... a discussion of culture is bound to take the phenomena of art as its starting point because art works are cultural objects par excellence. .... The distinction between them is of no great importance for the question of what happens to culture under the conditions of society and mass society; it is relevant, however, for the problem of what culture is and in what relationship it stands to the political realm.

Between Past and Future
Hannah Arendt

Contents:

Workshop on Ways of Seeing: Cinema, Painting and Architecture

In collaboration with SNDT University

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Introduction by Madhusree Dutta

The usual name for this kind of activity is "workshop", but I sincerely hope that we will turn this workshop into a festival of culture, of interaction, of debate. You have come from fourteen different colleges, different backgrounds, and different disciplines; you do not really know each other. So I hope that this will provide an interesting context for all of you to meet other people and make friends.

Some of us here are teachers, and while teaching or screening films or while conducting workshops, we often come across very difficult questions from people like you. Students like you ask, "Why do you make films that are not screened in theatres?" or "Why are artists so elitist that nobody can understand their works?" Sometimes they drop real bombs like "What is national art or Indian art?" Sometimes we have heard desperate pleas like "We want to do something different, special, but we have no idea where to start."

These questions sound very simple, but they are very complex. We definitely do not know how to address any of these questions with one short answer, and I doubt whether anybody really knows how to answer them. Often, interactions of this nature have left us very dissatisfied. The space and time to answer the questions within a college curriculum are almost invariably very inadequate. It is not a question of looking for an answer, it is a question of addressing and understanding the question. So we have invited some artists and we have invited you, and we have created this platform where we can all have some kind of interaction with each other and try to understand these questions.

Another reason for organising this event is that for various reasons, we get to see only one kind of art, one kind of cinema, serials, storytelling, even building or space design. The reason that we don't get a chance to see other things is one of the topics that we will address here. I will talk very briefly about what happens when we see only one kind of scene. One is that we get so used to this one kind of storytelling, or one kind of food for the eyes, that when we come across something new, something different in style, in look, in form, in story, we are so trained for that one kind of look that we just brush it aside and we say, "Yeh kya hai, bahut boring hai... Band kar do."

It is nobody's fault, we all do it. It is like alien food, you are not trained to eat it. Now we felt that with a little bit of help from practising artists, from teachers and from you, maybe we could try to understand the dynamics and norms which will make it easy for us to enjoy different kinds of things. After all, we are able-minded adults. I don't think it is fair that we continue to see only one kind of cultural activity just because it is easily accessible.

Art and culture are very difficult things to talk about. This is not a discipline where someone can give you a few rigid, linear formulas and say that if you follow these, then all questions can be answered. Every art theory throws up hundreds of counter-points within itself. To put it crudely, it is like a *bhool bhulaiya* (maze). As we proceed, we realise that there are a hundred ways to approach something, and when we approach it a little, we realise that there are a thousand other ways through which we could have approached it.

The fun is that every day, you discover a hundred other ways, and if you love this uncertainty, this multiplicity, this immense possibility which is there for you to discover, then there can be a discussion, a debate, there can be agreement or disagreement. But if we look for one sure, straight, simple way through which to walk and reach that point where we can consume a work of art, then this is not the place to find it. We are not teaching you the straight single path. We are trying to open as many doors of this *bhool bhulaiya* as possible.

Some of the people you will meet here are very eminent artists from different disciplines. They will help us in the whole venture. We will share their works, their thoughts, their concerns. You will ask them questions. There is no teaching, this is a workshop; we will debate and argue. You will make the piece of art come alive; the audience makes a work of art possible as much as the artist does.

Arun Khopkar

Arun Khopkar is an eminent filmmaker and film scholar. He is equally prolific in both fiction and non-fiction film making. He has made several films on noted artists and various art forms. His book Guru Dutt: A Tragedy in Three Acts is a major text in film study.

Modes of Perception and Ways of Seeing

I was very fortunate to have a very great filmmaker as my teacher and his name is Ritwik Ghatak. It is not a name which is known to everybody, for various reasons, but he was a great human being, a great teacher. One of the things he used to say was, "The day you begin to feel that you don't understand youngsters or you think what they are doing is all wrong, then, take it from me, you have become too old."

I am going to talk to you primarily about cinema, which is very dear to me. It is a very peculiar art form. If you take any other art form such as theatre, music or poetry, then we really have no record of who wrote the first poem or who painted the first painting. All these are shrouded in antiquity. However, cinema is an art form which was born in 1895. Its precise date of birth is known to us. There is enough documentation for us to know how it began, how it grew and what form it has taken. The earliest pictures were silent, sound was added to cinema only in the year 1927. These silent pictures were done with hand-cranked cameras.

There are two important names that we must consider; one is the Lumiere brothers and the other is George Melies. Now these names are not only historically important, they are also important because they tell us what cinema is capable of doing. At the very beginning of cinema, it became very clear that it is capable of going in two totally different directions. Mind you, before cinema came on the scene, there was no other medium which could record the reality around us in time and space. Cinema was the first medium which could record movement and depict it to us, and it was capable of doing this in many different ways. The earliest cinema actually went in two directions: one was its ability to document or show reality as no other medium could do, to be very realistic, very faithful to the kind of experiences that you have in your real life; the second was its ability to tamper with this reality, to transform this reality so that it almost becomes a medium of magic.

The Lumiere brothers were the first people who made films on everyday life and their films would include things like a train entering a station, a baby at breakfast etc. Although it was black-and-white and there was no sound, it was for the first time that the magic of

movement was captured by a medium. Initially, that was all that you captured when you switched on or switched off the camera, there was no attempt to tell stories using cinema, all that came later.

Once cinema started telling stories, it had to evolve a way of telling a story so that it could be understood by everyone. Filmmakers had to work out some kind of a grammar whereby they could narrate a story. For narrating a story, you require the creation of certain characters, secondly, the creation of certain events, and third is the arrangement of these events in time. So you know this is a boy at ten, you know it is the same boy at the age of 25, you know it is the same chap after a gap of 15 years. This is because the grammar of filmmaking is internalised by you, you understand there is a lapse of time, there is a change of space and so on, but all this had to be "discovered" by the early filmmakers.

First of all, in painting there were landscapes, there were portraits and there were just pictures of faces. So filmmakers also borrowed from painting and they discovered our image sizes. These image sizes are derived with respect to the human figure and the main image sizes are close up, mid shot, long shot. A long shot is an image size in which the human figure is comparatively small and you see a lot of the background. If you want to establish where an action is taking place, such as when you are looking at a Western, and it is a vast landscape or a city, then a long shot is used. The second image size which is important is full shot, in which you see the full human figure but there is not much you see above the head or below the feet. Mid shot is from the waist upwards.

We have these natural breaking points of the body, the neck, waist, knees. These are the joints. Now what happens is that to give a suggestion that this is all part of the whole, it is always better to include a bit of the base. So in order to show you a close-up, I will not show you just the neck and head, I will include a bit of the shoulder. The same logic applies even to the mid shot. In a full shot, I will include a bit of the ground as well.

Apart from these image sizes, other things gradually came to the cinema. Supposing I have to tell you a story within one hour, ninety minutes, or two hours. But so much is happening in one story, some people age, some die. If it is an Amitabh movie, in the last fifteen minutes there is so much mayhem, everyone dies, except the heroine of course! Now if I want to tell you a story in such a way that in two hours I will tell you the entire Ramayana, I have to find ways and means of reducing the events to a time that is manageable. So I start selecting from an event certain fragments of that event. Suppose I want to show you an event like "I'm delivering a lecture," I need a long shot which shows all of you and me, then there will be a mid shot of me, there will be a few close ups. And again, there will be a kind of long shot so that people do not lose orientation because of too many close ups. If you show too

many close ups, one begins to wonder where the people are gathered. Now, there are two or three ways of showing this kind of situation. One might be able to show how boring my lecture is so we have the establishing shot, then in my mid shot I have to have a very solemn face, no smile. I have to be talking very ponderously, talking about very boring things. When I come to your shots, since the lecture is boring, there might be some people yawning, somebody doodling, so there might just be a close up of a notebook in which my face is drawn or something like that. All these close ups will give you an idea about what the lecture is like. If it is an interesting lecture, then you will be sitting on the edge of your seat, your eyes might be wide open. So I am choosing details one after the other and I am also compressing time. I am showing you a 90-minute lecture in a matter of one minute.

What is very interesting is that given the same event, different people will use different aspects of the same event, and that is where the filmmaker's ability or his way of looking at the world comes in. Let me give you an example. There is a film called *The Bicycle Thief*, an Italian film, in which a man's job depends upon his bicycle, but someone has stolen it. So he and his small son go in search of this bicycle, and the scene that I am describing is one in which the man is very angry with his son and he slaps his son. So the son just starts walking away. The father walks on without paying attention to his son and then realizes that the son is missing. Just then near the river there are shouts of some boy being pulled out of the water by some fishermen. The father is shocked and wonders whether the boy could be his son. He runs to have a look at the body and realises it is not his son. At that point, you have a flight and you see the son sitting there at the top. The father looks at the son and the son looks at the father. Now, in a Hindi film, the same sequence would be cut showing long shot father there, boy here, then a close up of father, close up of boy, tears. Then the camera will track with the father running, then with the child running. Then they embrace each other, "Betaaaa!!!"

The way this scene is done in *The Bicycle Thief* belongs to a school of filmmaking called neo-realist, which was very prominent in Italy after the Second World War. One of the things that Italian filmmakers were very careful about was that they were living in a country that had just suffered fascism. Everything was exaggerated, just as in Maharashtra there are pseudo-historic speeches and everything is blown up, exaggerated: it might be an ordinary, third-rate building but it has the façade of a fort! Now this kind of fascism in which everything was exaggerated was what the Italian filmmakers were fighting against. So they wanted to show reality in as neutral a fashion as possible to make you really understand how common people lived, what their aspirations were like. They did not want to give any larger-than-life characters, or any highly dramatic scenes. So the way this scene is shown, you have a long shot of the boy and the father. Then in the next shot the meeting is not shown, you just see the boy and the father walking side by side. The boy who was walking behind the

father is now walking at a distance of just three feet from him. Exactly that part of the event, which the Hindi filmmaker would show, was eliminated by this filmmaker.

Battleship Potemkin is a well-known Russian film made in 1925 by the director Sergei Eisenstein. The sequence that I want to show you is called "the Odessa Steps." This sequence is one of the most well known sequences in the history of cinema. The background is that there is a rebellious battleship that has come to the port of Odessa. The sailors have mutinied, they have taken over the battleship and the people of Odessa have gathered to welcome them. All this has been shown in the previous part. In this part when the people come together, they are being attacked by soldiers. What I would like you to notice is how this event is reconstructed in a certain way. And what it tells us about how the filmmaker is looking at the people and the world around him.

Many times in Hindi films or in Hollywood films when you look at the crowd, the crowd is just a crowd, there is no individuation. In a crowd scene you have the hero and heroine, the rest are just a crowd. But here is a filmmaker who is making a film about an event in which ordinary people are making history, they are the heroes and heroines of this historic movement. The ordinary people are people like a mother, a child, a student; there is a young man. He has selected these types and he gives them so much life, so much attention. Although it is a scene dealing with a crowd, these people stand out, their destinies stand out. And there is a certain way in which the soldiers are depicted. They show this sort of faceless, extremely cruel aspect of the Tsarist suppression.

So when you watch the sequence, do watch what is being shown and what is not being shown. Just as it is important to say what one should say, it is equally important to not say certain things and just suggest them instead. If you start saying everything in words, there will be no charm to life, and so certain looks, a gesture, a pressure of the hand are all used for communication. Similarly, certain absences are very important in a film.

Discussion:

Khopkar: How does the sequence end?
I am asking you this question because a great filmmaker, DW Griffith, was asked the question, "Why do you make films?" He said, "I make films so that people can see." It is very important that before you start analysing a film, finding meaning etc, you are able to see a film with a kind of concentration and intensity so that the images stay with you and you can live with them like great lines of poetry or music. So what were the last three shots? Were they of people? Were they of objects?

Student: They were lions.

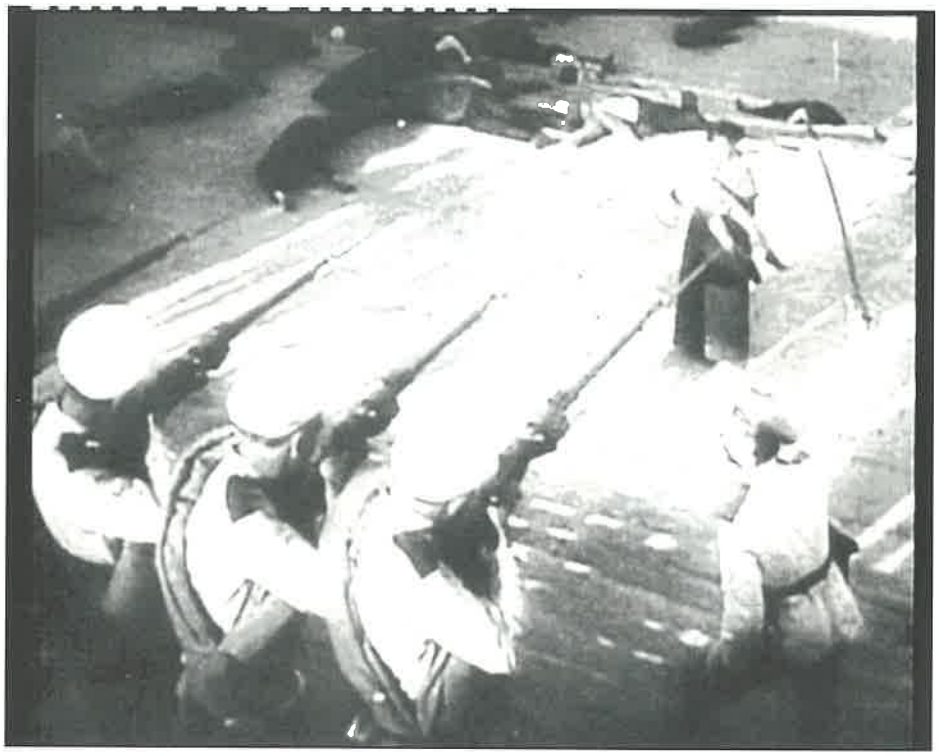
Khopkar: What happens in these shots?

Student: They lie in different postures, some are sitting, some are getting up.

Student: It gives the impression that the lion is getting into action.

Student: I thought of the destruction of everything. Not just destruction by the lions but destruction by everything else. There is a war taking place. There is destruction of power also.

Khopkar: Another sequence I would like you to see is from a film by another great Russian director, Andrei Tarkovsky. The film is called *Ivan's Childhood*, which is about a boy who actually never has a childhood because his



Stills from Battleship Potemkin / Odessa Steps

whole childhood is spent in the war and he is killed in the war. So this film opens with a very beautiful, lyrical, dreamlike sequence. We can see cinema's ability to depict, on the one hand, brutal reality and, on the other hand, the ability to be very gentle and to capture the very substance of dreams, the softness of certain kinds of dreams. Of course, there are nightmares also, but what I am going to show you is this very lyrical, dreamy world of a child.

Like image sizes, another important element of the filmmaker's art is the lens and lensing. There are three main kinds of lenses that filmmakers use, the normal lens, the wide angle lens, and the telephoto lens. You can put down the zoom as a fourth kind of lens. A normal lens is a lens that more or less gives you the same kind of view that you would have with your normal vision. A wide angle lens covers a very wide field of vision and the perspective. These lenses can give you a feeling of space being stretched. So a room shot with a wide angle lens would appear much deeper or longer than if is shot by a normal lens. The other kind is called a telephoto lens. When you see people in a match, they might be running on the field but you feel as though they are stationary. That is because that kind of a shot is taken with a telephoto lens, and this lens compresses space. So when a filmmaker is bringing a certain event to you, it is evident that he is controlling the time, he is controlling which part of the event to show to you and he is also controlling the kind of space in which a certain

Above - Stills from Ivan's Childhood; Below - Stills from Pather Panchali

part has to be fitted.

The next excerpt that I want to show you is from a film called *October* by Sergei Eisenstein. It is a sequence that is rather peculiar - the main lenses used here are very wide angle lenses, so a great feeling of depth is created. The event is part of the revolutionary uprising, and the action is taking place in St Petersburg. There is a drawbridge that connects two places, there has been a worker's rebellion, and in order to cut off this rebelling district the bridge has been raised. That is the sequence I am about to show you. In it you can see how the event of the drawing of the bridge is stretched over time and how the space is shown as being very deep. This sequence is a peculiar combination of something that is very realistic and at the same time quite nightmarish.

I have shown you the lyrical aspect of dreams in Tarkovsky's film, now you will see the nightmarish aspect in this excerpt from *October*.

One important point to be noted here: just as in the previous sequence of the Odessa Steps in *Battleship Potemkin* you have the lion as kind of representing the spirit of the people, the white horse here is a symbol. It is a creature almost from myth, it has purity, it has speed, the earth can't hold it. There is this kind of creating of space that involves the use of an extreme wide angle lens, and an event which is both realistic and yet has elements of nightmare, elements of mythology, and that is something which I think is very important for us to understand. I would like you to see a couple of more excerpts because I would like to talk to you about this aspect of myth and reality and narrative. This is a film called *La Dolce Vita* by Federico Fellini. It was made in 1960, and here you have the opening sequence. The theme of the film is "the sweet life" and in this film Fellini wanted to show something about the rich classes in Italy, which are so sated with, so bored with life that spiritual values are at a loss.

The opening of a film is so crucial because it must capture something of the true spirit of the film.

Here, too, you have the opening of a film which gives you a certain idea of not only the theme, but you also have something of a miracle, with the statues flying, the gods coming, all of this operated by a helicopter and done with such cynicism!

The opening chords of a melody or a dance are so crucial. I remember Smriti Nevatia, when she used to write theatre reviews years ago, had written that before a curtain opens, there is a moment of silence. And this is such a precious moment of silence because when the curtain opens you could have the world's greatest spectacle or you could have the world's greatest flaw. That moment of silence from which you begin in the film is very important, so that

you begin to look at films carefully, so that before a film begins you put all your other preoccupations away. That is true of all art forms, it is then that you begin to actually see.

Now with television you keep on munching, talking on the phone etc, that is not the way to get anything out of it. You will get only as much as you give. If you give a lot of attention to something significant, then you will get a lot out of it, but if you don't give that much attention then you will get nothing.
Another sequence I would like to show you is from a well-known Bengali film called *Pather Panchali*.

I would like to make a few points about this sequence. After talking to you about lenses and image sizes, there are two more aspects I want to talk about that are very important. They are light and colour. In black-and-white film, there are 21 steps from which to go from white to black. Out of these 21 steps, depending on the kind of approach the filmmaker has, he chooses to use certain "tonalities". Many realistic filmmakers, like Satyajit Ray, do not use extreme white or extreme black, they stick to using the middle greys.

This scene I showed you is very interesting because it is about two children who are learning the facts of life. First thing is the wires. They live in a small village, there is no communication. It is something that comes from the outside world. It is the wind passing through the telegraph wires that is making that sound, and it is very mysterious. This is the first time that the boy sees the train. You have these beautiful white flowers, against which you see the train like a black monster. The shot in which the train passes and you see the train on the other side, that is a telephoto lens shot.

Then you have the death of the aunt of their father. At the time of the death, when she falls, you have the water container, the empty lota that goes back into the river. So in that sense, the body has emptied itself of life and merged with the stream. On one hand you have something very realistic, there is no image here that is not natural. At the same time the way the things are organised here just as in the Odessa Steps sequence, you felt as though the director was concerned with innocents, with children. There was a magical coming to terms with the mechanical world and the first experience with death. How does one grow up? One grows up with experiences that deepen your understanding of life. So in one sequence he has brought together so many elements. That is what great art is all about. In German, there is a word for poetry, it is called 'Dichtung'. And 'dicht' is to make something thick or concentrated. So what does a poet do? He does not mechanically reproduce the world but he distills the essence of life and brings it to you.

I would like you to see a song picturisation which you may have seen before, but I would like you to see it from the point of view of how light and darkness is used in cinema to create a

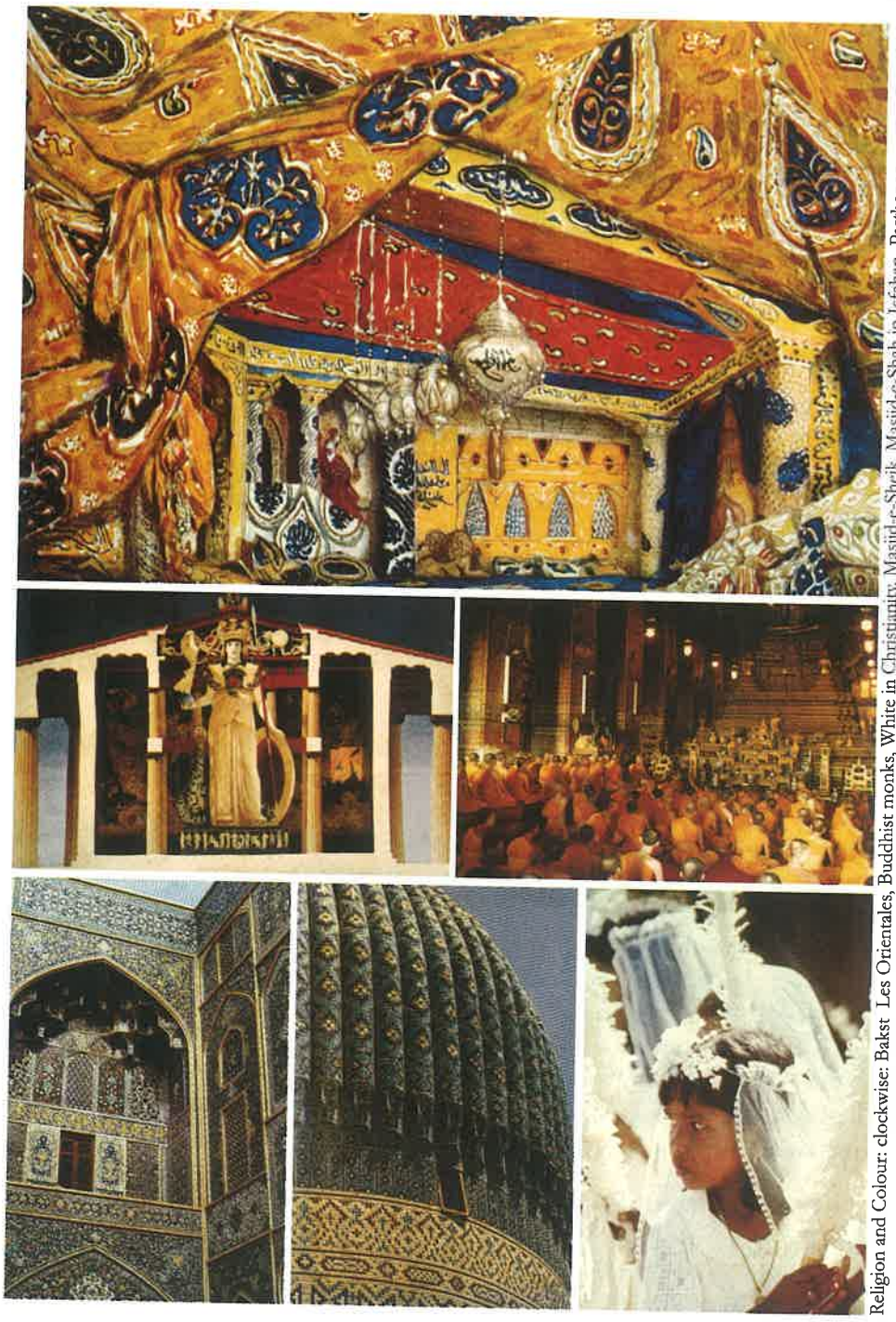
certain effect. This is a song from *Sahib Bibi aur Ghulam*. This film is located in Bengal; it is the adaptation of a novel, the story of a zamindar family and one of its daughters-in-law, who comes from a poor family. The time is the coming of the British. The family's wealth is being wasted by their throwing it away on singers and all kinds of sports. This is a dance sequence done in a very unusual way.

The use of light and shade in this song picturisation is extremely interesting. The song here has certain erotic overtones. It is a very peculiar kind of lighting; light is so important for cinema because there are certain emotions or certain feelings you would associate only with certain moods, like when it is daybreak there is joyousness, there is a going away of darkness. In the afternoons, the light casts very harsh shadows, so when you have light coming from the top you have eye socket shadows. If you take the picture of someone in that kind of light, that person will look quite harsh. Evening light is again quite mellow. The passage of time, the cycle of seasons, all these have a great emotional effect. This is recognised by artists and also by people who form religions. I was doing a film on Bharat Natyam, for which I visited many temples in the south. That is when the chief priest in the Chidambaram temple [in Tamil Nadu] told me that they kept the temples closed between 12 and 4, they tell people that God is sleeping at this time, but the basic reason is that at this time the light is so harsh that people will see the image as stone or metal.

I will describe to you two of my experiences. One reads a lot about Vaishnavite and Shaivite philosophy, but these two experiences that I personally had made me understand what these two philosophies were about in a sense. The first one was in Srirangapatnam where there is an idol of Shri Vishnu made of black marble with gold and diamonds. There is music outside, but as you enter the sanctum, the music becomes less audible. There is practically darkness, and the priest has a lamp that he uses to lead you on. Before your eyes get accustomed to that kind of darkness, as you go in, apart from the lamp you see nothing. Then suddenly, you begin to see some shimmering because wherever the black marble is polished, it catches the light, and the gold and diamonds contribute to the shimmering effect. Then the line of Vishnu's body appears, it is a horizontal line. In terms of our experience also, a horizontal line that we associate with the sea or the horizon, gives a lot of restful feeling, stability, and you have this extremely restful image of Vishnu. You don't know what kind of atmosphere or space is around. Is it the sky? Is it the sea? You just don't know. The music is so soft, gentle, and quiet. This aspect of Vishnu is that of the Preserver, of peace and order that reign in the world. I am not a believer at all, but you begin to understand that people who made rituals and formulated religions and religious philosophies knew a lot about life, nature, the nature of light, objects.

We are dealing here not only with cinema, but things which are common to other art forms

Clockwise: Japanese students' demonstration, Red fashion, a performance



Religion and Colour: clockwise: Bakst Les Orientales, Buddhist monks, White in Christianity, Masjid-e-Sheik, Masjid-e-Shah in Isfahan, Parthenon,

like architecture and painting. Just as there is this response to light and colour, it is recognised even in our classical music that certain moods and certain notes go together. So you have ragas of the morning and ragas of the evening. The day is divided into eight sections called praharas. You sing a certain raga only because of a certain relationship that you have with nature. The basis of the use of colour in art is also derived from nature. Thus man understands how nature has colour, and understanding this, he tries to use it in his own work, not necessarily in art but also in rituals, in clothes. If you take the colour of the sari of a bride in north India, it is red which is the colour of blood, of life. If you take the colour of the sari of a widow in Gujarat or Maharashtra, it is black or maroon, the colour of dried blood, because in that system she is not supposed to have any life now.

In our understanding, the seasons have certain colours, and then this understanding is codified in society, in rituals etc and used by artists creatively. Sometimes, it is used as it is used in nature, or it is used against the way it is used in nature. For example, blue is a colour you see in the sky, in the sea. The artist may want you to feel that kind of depth and hence will use blue, or the artist may be aware of the fact that your association with blue is of depth or of that kind of expanse, so he may want to use blue in a totally different way, he might want the face of a character painted blue, which is the most unnatural thing to do.

We will enter this talk of colours using a few slides. Here we see that nature at the biological level seems to use colour in three different ways:

(Slides of hummingbird, flowers, butterfly etc to demonstrate use of colour for basic attraction, camouflage and repulsion. Body decoration, the Parthenon, a set for a play, a rock group performing, a laser display etc.)

When various cultures give meaning to colour, it is quite interesting there are reasons why certain colours have certain meanings or certain associations in certain cultures. The same colour sometimes has completely opposite meanings in different cultures, say if you take the colour of mourning in Christianity, it is black, whereas you have white as the colour of mourning in China and Hindu culture. So you have white at one extreme representing death, on the other extreme, white is purity, white is sunlight, and so on. In most cultures, the colour of your own skin is given a certain higher value, now how do blacks negotiate colour? They negotiate it through pottery: the pots that are supposed to be properly baked are black. So black is associated with maturity, with wisdom, with rain-giving clouds, whereas in other cultures, black is associated with black magic, black tongue etc.

The colour which is closest to white is yellow, and yellow is very interesting because you have things like yellow journalism; in literature you have examples such as the yellow fog in T S Eliot's *Prufrock*; you call somebody's version a "jaundiced" version. Yellow has a very interesting history because it is the colour of gold, and gold is the only metal that you find in

Nature and Colour

Left to right: Body Painting, Body Painting 2 - People of Papua New Guinea mourning

Set of Four Jokers

the pure state. It is called a noble metal. When Christianity started opposing pagan cultures, they wanted to reverse all values. So early Christianity has Judas painted in yellow, and they banned the use of gold from many of the rituals. As Catholicism became institutionalised, it began to absorb rituals from many local traditions and gold came back in a big way.

It is important when we look at colour to realise that a colour works in a certain context. When we talk of yellow as being bright, it seems like it is an absolute statement. When you look at the same colour with a different background, you see how it produces a different sensation.

The next colour I am going to deal with is red. Red is, on the one hand, the colour of blood, of the animal world, of passion. But it is also the colour of violence. Red has been associated historically with red flags and revolutions. During the French revolution, there was a group of aristocrats who had lost some relatives during the reign of terror and who were guillotined, so these aristocrats used to wear red scarves to remind themselves of the vengeance that they must wreak upon the revolutionaries. Sometimes when you have red going into maroon then it is softened or gets a little more sombre. By and large it is a colour that one would associate with passion, love and then passion turned into its opposite violence and destruction. Again, we can see red with different backgrounds and see the varying effect it has with different backgrounds.

Blue is the next colour. It is the colour of the sky; it is the only colour after which a god is named (Krishna); it is the colour of the sea. In terms of perception, it is supposed to be a receding colour, which means that on white if you have a yellow patch and a blue patch, you will feel that the blue patch is a little behind the yellow patch, yellow seems to advance towards you. So á kind of movement seems to be created in painting without there actually being any movement.

Green is a very curious colour. If you look at orange, and I tell you orange is a mixture of red and yellow, you can feel the presence of both colours, but if you look at green, you don't really see it as a mixture of blue and yellow. Green is the colour of vegetation and it has the maximum number of shades in the nature around us. The value is ambiguous because you have someone turning green with jealousy, and depending upon whether green is moving towards darker green or lighter green, it seems to take values which are life-giving or signifying loss of life.

I would like you to see four slides to see how incident light which falls on an object can completely change our mood and perception of an object. Here are four slides of a clown with just a change of light.
Of the four slides, which one was the saddest clown?

Students: The one in blue.

Khopkar: Whenever I have shown it to any group, they tend to say the red or the blue. Definitely when you have this kind of association, then that is what is used many times by the artists.

Now I would like to show you some classic paintings where light is used in a very significant way. These are examples from some of the masters of painting Rembrandt, Georges de la Tour, Vermeer. Here in terms of cinema, what is very interesting is how one can take certain fragments of an event and highlight them through lighting. In fact, D W Griffith, who is sort of the father of modern cinema, started using lighting in which the screen had large areas of darkness and small areas were well illuminated. He called this "Rembrandt lighting". Basically it is to emphasise something, it is to create a certain kind of mystery.

There are two different ways of lighting an object. One is by using direct light. The second is by using indirect light, which is softer and does not cast hard shadows. The first technique is called chiaroscuro, or clear and obscure. The second one, which is developed by people like Leonardo da Vinci, is called sfumato. Both these terms are also very significant in cinema and in architecture; they are significant for the creation of atmosphere and mood.

What is very interesting is that there is a use of both direct and reflected light. So on the one hand you have this man who is meditating, there is this light outside, a kind of light of knowledge. You have this beautiful spiral staircase. Then there is somebody who is igniting this fire and doing this kind of menial work, but receives light as well. Such a compassionate and beautiful painting. It is one of the most amazing Rembrandts that I have seen.

Then light begins to become a kind of metaphor, it is not just light as it is observed. Rembrandt and other artists use light to convey something spiritual.

Adoration by the Shepherds, the source of light is covered (the candle) yet the light falls directly on the face of the child, so the deployment of the light is for a certain central importance given to the subject.

Before we go into Vermeer, he is a painter with very few paintings. He always paints domestic scenes, there are just three or four paintings of outdoor scenes. Many of them with the absent man; these are times when the Dutch and the Spanish and the English were trading and the men used to be absent, going on long voyages. There is a kind of gentleness the way Vermeer depicts these scenes and the way he uses light, the way every single detail is painted with so much love and care. In many paintings, the light comes from a source that is

on the left hand side, a window. You see the deployment of very few colours, very few objects. There is a tremendous economy and restraint. He is an extremely significant painter because the way he depicts these interiors, it is almost going into a kind of abstraction.

As opposed to a painter who is using colour in a particular frame, a filmmaker uses it in time. There are many ways of using colour. Many of the directors who have used colour in a significant way have associated a certain kind of mood or feeling with a particular colour. Supposing I am associating a kind of brutality with black, then I start constructing my scenes in such a way that I am spreading this black colour over various objects. It could be shoes, it could be clothing, it could be leather objects, it could be a black chain. By including these objects and making them come and go in a scene, I am trying to create a certain mood. When I take the interior of a house, given a middle class house and given the same naturalistic framing, it is quite possible to have many different colours for the walls. Yet, why does the filmmaker choose a particular time of the day, a particular colour for the clothing, for the background, for the objects? It is to associate with a certain feeling, a certain mood, and it is not ever a one-to-one association. Just as you have certain phrases in music, colours keep on getting interwoven into films.

Discussion

Student: D W Griffith, when he was asked why he made films and he answered that it is so that people can see. Now people can also hear films. When you were playing that Odessa Steps sequence, the music was so overpowering. Don't you think sound distracts?

Khopkar: The music in the Odessa Steps sequence has been added later on, it was not the music track that actually accompanied the sequence. Sound is a very important aspect, as important as the visual.

Student: You demonstrated how creatively colour can be used, in fact it is so essential, so natural in your grasping of what is around you. Do you think black-and-white filmmakers lacked a very important tool? How did they compensate for this lack of colour?

Khopkar: There is a certain amount of abstraction in the use of black-and-white. In spite of the fact that colour has been available for the last thirty years or so, there are certain films made by certain filmmakers where large parts are in black-and-white. *Schindler's List*, *Raging Bull*, a lot of work of Woody Allen (*Manhattan*, *Stardust Memories*). Andre Wajda made a film on war in which large sequences are in black-and-white. Brian De Palma's *Carlito's Way* opens in black-and-white and goes into colour.

So even when you use colour and when you use it significantly, it is also necessary to clear

the rest of the frame so that that colour stands out. You will find that in many films, you will have passages where the sets are quite grey, the colour of the clothes are black and white etc and then there will be one significant colour. Unfortunately in Indian cinema, particularly the kind of cinema considered very artistic, that of V Shantaram, it is not a deployment of colour, it is a diarrhoea of colour. Once you see a Shantaram film, for a week after that you only want to see black-and-white. You don't mind using dark glasses for a week or so after you see movies like *Navrang*. There is nothing as horrendous as V Shantaram's use of colour in the entire history of Indian cinema.

Student: The dance sequence that we saw from *Sahib, Bibi aur Ghulam* the photography concentrated on the expressions of three people, there was white light, and there were also long shadows, such as the shadow of the pillar, the shadows of the girls dancing. What is the significance of this combination of these three main characters and the shadows?

Khopkar: I am not attributing any definite meaning. There is that whole decadent atmosphere, there is a certain sense of that place being haunted. There is a suggestion of the destruction to come. In Guru Dutt there is a lot of use of shadows. In fact in my book [*Guru Duti: a Tragedy in Three Acts*] there is a chapter called In the Realm of Shadows. He uses these shadows to suggest many moods. I can't say that one can reduce it to just one meaning. But one can say that there is a suggestion of destruction, anticipation of destruction.

Student: If there are two people in the scene, how can you show both of them as equally important, but in different ways?

Khopkar: I guess it could be rather symmetric. If you are using something like cinemascope or widescreen, then the nature of composition itself allows for two centres of interest on either side of the screen. In a conventional three by four format in which you see films or in which you see television, such compositions are rather rare. They are more common in cinemascope or 70mm.

Student: Could we use two different colours? Maybe the dress could be such, or something like that?

Khopkar: Of course you could do something like that. I am reminded of something very interesting. In *The Bicycle Thief*, the director Vittorio de Sica was offered a million dollars if he took Cary Grant as his main character. Now, he wanted that character to be a common man who could not be distinguished from his neighbour, so he said that if he had to take Cary Grant, then he might as well not make the film. When I saw Shyam Benegal's film *Ankur*, there is a procession in the first shot where you see [the heroine] Shabana Azmi. The colour of her dress is such that you immediately spot her. Whereas in *The Bicycle Thief*, de Sica had

taken great care that when you take a long shot or mid shot, there is no way of telling who the hero is. So when many Indian critics talked about the realism of *Ankur*, I was astonished. The treatment of colour was not realistic like it is understood in cinema criticism.

Student: You said when there is an excessive use of colour in movies, it is visual abuse. Then how come Indian directors who use such excessive colour still manage to make such blockbusters?

Khopkar: The dance sequences have become a kind of spectacle, what with MTV etc. A different logic applies to a spectacle and to a naturalistic sequence, and I think one will have to take each sequence on its own and see what purpose it serves and what mood it creates. I am not against the use of song and dance sequences in a film, I think they are extremely potent weapons in the hands of filmmakers, particularly since we live in a civilisation where when a child is born there is song, a lady is pregnant you have a song, somebody is getting married and again you have a song.

Student: In all the Woody Allen movies I have seen, he has a lot of long shots without a cut, he goes on for a minute without any cut. Is that his style or does he have a purpose?

Khopkar: Which movies are you talking about?

Student: Crimes and Misdemeanours, Purple Rose of Cairo.

Khopkar: If you are talking about very long shots in general, I have not seen the films you are talking about. Anyway, there has been a certain debate in cinema. There is a certain school of thinking which seems to feel that the kind of fragmentation that Eisentstein does of an event into details, and moves you in a certain emotional direction it was felt by this school that it was a very manipulative way of dealing with the audience. So they felt that long shots without a cut, in which everything is just shown to the audience, are far more democratic and meaningful. So certain schools of cinema did emerge, like the French New Wave had these very long shots, they used to call it a shot sequence - a whole sequence is combined into one shot, sometimes lasting for about five to ten minutes.

Anuradha Kapur

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Points of View in Narrative and Traditions of Performance

I want you to look at certain forms that we are in the habit of looking at theatre and television and cinema and, indeed, even painting. We almost assume that they exist naturally in a certain standard way; that this is "the way things are." So I am hoping to try and look at ways of decoding what this "standard" version is.

I am going to show you two video clips. I would like you to put together a scenario from what you see. While making the story, just keep in mind the following points: speech, that is words; movement, which would include body, posture, dance, gesture of the hand, anything from stylised to natural movement. The third is design, which would include the set, costumes, properties like mirrors, teapots, tables etc. The last is sound, which is separate from the spoken word and includes music and any other sound effects not made by the voice box.

So let's watch these two pieces and then let's make a story, or discuss what could be the possible story.

([1]An excerpt from the TV serial *Mahabharat*, with the sound turned off.)

Any thoughts on what the story is?

Student: Children coming back to their mother.

Kapur: How do you know they were her children?

Student: Because they bow down.

Student: I think Draupadi's eye expressions were very loving towards the child. They were the way a mother looks upon a child.

Kapur: So there was a look of maternal pride, there was a look of affection. There was also a

1 The TV serial *Mahabharat* was aired on Doordarshan, the state-run channel, in 1998.

signal, that of touching the feet.

Student: What I thought was that all the men were not her children. One was the child, the rest looked like the child's friends.

Kapur: Which one was the child?

Student: The one who bowed down.

Kapur: Actually most of them bowed down. But the point you are making is an important one, that they were not all her children. Does anybody think none of them was her children, but were actually her friends? Are you taking your cue from the fact that you know her to be Draupadi ?

Student: I don't think they were her children. They all looked like they had done something wrong and they were approaching her carefully, trying to think of what to say. They had some problem and they wanted to sort it out.

Kapur: Nobody thought they were her lovers?

Student: I thought they were.

Kapur: Okay, let's look again.

(The excerpt is replayed.)

Student: She smiled as though somebody has come to look for her. As though there is going to be a wedding and these are her would-be husbands.

Kapur: Tell me, when he says they could be "would-be husbands", is it wrong? Does it seem wrong because we know she is Draupadi, or because this suggestion is not there in the scene?

Student: They look much younger than her. Not the man in the moustache, but the others. They look too young to be her would-be husbands. And one of them touches her feet.

Kapur: Can we just stop here for a moment and have a little thought. Perhaps we have certain signals that if he touches her feet, he must be younger.

Student: But these are assumptions we make because we are used to it.

Kapur: So we are going by that. If he must be younger, then he can't be a would-be husband.

Can we also think of stories where the face is saying something and the story is saying something else? We could have a face that is giving us signals of one kind of person, and we could have a body that is giving us signals of another kind of person.

Any ideas about the costume?

Student: First the guy in the white suit was in focus because he was the only one in white and the rest were in all sorts of colours. Then they showed Krishna and the other lady in yellow, then Draupadi in red.

Kapur: So perhaps they get differentiated by the costumes that they are wearing.

(The excerpt is seen again.)

Kapur: Now tell me, who is the senior-most?

Student: The man in white.

Kapur: What about the three people standing at the back? We can forget about them, is it?

Student: The one in the centre is the youngest.

Kapur: Could we say that it's not the costume alone that is giving you the signal, but something else is? The body, the posture, and so on?

It could be that the costumes don't distinguish character. Quite often, expressions might say one thing and the body might say another. So are we saying that we are hiding something inside? Or are we saying we wear all our expressions in the body?

Student: We are mostly hiding something inside.

Student: They may be able to hide their feelings, but they may not be able to control their body gestures.

Kapur: So we have a suggestion that body gestures may not be in control. So the body is saying one thing and the face another.

Some say it is a mother looking at her children, some say it is a woman looking at her would-be husbands.

Perhaps we can have a thought that there are looks between men and women, between children and mother, between fathers and sons that we accept and immediately put into a

category like "mother-son". Sometimes, if we look closely, we see something different.

Here we are talking about acting, how to represent oneself on stage.

(Another video excerpt with the audio off from the play *Aadhe Adhure*)

Student: I think it is a father who is yelling at a son. The son loves his mother very much but he does not have the guts to go against his father.

Student: I think they are brothers... There is a fight... The lady in the sari is the elder brother's wife and she is siding with the younger brother. When the younger one is being scolded by the elder one, the lady in the salwar kameez is moved and guilty.

Kapur: What could they be talking about?

Student: It could be family business.

Student: The younger brother seems like he is an alcoholic or a drug addict or something.

Kapur: So he comes across as a man not taking responsibility.

Student: It could be about the younger brother being unemployed. The elder brother is working and there is no help from the younger brother. It is a middle class family.

Kapur: How do we know that?

Student: From the set.

Kapur: Could it be a recreation of a TV serial or is it a recreation of a stage drama?

Student: Most of the TV serials are not about middle class people.

Student: A serial can have middle class people; look at serials like *Hum Log* and *Buniyaad*. I don't think only rich people are portrayed in serials.

Kapur: One thing you can think about is that there is a certain picture of middle class-ness that is always being suggested. How can we decode that?

Student: The set is very simple, the costumes are not lavish, the way everyone is sitting.

Student: With serials like *Hum Log* the thing is that the sets looked tacky. Often when people portray middle class-ness on television, such as in *Hum Paanch*, the sets are not middle class sets. The sets are glossier than the sets we saw on screen right now or in *Hum Log*.

Kapur: This is a very important comment. Let's decode it. Firstly, in some of the serials, you have various things that are middle class but the set seems to pull in another direction. About the first clip we were all saying that the gesture pulls in one direction and the face seems to pull in another. Could we say the same thing over here?

Maybe you have an idea or a key or a code of middle class-ness, and you say this is what you will put in a middle class set and the story will become middle class. Like in *Hum Paanch*, the story is middle class and the set is not so middle class. Are we then making a statement about realism?

Student: In a serial like *Hum Log*, the sets and everything go together so it affects us and we easily accept it as a fact that the characters are middle class. But a serial like *Hum Paanch* is seen just for fun and is forgotten quickly. Due to the sets, the middle class-ness does not reach you. It is just a commercial look.

Kapur: So the commercial look still tries to tell you something. What do you think it tells you?

Student: It should not give you a false feel. There needs to be some connection with reality.

Kapur: Do you want it to look used, lived in? Is that what you are looking for?

Student: The way in which you want to depict or sell a particular theme to your audience. Like the look of your product, which you want to sell to a certain amount of people... You need to think about how you would package it.

Kapur: So what is *Hum Paanch* being packaged to sell? Think of the *Hum Paanch* set and the costumes in the *Mahabharat*.

Student: There is no relevance to our life.

Kapur: So let's take that as one principle of realism that we should dock in our head realism looks at characters like you and me, in serials or on stage.

Student: Why should we always look for realism in serials? I never really understand that.

Student: I think when you are talking about the middle class, it can't be larger than life. But when you are looking at the *Mahabharat*, it has to be larger than life because it grabs you in an entirely different way. A middle class serial will make you think about your own circumstances but the *Mahabharat* has to be impressive, apart from making you think.

Kapur: I agree that it has to be impressive. The costumes you saw in the first clip were

probably impressive.

Student: Do you think they use these costumes because we want to watch good things? We like to see gold ornaments, good crockery, good doors, good furniture and so on. Do you think that is why they use it?

Kapur: I think that is true. I think that is in fact quite a governing convention to assume this is what the audience wants, so let's give only that to them.

Student: The costumes suited the *Mahabharat*. In the sense, that is how their clothes were in those times. You have to depict them as they were.

Kapur: I suppose we know that they wore such clothes?

Student: I suppose they did find out and then decided on those costumes.

Student: The costumes were quite exaggerated. When we saw the *Discovery of India* serial, the costumes were very simple. This *Mahabharat* is much more exaggerated.

Student: The costumes fit our image of mythical characters. They are trying to come quite close to what we imagine mythical characters to be.

Kapur: I think this is worth a thought. Where do these mythological imaginings come from? This is how you think they lived, wore clothes etc. Some of you here feel that they have to be impressive; the scale has to be "larger than life". Would you agree that in the clip you saw of the *Mahabharat*, the scale is larger than life, or would you say that the scale is the same as that of the other clip?

Student: It was larger than life.

Kapur: Why do you feel that? I have a feeling it is exactly the same.

Student: It was quite exaggerated.

Kapur: Why do you think it is exaggerated?

Student: I read an article in the newspaper about the *Mahabharat* in which the writer has estimated the whole thing. For instance, how can a person so many ages ago have a ***mukut*** (crown)? There has to be a gold mining industry for that, there has to be some kind of artistry to have that kind of jewellery. How is that possible?

Kapur: I agree. I think we have a picture of what we think is the past. We have to give a

thought to how we are constructing that past; we have to make sure that we are not making it by today's standards of what we call "richness", with pink pearls and all that. We have to make a decision now about how we look at the past. I would like you to think about the expressions - are they larger than life or are they middle class?

Student: We have a subject, "History as Heritage", in which we were taught that cinema or drama is an escape into the world of imagination. Even if you are poor, when you see something like the *Mahabharat,* you think, "Oh, wow! I wish I could have had all that." Maybe those who are making these kind of programmes are trying to make people feel as though those characters are just like them, but they dressed in a style that we cannot even think of, but we wish we were there. It is some sort of a dreaming state.

Kapur: Maybe that is true. Let's look at some of the basic principles of realism. We all know them, but let's go through them anyway. One is that when you make a play, or work in some other form, the stories are everyday stories of bankers, lawyers etc. The next would be that they speak in prose and not in verse. Basically the characters, since they are middle class characters, look like you and me. Those who watch them and those who are on stage are mostly of the same class. Another principle could be that there isn't likely to be any divine manipulation. If brothers or fathers and sons are having a fight, no *akashvani* will tell them how to solve it. It is going to get solved by the boss or a family elder or whatever; it is going to get solved in human ways by human people. The last condition would be that the people don't look as if they are part of the past, they look as if they are a part of our time. So these are among the basic principles of realism.

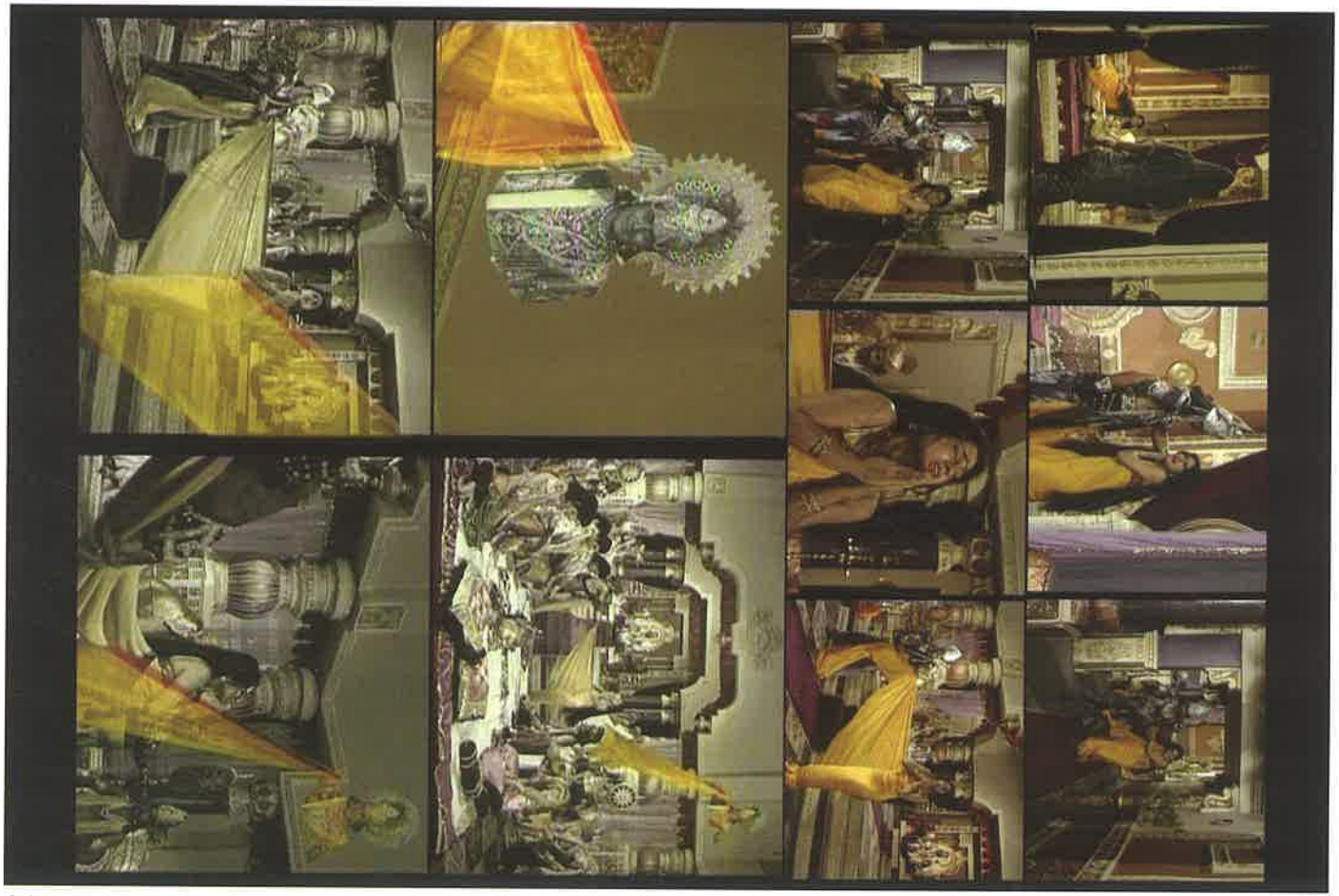
So, realism says that it presents reality as it is, without any cast of what you want it to be or what you "think" it was. It is observed reality, it is fact.

I will leave you to think how this notion of fact sits in the first clip you saw. What is observed there? What is the fact there? How do we know that is the kind of jewellery they wore? From what are we making that past? Perhaps we are making it from the present, from this time.

Another thing I would like you to think about is that if we are making the past from objects of richness today, then maybe we are creating a middle class drama and not a glorious past. So the face is actually telling you a middle class story and the costume is actually telling you what we think is the story of the past and the set is probably telling you that it has been made right then that nobody has ever sat on that throne and nobody's ever stepped on that carpet either.

I am trying to say that "realism" has several versions, we can interpret it. We must not take it as a given, as a standard.

Stills from TV serial Mahabharat by B.R Chopra Productions



Collage of stills from 'vastraharan' sequence of TV serial Mahabharat by B.R. Chopra Productions

There is this notion that we go with when we talk of epic characters that they have an epic stature, larger than life. Think about whether any of these characters are actually larger than life, and what is epic. Also question whose eyes you are looking through when you look at the *Mahabharat* and at the clip from *Aadhe Adhure*. Are they your own eyes, or is the author telling you to see with a particular eye?

Student: We say that in the past, it was grand because that is what we are told, and right from the beginning we are made to see such posters and such pictures.

Kapur: So should they be completely different?

Student: I think that depends on what the filmmaker or the producer is trying to do. If he is trying to give you a version where he intends that you de-familiarise yourself completely, then they will probably be roaming around in white dhotis, but if he wants it to fit your ideas based on what you have seen through idols and pictures all your life, then maybe he is going to try and continue show you that picture. If that is his idea, to have a large mass audience, then he is going to subscribe to popular myths.

Kapur: I think that is a good point. Maybe the decision is made by the fact of whom you want to address and for what reason, not on the basis of "fact". Is it possible to depict the full truth?

Student: In most serials that we see, there is an element of essentialism. For example, how much do we know of ancient Egypt? We might know about the Sphinx and the pyramids, but we don't know about a town that was built by the Pharaoh to house slaves. No one talks about things like that. It's the same thing here, in the *Ramayan* and the *Mahabharat*. We don't see too much of public life, we see the palaces and the battlefields and we see gold. I think it is a nice way of propagating a religion. I am not saying it is the only way, but it is one of the ways.

Kapur: I think what we have to be alert to, is that we have to see it as a version, not the version. This is true of any storytelling, realism included.

I would like you then to think about one other thing: do you want the image that you see on stage or on the screen to give you all the details? Or is it better rather, is it possible to make an image in which you fill in some of the details to get the rest of the picture?

Would you get a smaller picture of Duryodhan and Dhritrashtra if they didn't have the pearls or the *mukut*? Or would you get an image, which gives you some space to recreate the character, if you did not have that costume and instead had something else? Let's look at another clip.

(A video excerpt from a Kudiyattam play: an enactment of Draupadi's *vastraharan* or disrobing)

Kapur: So there were three saris, which were very carelessly tied together, there was no effort to say that this was a single endless sari. Did it seem like bad theatre to you? Is this giving us less of a past? Or does it give you an occasion to think you are creating something too?

Student: I think it is just the presence of the sari that was important. After all, most people seeing it know what to expect from it, they know there is going to be a sari there and they know that it is not going to unravel entirely. Most of the people know the story; you don't need to show them a special endless sari. They can identify with a piece of cloth in its place.

Kapur: The story was known in the television serial too. What happened here that was different?

As soon as you identify the story here, you start putting in more details. So we create an illusion of the story and we know what to expect in terms of the sequence of events. At the end, when the actress comes and takes away the sari, then it suddenly hits you that this is not real. As a result, you see it as amateur theatre rather than as the story that was going on.

If the lights had been dimmed and the sari cleared from the stage invisibly, then how would we interpret that makeup which was not at all real either? Think of what the stylised makeup is doing for you. Is it producing a real picture? Is it producing an image, which is not real, not like you and me? How are we showing the past? Is this past something we believe to be a story, not something real? Are we talking about an ideological position, about how to deal with forms and about what realism is?

(A video excerpt of a Kathakali performance in which Shurpanakha tells Ravan about her love for someone is played. Ravan says she can't marry him and slays her lover. Shurpanakha then takes on a demonic form and curses him)

Student: I feel when you are looking at anything in this kind of a set-up, it is the stylisation that is important. You look at it as a drama or dance in a particular style. Like in paintings you have a certain style, in the same way you start looking at the dance from the point of view of a certain style. You don't look at it from a story point of view.

Student: I agree with her. This is a dance form. It is not a play. It is not supposed to be realistic. Their clothes are the costumes of the dance. Through that dance, they are expressing a story, but it is still a stylised representation.

Kapur: There is something very important being said here. That this is a stylised performance and not a play. So we are assuming that plays look a certain way.

Student: What I mean to say is that whether it is theatre or dance or a mixture of both, the style is the most important thing. But in the earlier clips that we saw, the story becomes more important.

Kapur: I want to point out one more thing that we have to take on board when we discuss this. The writers, the performers, the people who worked on the costumes, they all must have had similar questions about how to represent gods and other legendary, mythical figures on stage. Why did they all choose this version and why did we choose another version and why do we say that is a play and this is stylisation? They must have had some view of the past; they must have had some views on the images of gods and epics and heroes. They chose a certain solution and we chose a certain solution. I think we need to think about why we choose those solutions?

Student: It is all like a painting. What I would like to say is that the way they depict, that is their paint. And the story is like... Suppose you want to show a cat or a dog, you might see it in pencil or charcoal, either ways you would see a cat or a dog.

Kapur: And here?

Student: Here you see the story, you see Ravan and Shurpanakha and so on. You see that when you uncover them from the paint.

Kapur: Tell me, how many of you uncovered them from the paint? Did you want to see the faces, or was what you saw enough?

Student: I just thought, whenever you put up a theory you have some assumptions. In this case, the assumption was that all people looked like this, Ravan looked like this, and so on.

Kapur: Does anyone have any view on this? I think Ravan looks like this and so I depict him like this. Do you think this is the artistic solution? Or is another kind of explanation required? Did Ravan look like this, green face and all? Or are they attempting something else?

Student: It is an art form. Art forms can be based on different ideas, and Kathakali requires all that paint. Maybe the paints are not important, they were being used only to cover up the face...

Kapur: Cover up the face to be "not human".

Student: Yes, to be "not human". To be "not" what they are. Because they are human beings and we are also that, but they don't want to portray them like us. Like we saw in the *Mahabharat* serial, we tend to still look at the characters and think they are a bit like us.

Kapur: You might see the pores of the skin and all that, and they don't want you to.

Student: I don't think it is really covering up the face. All that paint is not really used to cover the human form, but to highlight the facial muscles that are used in Kathakali dancing. That is what Kathakali is all about.

Kapur: So what we are now saying is that there are certain artistic solutions that are made to perhaps highlight the face, not to obscure it. That brings us to the many ways in which we might want to depict reality.

For each solution, you have to ask "why?" What is the past that is produced for you and what is the figure that is produced for you? There may be certain solutions that are for reasons other than artistic or formal. They do something for us, they produce a meaning, and they are not always supposed to produce only "one" kind of meaning.

Let us tie up all that we have discussed. Think about the costumes, think about the faces, think about the age and the look of the mother and the son which got obscured enough so that they might have been two lovers. Think of the later clip where we wondered whether the two people were father-son or brother-brother. We didn't ask the same kind of questions for Kathakali or Terekutu. We made a slight detour and wondered, is that amateur acting? Does it stop you from thinking? Does it produce a shaky Draupadi or a shaky Duryodhan? What is the face really doing?

Covers of the popular magazine Amar Chitra Katha

Romi Khosla

Romi Khosla is an architect, planner and urban study person. He founded Group for Rural and Urban Planning (GURP) in New Delhi in 1974, and has designed a number of large institutional complexes as well as small community-based rural projects. His recent work includes developmental and revitalisation projects for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Central Asia, Tibet, and Egypt, and for the Government of India in the Himalayan belt.

The Use and Abuse of Tradition and Modernity in Architecture

Architects are optimists. They have to view the world slightly differently. If you are a pessimist, then we are going through terrible times. You say, "Something is going to happen anyway, it does not make a difference to me." If you are an optimist then you might say, "Okay, I am facing an uncertain future, so let me invent it for myself, let me influence the future in some way so that it is beneficial to us." I want to portray the architect as a creative person who believes in influencing the future.

We are not going to talk about architecture in terms of how it is commonly understood as buildings etc but we are going to talk about architecture in terms of human settlements: how society has settled and formed towns; how ideas have been invented by people to influence and thereby change these.

Our direct experience is limited to two generations to stories told to us by our parents and by what we experience. Before that, it is experience attained from books. However, what goes into books is not necessarily what happened. It is sometimes interesting to see that there are huge aspects of the past that people do not put down in books, and one remains unaware of them until one goes into the past and looks oneself. It may seem to some of us that the chaos that we face in the present is something that the modern world has brought about, and that the past was a very peaceful time. We tend to forget that this enormously long civilisation has undergone traumatic changes in its history. If you look carefully, you will find that what is going on in our civilisation at the moment is part of the process of continuous change that goes on in the subcontinent.

When we are uncertain about our future, and tend to talk in terms of a more western, global future, the pessimists say that we must restore our cultural values to counter this growing westernisation in our country. Some kind of Golden Age, which was roughly around the time the epics were being written, is portrayed as the time that our values were undisturbed.

According to the pessimists, we should be safeguarding our future by reviving these cultural values. So these issues create anxiety about how to face the future, because on one side you have the past being brought to us selectively, and on the other side we are also condemning the future. But the future is there, we are heading towards it, and it is not the way any of us imagines it is going to be. So we must stand at a distance, see what has been going on, and see whether what we are going through now is, in fact, any different.

Let me dwell a little bit on what "modernism" means, and praise it a little bit. I say "praise" because I would like you to think of the enormous advantages that have come to us and which we take for granted. We are quite familiar with multiple worldviews. You are quite free to think what you like about the issues that you want to think about; you can actually openly disagree with your parents and you can actually criticise the government. If you were to be cast back into the 16th century for a moment and think the way you are thinking now, you might have ended up getting into a lot of trouble! You no longer have the pressures of a society that is pre-modern, which had just one worldview: this is how things are done; this is how society has to be run; this is how the caste system works. All of these things have eased up in urban areas, in areas where settlements have taken place, and this is due to some elements of modernisation.

Now we also have multiple sources of knowledge. If you have the intellectual ability and you have the access to knowledge, then nobody can stop you from reading books and nobody can stop you from discussing things and gaining whatever knowledge you might want to gain, as long as you have the energy to do it. You can believe in a life for yourself that might be different from the life being imposed on you. This is an aspect of modernisation.

The process of modernisation, the radical change away from traditional society, started with the Protestant movement in Europe. This movement was about breaking away from the Roman Catholic Church. The Church inhibited the individual because it emphasised collective worship, family values and social values. When the Protestant movement began in Europe, it split the Church in half. It is very difficult for someone living in the Indian subcontinent to imagine this, because here the institution of religion has not formed a link with the state. In Europe, the Church and the King ruled together. In a place like India there were hundreds of sects, which grew out of the main religious bodies, be it Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism. The clean division between one school and another school did not come about in India.

In Europe, it was a very traumatic change because the rise of Protestantism led to the rise of capitalism, the rise of private enterprise, which eventually led to industrialisation, and then the colonisation of other parts of the world. The entire industrialisation and colonisation

movements can be traced back to a split in the idea about who has the right to decide your future. Subsequently, because of industrialisation, there were many positive aspects such as accumulation of wealth; it also had terrible negative consequences such as slums and exploitation. In response to these negative consequences of industrialisation came the Socialist movement. The Socialists refused to accept the damage that industrialisation had done and decided that they would invent the future for themselves. Subsequently, this gave rise to the Communist movement, which talked about how the poor must be looked after.

Of all the changes that had been going on over the centuries, this particular change began a process, which transformed human society into a completely new society. The big question that is before us today is, "What do we do with modernism?" I will try and show you that modernism itself has affected the way we live in our settlement patterns.

There are three qualities that you could think of as forming the core of modernism. Traditional societies believed in symbolism. Every act in the day had symbolic meaning; certain things had to be done and certain rituals performed. If you take the Buddhist or the Hindu culture, you will find that each colour has a value given to it, certain things cannot be painted green, certain things cannot be painted red, and so on. Modernisation put an end to that. It introduced abstraction, which means you looked at objects without cultural values attached to them. You looked at form or colour for the sake of its quality, not because it was connected to something.

This abstraction came with industrialisation, which also brought in more widespread accumulation of wealth. In traditional societies, all wealth was concentrated in the hands of the king or the landlords or the church. All big works of art were commissioned by such people. Industrialisation spread wealth among a larger number of people. Each entrepreneur became an accumulator of wealth, which had its own consequences.

The third key aspect of industrialisation was mechanisation. Mechanisation was the beginning of the end of human labour and the ability of human beings to do more with machines than they could with their own muscles.

With every aspect of change, you have to look at the good and the bad. If it is very good, then be very suspicious; if it is very bad, then be very suspicious again. There has to be both good and bad. It is when things are in balance that you will actually get a situation that you can control and you can imagine.

(Image-1: Region of the Old Silk Route)
The subcontinent of India is part of a very ancient culture that for 2000 years was part of the Silk Route that crossed from China to Europe.

Clockwise: Image-1 to 5

Clockwise: Image-6 to 8

Starting from China and going to the Mediterranean was the highway. Marco Polo is supposed to have travelled it. This is the highway down which Genghis Khan came; this is the highway that brought Timur to India. This was a very prosperous trade route; people made fortunes trading along it.

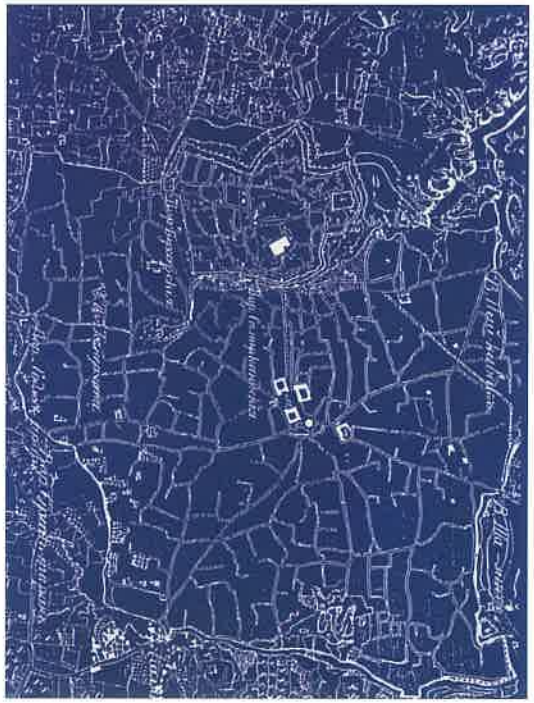
I have been fortunate enough to travel on parts of it. I am going to try to show you what kind of human settlement patterns existed in this part of the world before the colonisation period began. What essentially put an end to this trade route was that the Europeans brought ships to India and China. That is not all, they brought cannons and they sank the Arab and Chinese ships to capture the trade. So, major changes took place in this part of the world because of the trade. This trade was very lucrative, and with the change in the colonisation process, our settlement patterns changed.

(Tibetan settlement, Image-2 Samye today ,Image-3 Samye in 1950)
This is a typical settlement on the Silk Route. You have to imagine horses and camels and caravans. This is the centre of Tibet, a place called Samye, which is the most sacred temple of Tibet and which was built by Indians in the 8th century. The Indians went from Bengal and other places. The two senior-most gurus of this place, who spread the learning of Buddha for the first time in Tibet, were Indians. At the end of a day's march, sometimes they came here and exchanged goods with the monks to give them some things they may have wanted. When you crossed through from China to Europe you went through magical places like these.

(Image-4 Lhasa in 1990, Image-5 Potala Palace)
It has changed considerably now. This, too, was a stop on the Silk Route. This was where the Dalai Lama stayed. The architecture reflects the worldview. Right on top is the castle of the Dalai Lama, which is responsible for the way you think and what you can do. It is also the place where the accumulation of wealth takes place. If you wanted to be paid to do anything, you had to go up to the castle. Below the castle was the town, the settlement of Lhasa on the riverbank.

We have created an abstraction of the palace so that we can think about it and plan it again. I am not going to try and outline the various changes that have taken place in Tibet. But what I will say is that the Chinese are attempting to obliterate the Tibetan character. It is all part of the colonisation process, no better or worse than what the British did here.

(Image-6: Tashilumpo)
The next city along the Silk Route, also in Tibet, is the home of the Panchen Lama. Here again, you can see that the settlement reflects the worldview. The importance of the religious doctrine can be seen by the importance of the position of the Lamas.



Top to Bottom: Image- 9, 10, 11

(Image -7: Bokhara Market Space, Image-8: Samarqand Market space)
The towns of Samarq and Bokhara, a dense urban centre. These were towns where the Silk Route traders had a huge market.

You will see that like in the Tibetan settlements, the centre is occupied by the king. In this case, it was Taimur. Taimur Lang invaded India and took many craftsmen back to Samarqand to make the monuments.

(Image- 9 Samarkand Mohalla)
You can also see a whole series of courtyard houses. Later on I will be showing you an aerial picture of Delhi you will be surprised by the similarities.

(Image- 10 Somarkand street pattern)
Here was the street pattern: in the centre of the slide there are three white hollow squares the core of Samarqand. That's where there was an open square, a big market square where every body laid out their goods.

(Image- 11 Registan square Smarkand, Image-12 Bhokhara street market space)
Here, in this magnificent setting, the traders laid out their goods, and exchanged and bartered. It is not unlike monuments in India; we haven't got them so glazed and tiled because our tiles have been taken off now. It's not unlike monuments in Persia. There is no part of India that has not come from Central Asia or from Persia. And there is no part of central Asia that has not come from India. Many of these monuments had Indian craftsmen working on them.


image - 12

Almost all the wood used on these monuments went from the Malabar Coast; it crossed the Himalayas on elephants.

(Image- 13 Early Delhi)
This is an early view of Delhi before Delhi became what it is today.

The Jamuna, with the ships on it.

Top to Bottom: Image-13, 13A, 13B

(Image-13a: Delhi from the air in 1950)
When we talk about Indian identity we have to be very careful. India is like a sock, everything comes and settles down in India and has done for centuries. It is very difficult for us to sift that and say what is Indian and what is not.

On the upper end, you can see the beginnings of a completely different settlement pattern. This is the colonial, the modern settlement pattern. Bungalows and avenues.

Traditional settlement patterns lower down in the photograph show community living, family life, no individuality, everybody living in courtyard houses. You can't do things on your own. As the emphasis on the freedom of the individual to do what he wants regardless of its social consequences grew, the settlement pattern opened up. People began to live in bungalows surrounded by land.

When you go about a city today, if you are reading it to read how society works, you must look at the buildings around the streets, they are the barometers of society: what counts; what values exist. Similarly, when you go up in the air you can immediately look for what a society stood for.

(Image-13b: Rome in 200 B C)
By contrast, there was a Roman settlement of 200 BC. We must not forget urbanisation is a very old tradition and Romans had very sophisticated urban settlements long before we had them here. People will quote to you the Indus Valley civilisation, Mesopatamia, and so on, but the Roman civilisation was a democratic civilisation. Working with a Senate, with a very complex network of trade and government, far more sophisticated and democratic than we had known. So when we look around history we should be very careful about the supposed uniqueness of our past. It is possible that there were civilisations that had more advantages than we had known.

(Image-14: Greek courtyard house. Image-15: Samarkand courtyard house)
We talked about the courtyard houses of Delhi and Samarqand. This is a Greek courtyard house. There is an argument in architecture that a traditional Indian house was a courtyard house and today we have got European bungalows. A traditional Indian courtyard house was Greek, Roman, Egyptian nothing Indian about it! Yet it is also Indian.

(Image-16: Greek theatre in Sicily)
This is an empty theatre in Sicily. Today, the open-air theatre is very much part of the Indian urban campus. Certain architects give this to us as a performing space. Quite happily, we have digested this Greek structure without ever worrying whether it is of Greek origin or of Indian origin. The civilisation of India is like a sponge; it absorbs everything. We are

basically creative and inventive people, to us any source of knowledge, any source of inspiration, is good enough provided we think it is useful.

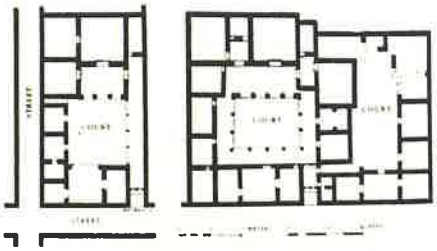
The Uzbeks built the Taj Mahal. The Mughal emperors came from Uzbekistan. They brought into India a completely different sensibility of architecture. We are talking about the 15th and 16th centuries. They brought with them the tradition of building a tomb in a garden. In Islam, there is a certain representation of paradise. Paradise has been described in the Koran: it has four springs, four gardens; the tomb rests here in the Garden of Paradise.

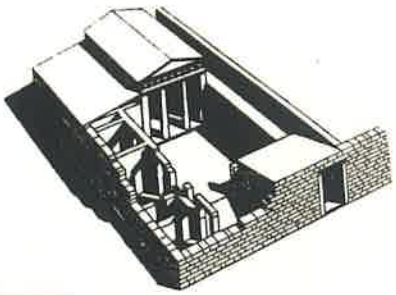
You will notice that it is placed on a platform. Now when you go to Uzbekistan, none of the monuments are placed on platforms. The Mughals adopted this platform from what they saw of the Hindu temple. The Hindu temple was always placed on a platform and it showed off the building very nicely, and when the Mughal Emperors Shah Jahan, Akbar, Jehangir, Aurangzeb built their monuments, they built them on platforms very similar to the way Indian temples are built. Secondly, the Uzbek emperors never had marble or stone. They built with mud. The splendid monuments of Samarqand are actually made in mud and then covered with tile. They came here and found craftsmen who could carve marble, so they worked with them and produced very unique buildings.

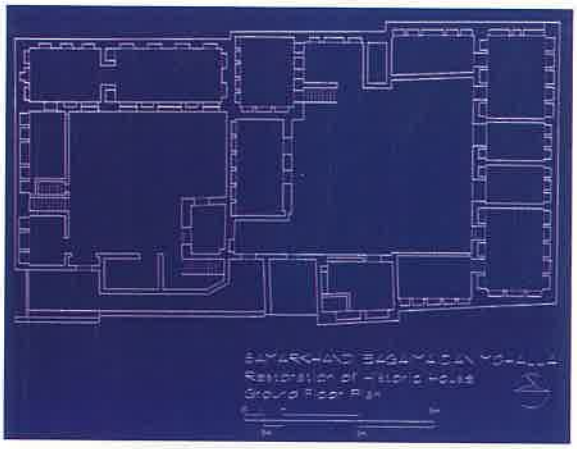
The Taj Mahal, or Akbar's tomb these are all unique buildings which you don't find anywhere else in the world, and it is impossible to decide what culture they belong to. If you get a European shirt printed with indigo, what is the cultural origin of that object? Indigo is a traditional sub-continental dye and a shirt, if it is with a collar it belongs to Europe, but if it is without a collar, it could be from this part of the world. When you see a garden in Marrakesh, I want you to think for a while and see the tent as the Taj Mahal and the sunken gardens as the landscape of the four gardens. The Char Bagh of Paradise.

The experience is like this: as you walk down the carpet, the trees are actually growing in the sunken portion, and when the fresh leaves used to come up in spring it would look as though you were walking in a garden because the tree tops were at the level of the carpet you were walking on. When you came in winter, the leaves were not there. So, you got a completely different feeling, like walking on dry wood. Those of you who have been to the Taj Mahal see grass growing there. Actually, they were once sunken like this and had trees in them. When the British came, they used to rent out the Taj Mahal as a honeymoon palace and with sand from the Jamuna behind, they filled up all the lawns that you sit in today.

Then we come to the modern period. The industrial period is the hypnosis of the subcontinent. We are, we continue to be, totally mesmerised by it.







Top to Bottom: Image-14, 15, 16

Top to Bottom: Image-17, 18, 19

(Image-17: Paris Avenue, Image-18: Paris urban riots)
This is a slum clearance programme in Paris, not at all different from what goes on in Bombay. In 1871 there were riots in Paris. Napoleon III's police could not get its troops into the areas where the riots were being fought. Urban riots are always by the urban poor. So they bulldozed avenues right through the poor areas. The big famous avenues of Paris actually came up where they bulldozed and destroyed the poor areas of Paris.

I want you to think awhile about this and tell me in what way is it different from the actions of today, when riots lead to road widening schemes etc. These are the consequences of a modernisation process going on in every society.

(Image-19, 20: Paris re-development)
Entire areas were demolished and new buildings given to developers to put up. The glory of Paris as we see it today has been built on the most terrible wiping out of the poor, because with industrialisation the rich began to win and take over the city. So when you look at very old pictures of Paris you will know that the rich had not won then, but now they have, and the whole fabric of the city has changed.

Probably the most influential for India was a man called Ebenezer Howard. He said it was possible to have garden cities. The ideas of Chandigarh, New Bombay, all go back to this man. This man influenced all the town planners after the 1930s. New Delhi was influenced by him.

(Image-21: Ebenezer Havard garden city diagram)
There was this contradiction always, the desire to live in a garden city. There has been a major shift in terms of inventing the future; of not living in close, dense communities with your neighbour living just five feet away from you, but in living in garden cities. That idea has been with us and refuses to leave us.

If today you were to say that this idea of designing for the motor car, or designing for private lawns, is a complete waste of resources and is anti-social, you would find it very difficult to defend your views

Image-20

GARDEN CITY AND RURAL BELT

Clockwise: Image-21, 21A. 22, 22A, 22B, 22C

because a whole series of people have invented this future for us. They took the opportunity to decide what kind of settlements we are going to live in.

(Image-21a: Colonel Colin Mackenzie surveyor general)
The British government appointed a Surveyor General to map and to introduce new settlement patterns into India. This is the gang of people who surveyed India and made new settlements possible.

(Image- 22: Lutyens and team searching to locate new Delhi)
Then they sent over Lutyens, with a British team that came over to plan the modern future of India. They went about on elephants and selected a site and started their work. It is quite curious that this man who is sitting on this camel with his hat actually built the Presidential Palace and the government offices in New Delhi, and we have very comfortably absorbed these buildings as a part of our Indian tradition. But in fact, they were put together by a whole lot of Europeans who came here on a boat. They said, "Yes, it should be different from the Mughal palaces. We will give India a modern government; we will give the Viceroy a modern palace."

After Lutyens came to India, we got a man called Le Corbusier. New Delhi was part of the colonial heritage. After 1947, Nehru felt that independent India should have its own symbol of a settlement. Settlements are very important, new cities are very important. So he sent out two Indians to try and search for the most forward- thinking European who could come to India and build a new city, because Punjab had lost its capital Lahore in the Partition. So it was decided to build a new capital called Chandigarh for the new Indian part of Punjab. They went to Europe and identified a man called Le Corbusier. Le Corbusier was a dreamer and he was a par excellence inventor of the future. To him, the future was people living in high density flats in the middle of beautiful countryside.

His ideas were enormously influential. The first city to be built according to his ideas was in Russia. This was where workers were put up in multi-storeyed buildings and the countryside was supposed to come in right up to the foot of the building. We know now, sixty years later, that living in multi-storey buildings can be disastrous. But this did not stop him from inventing the future and it did not stop us from learning a lesson from it. At least he was bold enough to attempt to make it possible. In fact, multi-storeys are good for offices but bad for residences, because of the problems of family and children. But for offices, bachelor hostels, student hostels, there is nothing wrong with them at all.

(Image-22a: Tony Garnier's Industrial city)
In France there was a man called Tony Garnier. Garnier was a great believer in industrialisation. These were drawings he did out of his mind, showing what he thought an

industrial city would look like. These were people who invented the future and made it happen. The fact that they did not get it right is not the point. Maybe you can get it right. A lot of people have got it right.

These industrial towns were visualised as small towns, and they work as small towns with a million, or million and a half inhabitants. As soon as you convert these to towns of 16 million inhabitants, it leads to chaos.

Chicago was the great invention of the Americans as their urban future. This is a typical example of abstraction which gives rise to the blocks, the multi-storeys, which exist in the United States. US urban patterns were totally invented; they had no relation to European ideas at all.

(Image-22b: Carbusier city for 3 million)
If you see Manhattan it is very difficult to convince someone in Manhattan that that plan does not work. It is an intensely alive and prolific place and it is based on the idea of multi-storeyed buildings that arose in the 1930s under Le Corbusier and Leonidor the Russian architect. You have to imagine on each of those squares a tall building, 50 or 60 storeys high. That composition is downtown Chicago.

(Image-22c: Chandigarh)
Le Corbusier came to Chandigarh and created a plan with greenery and with lower level multi-storeys, but essentially it's the same idea that he had.

This is the reality of Chandigarh. This is completely opposed to pre-modern settlements, which are dense narrow streets, with shops mixed with houses, mixed with workshops. This on the other hand is the modern abstract open squares, museum, a centre for government, shopping centres separate from houses. We are continuously in flux. There is nothing static. You have to influence that movement, that direction in which we are going, by having ideas, by being inventive, by being creative. Imagine, if a person wants to portray an alternate future for us and he makes an image of it and then he juxtaposes it with this image, he is saying a lot. He is saying your present pattern of urban life is rotten; this is what is going to happen to you, therefore I am portraying another pattern for you. Let's see what some people are portraying for us.

There is one collection of architects who believed in the moving city. A whole city on wheels. No need to settle down anywhere, you can just come to a consensus and drive off to another part, then lift the wheels up and live there for a little while.

Another group of architects believes we should put up concrete structures and we should live in pods hanging from them so that nature is undisturbed. Each house is a pod. You can

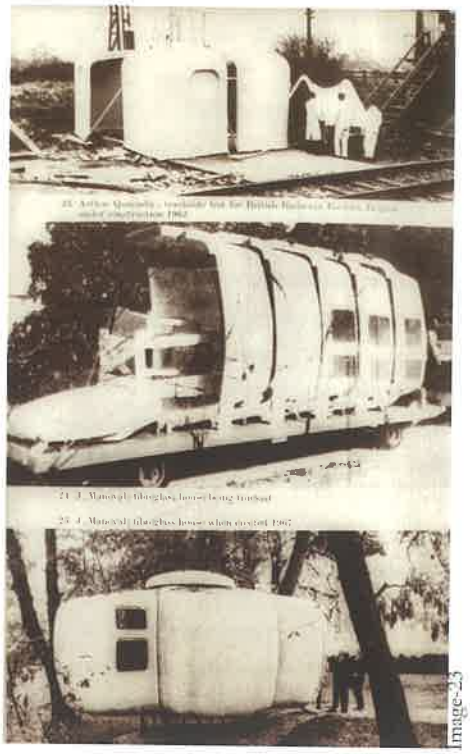


Image-23

see that little fruit hanging from the tree. When you want to come down to earth, you can come down on strings. You can come down and then wander about.

Another group of people has projected that maybe our future settlements should be on the sea. Maybe we should not occupy the land at all. Maybe, just off the coast of Bombay, you can get a huge new city floating on the sea.

(Image-23: High Technology pods)
Another idea portrays that you live in a high technology capsule and you live all over the countryside, you live in communication with each other on faxes, telephones and videos and television. Outside, maybe there are sheep farms, maybe there are people living alternate ways of life.

Here is an architect who believes that multi-storeys are out of fashion. What you need to do is erect frames, just steel frames. Then you go and buy a house to the design you want, and a crane will put the house in place. When your children have left the house and you need to reduce the size of your bedroom and increase the size of your living room, then you sell that house and you buy a new house, which is lifted by a crane and put into place.

It is like going to a car showroom, you now go to a house showroom.

Then there are the religious cities. This is the future of the Vedic cities being invented. Now there are whole series of them. Think of the slides of urban decay and the rotting of urban civilisation. Here is a community of people who are portraying that the new settlements of the future will be religious settlements, and urban life as we know it will no longer exist. Everything will be devoted to worship and we will go back to that Glorious Past, that Golden Age where everything was in harmony and nature surrounded the temples.

This is a slide that I think is very important for us to consider in the light of the material that we have seen. For each of us, an indefinite number of universes exists simultaneously. In each of us, there are contradictory trends of what we think we believe in, what we ought to

believe and what we really feel like believing in, what our instinct tells us. There are layers of influence: of the ideas imposed on you; of a universe that you think you do not know enough about but is very exciting; of your really wanting to go somewhere else and lead a completely different kind of life.

So each one of has these many layers co-existing within, and we have to accept our mental state, that we are living with these contradictions. Then we have to ask what kind of future should we invent out of this. Which layer of this universe should we emphasize? Which belief system is it that we should work on and develop in the realm of ideas and defend? Because we lead complex lives in urban areas, because we have multiple sources of knowledge, we have multiple ambitions; we also have the desire to be in multiple places at the same time. If you don't resolve these things, if you don't try and think of which universe layer is important for you and develop that, you end up being very, very confused. It becomes difficult to work on any one aspect because these layers are continuously playing inside you. Each person that you meet, each idea that you get influenced by, represents a different universe. There is no single answer, only multiple answers.

There is a growing belief among urban planners that the city as it functions today is not the answer to our future, in fact it is an awful mess. So the Vedic city is just one of the answers, it happens to be the idea of one of the groups that have put their ideas down on paper. If you or I disagree with it, then it is very important for us to formulate an alternative.

I can't offer to you any great idea to believe in, except for something, which emerges out of you. This great freedom that modernism has given us is very important. It is the reason why the West has been able to invent so much of its future and made such enormous strides. We as a society have, by and large, tried to fall back on the past to give us some kind of strength to cope with the present.

Discussion:

Student: When we talk about change and modernity, can't we make slight adjustments in the way people live? Or is it necessary to change the way people live drastically?

Khosla: Whenever change comes, it has a negative aspect and a positive aspect. The positive aspects are good - people have cars, they have better houses, they have conveniences. But it's important to focus on the negative aspects as well. For instance, Indian society as it is developing today is very short of accommodation, and this in a way is holding together the family. In a strange way, you tend to live much more with your family not because you love your family, but because it is much more expensive to live apart. One could argue in favour of preserving the family at all costs. If you look at the experience of the west, it shows us

that despite the negative aspects of tension in the family, preserving the family as a unit is actually very critical. Automatically, this will affect the way we plan cities in the future.

I am going to now talk to you about two towns, Samarqand and Bukhara. Samarqand has always been a magical word for North Indians and Bukhara as well! Restaurants are called Bukhara nowadays. Bukhara actually refers to cities in Central Asia where there were large Indian settlements, so there is a big connection with India.

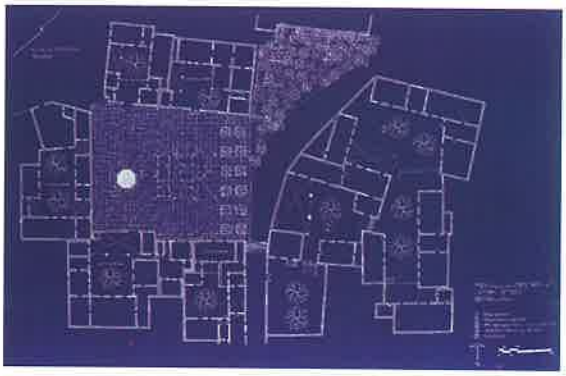
Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Khirgyzstan are all Central Asian republics. They were colonised by the Russians and exploited by the Soviet Union, rather like India was colonised by the British; used for extraction of raw materials etc. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the Central Asian kingdoms attained independence, and part of their mandate was, "We have been under 70 years of Communism, it has destroyed our culture, therefore we will redefine our culture." It was like saying, "We were Uzbeks before the Soviets came in and tried to modernise us and gave us new education. We must find our own heritage and past."

As part of this process, I was asked by the United Nations to go and spend a lot of time there to try and see how the damage, which was created in the urban settlements of these two major cities, could be repaired. For us, it was not really a question of trying to rediscover the past. The question was, what is the challenge of the future? How do we revitalise these areas?

Take one of the mill sites in Bombay. It is what I would today call a "dead urban space." It is all locked up and nothing is happening there. If you were to think of a proposal to make it part of city life, then you have, as we call it in architecture, "revitalised" it. The trick is to decide what to do. Somebody will say you should have a museum here, somebody will say you should have an arts centre here, somebody will say you should put up housing[2] Similarly in Samarqand and Bukhara, there were large areas that were demolished. These were potentially slum areas. In the middle of them were these monuments, which were made to shine and appear as tourist attractions. My job was to propose how to bring life into these city centres.

You have to imagine conditions not dissimilar to those in Bombay chawls - no water, no sewage, overcrowding. A place that is being looked at by builders as potential development areas. It was the same in Bukhara and Samarqand. The question was how to prevent it all from being demolished; how to reinstate or, as I would call, it "restitch" it so that you restore some sort of a balance to society and not make it a way for someone to earn a private fortune at the expense of the community.

2 The lecture was delivered in 1996 before the mill land in Bombay opened up to the service industries and luxurious multi-storied, resident buildings - Editors.



Top to Bottom: Image-24, 25

Samarqand was a city created by Taimur Lang. His grandfather, Genghis Khan, had destroyed the settlement to the north. This was a place known as Afrasiab, which was a great Zoroastrian centre. Many fire-worship temples have been found in the ruins there. Taimur Lang then founded a new city called Samarqand in this place.

Samarqand consisted of a pre-modern pattern where there were mohallas. The mohalla is a unit of a community within an urban fabric, in the same sense that today you have housing societies. In Samarqand, these mohallas had separate gates, and in the nights the area used to be sealed off. In this way a neighbourhood was defined.

(Image-24: Bokhara Mohalla, Image 25: Samarkand Mohalla)
These were the traditional mohallas. Next to the three squares on the upper side is a shaded area. That is the project area that I was developing as a model for the Uzbek government.

The modern city that has come up around the historical city. Delhi also had a modern part and a traditional part next to each other, and this is exactly what happened in Samarqand. The Russians came and built boulevards and completely different settlement patterns. Here you can see very clearly how two different world views, two different universes, have been put together in one city.

The mohalla consists of three monuments and madrasas, and behind this was courtyard housing. The area, where trees are now growing, was demolished by bulldozers. The Russians preserved the central monuments and made them tourist attractions, stopped the marketplace which was in the middle and cleared the whole urban settlement in front so that the tourists could have a look at the monuments from a distance. Obviously, the terrible social cost of doing that cannot be repaired easily, but part of my job was in fact to see

where there were non-critical areas that were not going to interfere with the tourism map, and how we could restitch them together.

(Image-26 Mapping the Mohallas, Samarkand)
The first thing we did was to use the best of modern techniques to make a map of it. The different colours show the different conditions of the housing. Some of the colours denote bad buildings that need more help and some of the colours denote good structures. I had a team of six or eight Uzbek architects and social workers who had questionnaires. We went into each house to talk to people and find out what it was they wanted, what were their aspirations, what would they like to see done here. Out of fifty three-mohallas, we were working in one. The mohalla at one time used to have a very beautiful centre, there used to be a small mosque and a big water pool and tea houses where people gathered. These had all been destroyed.

Adjacent to the mohalla we were working on what used to be a market square, and part of the proposal said that we would restore an open market in the centre of this. Any monument, unless it is a tomb, if it is simply left to be looked at, it is not the source of any joy to anybody. It is the activity around the monument that one loves. One goes there to buy things and enjoy this wonderful setting. To go there and to wander about in an empty square is a very boring experience. If you can put some market activity into it, then the whole experience will change.


Image-26

This is the historic photo before the demolitions took place and the corner here has an octagonal domea series of three domes. That is a landmark. In proposing what to do with this area, we had to look at what existed in its history.

We decided to re-pave all the streets. There was no paving, there was only mud on the streets at first. So the first thing we did was to re-pave the streets and make a surface available for the people to walk on, even in the rains.

The houses are broken, and there is poverty in the streets. So, part of the solution was to create images for the people in the mohalla to show them how it would all look if we did some work.

This is a typical street. You can see the blue dome of the monument at the back. There is dirty water running down the centre, and gas pipes, electric wires, everything in a mess above the ground. Generally, fairly slummy conditions.

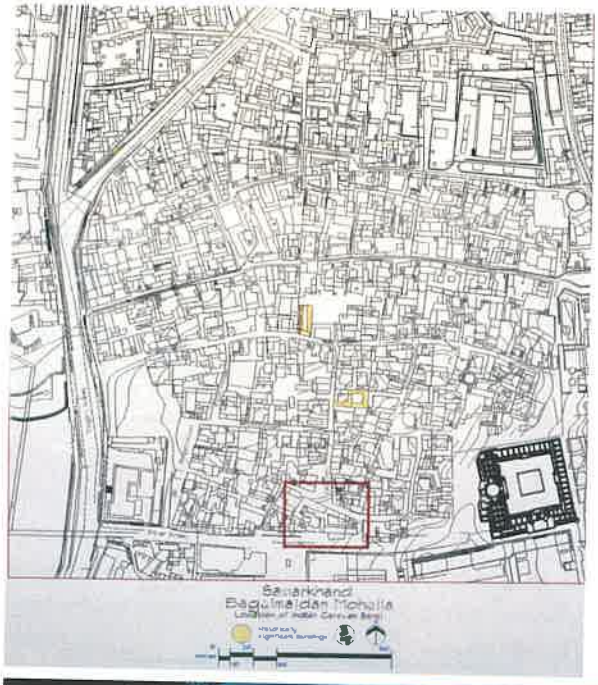
So we created images to show the people in the mohalla, and the Uzbek Government, that we should repave the streets, put the gas and sewage underground, put taps in every house, and so on. This particular project required the support of the community. Our entire team was continuously in discussion with local people, finding out what were their problems, what were the technical issues that needed to be taken care of, what were the social issues involved.

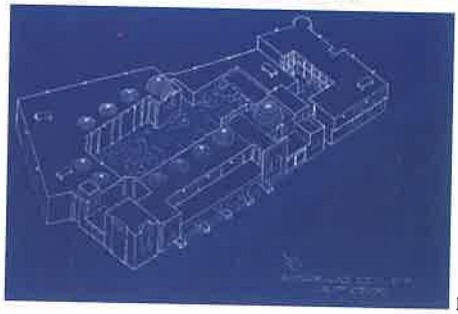
(Image-26a: Site of Sai, Image-26b: The Sarai site)
This is the site of the Indian caravanserai. For the last 1500 years, all Indians going to Samarqand used to live in some building on this site. This is its present condition. Whenever an Indian came on his horse or elephant or camel from India, bringing with him cloves, garlic, cardamom, indigo, rice etc, he would first go to the Yatri Niwas, the Indian caravanserai. This is where the cooks served Indian food; this is where Indians came and sat down and asked what is happening in the town: "How is the Hakim?" "Is the ruler cruel?" "Do I have to bribe anybody?"

(Image-26c: Proposed Caravan sarai)
One of the proposals I had was that the Indian government should restore this site, not as a hotel but as a crafts workshop, a place where Indian craftsmen could interact with Uzbek craftsmen.

(Image-27a: The Mohalla centre today)
This is a mohalla centre as it exists today. There were four trees, there was a pond full of rubbish, and there were no teashops. There was just a lot of building material lying there. We redesigned it, we created a pond in the middle, we created some teahouses, planted more trees, paved the area. You can imagine that three or more streets lead to this area where you can come, sit down, have tea and then go back.

The centre of Bukhara was entirely demolished to show off some monuments. Here too, there was an Indian caravanserai. The market activity, which should have been happening in the centre of town, was in a field outside. They took the furthermost point of the town and let the people sell goods there as a private activity because, under the Communist regime,





Top to Bottom: Image-26A, 26B, 26C

private enterprise was frowned upon.

(Image-27B: Market activity banished to the perimeter of Bokhara)
My argument was that this is going to be the source of your greatest strength. This is how civilisations have existed for centuries, on the basis of buying and selling. So we must move the market activity into the centre of Bukhara and let a new city be born there instead of letting it be like a museum. We were able to convince the Uzbek government and the United Nations. The only thing the Uzbek authorities did not want was for it to be an open market.

They said that they needed to construct some buildings here so that it has the dignity of a town centre. We did some research and came up with some documents to show what was here before.

(Image-27: Revival of Mohallas in Samarkand)
Like in Samarqand, in Bukhara too we were looking at how we could revive the mohalla centres. For us, during the restitching of residential areas, the critical issue was community space. If you destroy community spaces, you destroy communities. So our first step was to restore community spaces so that the community comes together. The next step was to restore water, sewage and electricity for the houses.

Top to Bottom: Image-27B, 27A

(Image-28: Craftsmen making bricks)
We found from records of the past that there were people who were still making mud bricks. Mud bricks as a form of construction goes back the Indus Valley civilisation. With Uzbekistan becoming independent, unemployment was rampant. In order for us to create a future, the first priority was to create employment. I named the programme "Employment in Heritage Protection". We were going to train people to make mud blocks, to reconstruct the houses.

We made a map of how to rebuild houses. In one particular space, we were building sixty or seventy houses and giving them to people we had identified as having lived there before. We were trying to restore life back into that area. We wanted people to know that this was not a blighted area, but one where things were beginning to happen.

In one particular mohalla, we found that there were four brass craftsmen who had stopped working ten years ago because nobody bought their stuff. We decided to replace some ugly electrical lights with something made by the brass craftsmen.

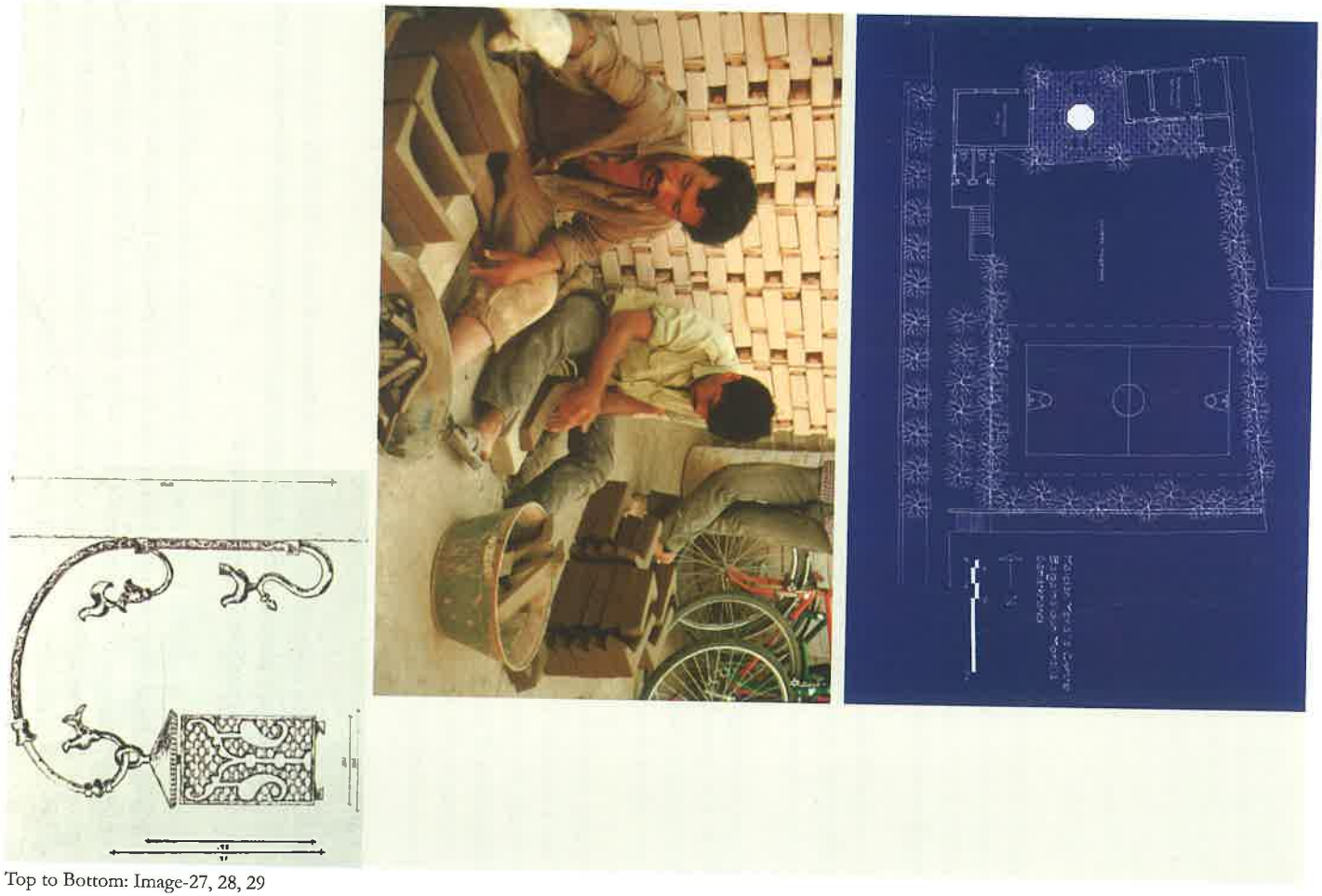
(Image-29: New lights for the street made by craftsmen)
This was postulated as the alternative lamppost for this area that was undergoing revitalisation. Not only is it nicer, but it is also important to remember that we needed about 800 - 900 of these, and all four brass craftsmen would get work for two years doing this.

So you always have to see that the actions you initiate when you invent the future should have maximum benefit for the community. Solutions should never be imposed from the outside. You always go in with an idea, which you communicate to them and discuss with them. Only if you have their support are you going to be able to realise that idea. So as an architect you are inventing a new future for this area and at the same time you are saying, "It is not something beyond your dreams...if you work at it now you can actually realise it."

Discussion

Student: You have talked about changing the architectural look of Bukhara and explained how you made your plans and revitalised old centres. I wonder how come this was not tried in India. Is it not possible, or is it not needed?

Khosla: I think it is possible. In my case I have worked in some three or four Indian places. I worked in Srinagar where we talked about how we could restictch certain parts of Srinagar. But I was opposed to the government's approach to that problem. While the work was still in progress they started broadening the roads and demolishing the work because they could not get Army troops in and there were terrorist problems. I believed that we had to work at the community level, but the government felt that the community had already become



Top to Bottom: Image-27, 28, 29

terrorists and was anti-India. So we could not make too much headway on that project. Finally it turned out that they were wrong and they called me recently to start this work again. Every project, social or architectural, has to be community-based.

You get redevelopment in most cities, even Bombay. There could be an owner of a chawl in Bombay and he wants to get it emptied. So what he does is, he makes it structurally unsafe and then gets a court order to demolish it. Actually he is trying to get rid of the community and benefit from the land. You might think that the building is structurally bad and has to go, but why can't I think of some alternative to having those people evicted?

Student: When you redesign buildings, don't you think the architecture needs to be in keeping with the times? Like, domes seem very...

Khosla: An interesting question. First I would like you to clarify something. What is the architecture of today's times, in your mind? How does it look?

Student: The materials...

Khosla: The materials are just bricks, which are ages-old.

Student: The forms have changed. I would not use domes and arches.

Khosla: Would you use glass buildings?

Student: Definitely not. Not in the area we are dealing with.

Khosla: Would it be multi-storeyed?

Student: Yes. Probably. At least five or six floors.

Khosla: We are talking about styles now. It is quite difficult. Architects are always trying to make contemporary buildings, they are terrified of doing something historical because it is not a progressive thing to do. Generally, the ideas of contemporary buildings are more or less taken from architectural magazines that come into this country. It is quite difficult for an architect to propose a contemporary building that does not have elements of European or American buildings in it.

Student: I would not really agree. I think the buildings you showed us reflect the surroundings they are built in but definitely not the time they are built in. They reflect the architecture of the monuments around them; the monuments seem to be reflected on a smaller scale in the proposed designs. In modern buildings that are different from traditional ones and not American either, we see a lot of good architecture even in India.

Khosla: You see there are two separate problems here. Suppose you are constructing in an old historical area, and there is a vacant area where something has been demolished and you want to build something there. The remaining buildings were built 5000 years ago. It is a choice that the architect has, either he makes the new building sympathetic to the surrounding forms or he puts in a completely different building. And that depends a bit on how big the ego of the architect is and how much he wants to make a demonstration of it!

There is no absolute answer.

Student: I would feel that if a contemporary style building does come up, then you would give the other buildings a chance at change too. So you have a growing neighbourhood rather than a stagnant one.

Khosla: Depends on whether you are trying to preserve those things or not. The thing is, what is good architecture and what is bad architecture is purely a matter of opinion. There is no way that there are any absolutes. It is like judging painting, judging films if you like the film and think it is great, a man who has a different universe in his mind will say, "You don't know anything, you are ignorant. You just like pop culture. Real cinema is something else."

These are all matters of opinion. The only thing is that whatever you do, whatever intervention you make, you should be able to defend your opinion. And that needs certain reflection.

Neera Adarkar: Since you brought up the mill areas, I thought I will just mention some differences that might answer a few questions.

When you think of Bukhara and Samarqand, the places were already dead and the fabric was already torn. Your intervention with the local people was to find out how to restrict this process. The mill areas make up about 50 per cent of the island city; these areas are not dead. They are made to appear as though they are not profitable because the profit from the land is much more. The interventions being proposed now by the state with the help of the planners and the architects imply that the larger interests of the city are much more important than the interests of the local residents there. Because the city seems to require open areas, waterfronts and public places, and the mills have been declared sick, we are made to think, "Why not use these mill areas?" The thing is, the local people have not been taken into confidence, and the culture that has evolved there over the last 150 years has not been considered. So when the interventions are proposed, they come from "outside".

Student: You have areas like Parel, the mill areas, where these huge corporate buildings have come up like towers. I am fascinated with these monolithic towers and these tiny human

settlements squatting around them, and I am curious about what will happen a few years down the line. The whole of Parel seems to be going through a sociological transformation, you have these buildings where the ad agencies are shifting in, and there are the settlements. Will the area lose its character? Will this become the architectural motif there?

Khosla: Bomaby is a rather unique place because the destiny of the city is decided by the builders. The redevelopment process that is going on here is basically polarizing the population. In Parel, it is a question of time before the jhopadpattis are cleared; they will disappear and you won't even notice. The polarization process is very difficult to resist because of the links and money power of those involved. You can create a riot and downgrade an area or upgrade an area.

Given the lack of governance that Bombay is facing now, it is difficult to predict what kind of future these kinds of situations can have. The levels of money and interchange are beyond anybody's intervention. They are already outside the government; they have tied up with the underworld. It is very difficult for a community-based project to take on that scale of work, they will just be obliterated. Maybe Bombay is heading towards an urban future that has got very little left for it.

As an architect, as a social worker, as a person who is working in a poor community that already has its back against the wall, you have to have alternatives. It is very important for those people who are concerned with thinking about the future to clearly formulate it. When you say that slums should not be cleared, multi-storeys should not be brought up, somebody might very logically ask you, "What should we do instead?" They have a solution, they will clear the slums and build the multi-storey. What is your solution? If your solution is, "Don't do this, don't do that," they will still ask you, "What is your solution? What do you want Bombay to look like 20 years from now, you want it to be full of jhopadpattis or what?"

If you sit around a table with a community, you do not get ideas. You need to have strong ideas out of your own convictions and then you test them at the community level.

Student: About your work in Samarqand and Bokhara does a historical area need to be treated just like that? The people who are displaced, do they expect the same thing when they come back?

Khosla: They would expect to have much better facilities. They will expect to have toilets, streets in places that have never had streets before, gas and water.

Student: Many people think of slum dwellers as architects in themselves. You have designed the systems in a way to give them their history back. Could you have looked at it from their point of view and see why they made it the way they did in the present system?

Khosla: I have found that people who don't improve themselves can't do so because they are poor, and can't accumulate surplus resources. If the person is too poor and you give him new clothes, he will wear the new clothes. When you are given a slum community that has adjusted itself to the reality they are living in, it does not mean that is the essential characteristic of that reality, it means that nobody has bothered about them. Under no conditions would you say that the way the sewage is running down the road and the way there is no electricity or water is in itself a desirable goal. You are not changing their future, you are concerned with their quality of life in terms of settlement, in terms of what the family has to suffer.

You have to continuously talk in terms of improvement. If you take the Indian middle class in the last five years, there has been a five fold improvement only due to their ability to access global goods, global programmes and so on.

Student: But is it possible that their whole lifestyle may have changed to the extent that the traditional lifestyle may no longer be valid? Also, we all have different ideas of improvement, so how can we decide what is good for someone else?

Khosla: It still depends on the level of intervention. There are certain things that do not require community discussion you need toilets, you need water. When we think of employment programmes and schools, that is something you have to discuss with them. You may be proposing a future to them that they might not even be interested in.

In the case of paving, what kind of mohalla centres or community centres they would like, all this was decided after community discussions. Most people wanted a tea house where they could sit; they wanted a hall for marriages. From the community you get reactions to community facilities, from families you get reactions to your interventions in their houses.

I will make a distinction here between when I do ask for community advice and when I do not. I will take the example of the Cowasji Jehangir Hall in Bombay I did not ask anybody in the community about it, and that means the whole of Bombay! Here we had a building lying closed for 20 years, nothing happening in it and the government proposing a Gallery of Modern Art for Bombay in it. Then you don't have to go to the community about it. You are not robbing the community of anything. So I think the critical question that one must always ask when one is intervening is, "Does the proposal rob the community of something?" If it takes away something from the community that is using it and gives it to another community that has nothing to do with the community that used to use it, then I think you have some need for raising questions.

Student: In the tradition-modernity debate, where does Vastu Shastra belong? Is it a

reflection of what modernism opens up? Is it some kind of reaction, which you can equate with a climate of revivalism?

Khosla: I will just take you back a bit to European history, and contrast the European experience with the Asiatic experience. The process of industrialisation, and the process of modernisation which followed, resulted in a desire by the modernists to separate themselves from the past. It is a very important belief in the modernists that the past holds no answers to the problems that we are going to face in the future, therefore we must disconnect ourselves from the past.

Then Europe had two world wars and they lost 50 million lives. It is as though 50 per cent of the population has been devastated by wars. All young men, all craft knowledge, all alternative knowledge has been totally destroyed. They also bombed their major cities. When they did this, the century lost all contact with the past. So, the modern movement found fertile ground for trying out its new ideas. What happens in Asiatic societies is that the past continues to live because we have very strong oral traditions. A lot of knowledge, which is not written is handed down. So if we were to have a similar war and all our practitioners who have brought down some kind of knowledge and skills from their fathers and forefathers were all to disappear overnight, then all this knowledge would disappear too. You would get a situation similar to the one existing in Europe today.

So the argument about whether this or that form of knowledge is right is a European argument. In Asiatic societies there are multiple solutions, there are multiple universes and every solution is possible. There is a continuous emphasis on the idea that there isn't just one reality. If you propose monolithic solutions, then you get intolerance.

The modernisation process is like transplanting. Either the transplanting works or it starts a process of rejection. Why is it that the education system we have had since the time of Macaulay is undergoing such trauma now? We are now beginning to question what the basis of learning is, and whether it ought to be done in the way we are doing it. Our museums are empty; all the institutional arrangements, which we inherited from colonial times, are empty. Who is to say museums are useless, but nobody goes into a museum. So how do we decide whether a museum is right or wrong? These are all difficult questions about what is happening to modernisation in India.

I think it is very important for us to not think every aspect of modernisation is good. There is no question of modern or traditional solution. When I am doing work as an architect, I do not think in terms of "traditional" building or "modern" building. I think it does not matter. I do what I think can be done today; whatever has some meaning to the building and to the surrounding area and the community.

Neera Adarkar

Neera adarkar is an architect, teacher, urban researcher and social activist. Her major areas of works are urban space politics, Pakistan-India peace movement, issues around closed textiles mills of Bombay and women's movement. She has co-authored One Hundred Years One Hundred Voices: The Millworkers of Girangaon, an Oral history. She is a founder member of Majlis.

Note on Practical Exercises: Formal Elements of Construction in Architecture.

"We put thirty spokes together and call it a wheel;
But it is on the space where there is nothing
that the utility of the wheel depends.

We turn clay to make a vessel;
But it is on the space where there is nothing
that the utility of the vessel depends.

We pierce doors and windows to make a house;
and it is on these spaces where there is nothing
that the utility of the house depends.

Therefore, just as we take advantage of what is,
we should recognize the utility of what is not."

Lao-tzu
Tao Te Ching
6th century B.C.

Space is the protagonist of architecture, a discipline that primarily concerns with the occupation of spaces. The essence of architecture is the void, the space that is enclosed within a structure. Painting or Cinema function in two dimensions although they create an illusion of the third dimension where as architecture only works in three dimensional vocabulary. It can be said that these art forms offer mental penetration of spatiality where as architectural space is experienced by our bodies and minds. It is grasped and felt though a direct experience therefore cannot be completely represented in any form, in paintings, photographs or even films. This direct experiences is perceived not from a static position (like in sculpture) but by moving though it. This movement gives an additional dimension of Time to architecture. Therefore an architectural product is to be enjoyed not from outside like the most of the other visual arts but by looking at, listening to, feeling and moving through inside and outside.

The workshop for the undergraduate students was therefore designed as series of exercises with their own bodies within an enclosed room. They created simple as well as complex spaces by the various compositions of their bodies. The first set of exercises was to help the students experience this art of the hollow, the void.

However architecture is not only a formal and spatial organisation, it cannot be only built spaces and forms. It deals with people, their pattern of behaviour, their activities and their sensitivity. A building gathers within itself a specific world of functional and emotional kind and traces of past and present events.

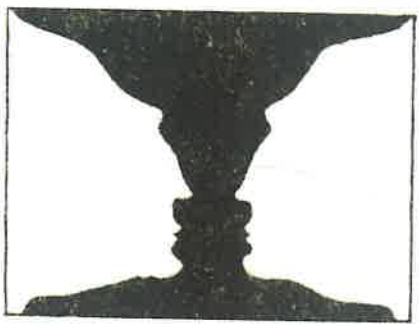
The second set of exercises was to understand that the space is not 'neutral'. The perception of space is not a mechanical or physiological process: it is filtered through memories and intelligence. This point was elaborated by the exercises to show how different people react differently to different places. A short theatre exercise to show how the perception of space is connected to gender and class associations was planned as a culmination of the workshop.

READING SPACES

Exercise 1

Figure and ground exercise. To 'read' two-dimensional space as a first step. See the adjoining figures to interchange the figure and the background space. This will help to 'read' the background space as an object and the 'object' as the background.

The formation of our bodies against a coloured background held at a distance will help us 'read' the space shaped by our limbs and bodies as prominent contours.



Two Faces or a Vase?
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Exercise 2

Experiencing a 'room'. Notice that to experience the entire room, you need to walk around, unlike watching a film or a seeing a painting. You can also experience touching the walls, smelling the space, listening to the echo etc.

Exercise 3

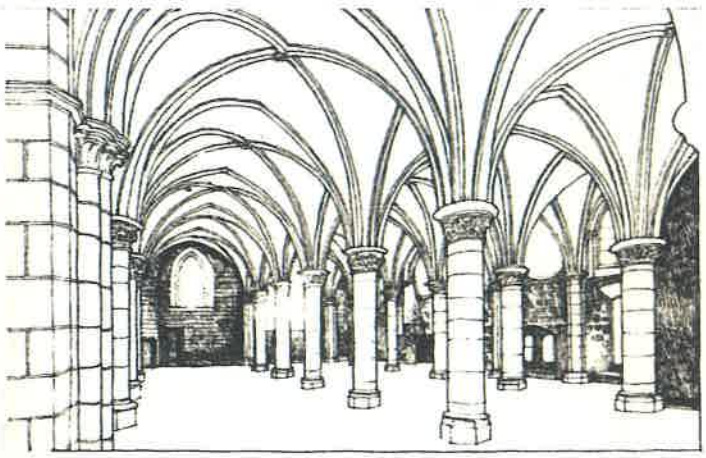
Make a cubical space with four sides by means of screens and observe that this space is born from the relationship between these boundaries. These four planes, which do not on their own have the character of object actually define the limits. Corners are most important to give feeling of the enclosed cubical space. Separation of planes leads to connection of spaces. The space flows from inside to outside. You can move through the space, which is thus connected.Use only two sides of a cube to form a corner and complete the remaining two sides by human bodies or poles placed at close intervals. Imagine them as columns in a building and move around to experience the space. The columned can be called as a perforated wall.

Exercise 4

Make a formation of human bodies in grid pattern within the enclosed room and extend the arms to create arched formations. See how the space, which was earlier one large room, is divided and subdivided to enhance the depth of the space.

Exercise 5

An opening made in the enclosing elements like walls or ceilings result in



Vertical Linear Elements
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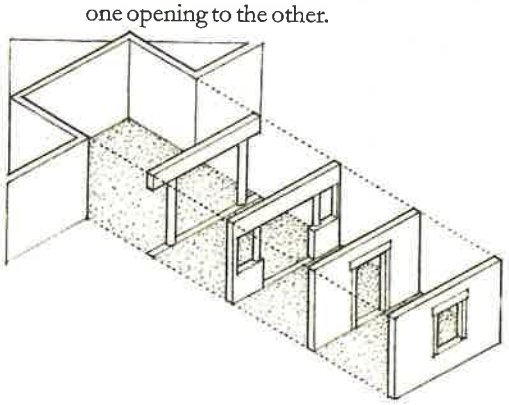
A. Visual contact with the 'other' space.

B. Continuity of space from interior to exterior or from one interior to another. The spatiality reaches its peak when it is pierced, when it can be crossed, thus links to the environment beyond the object.

C A change in the lighting quality. The building is immobile but the light changes. The light brings life to the building.

D Enhancements of the perception of depth as you see from one opening to the other.



Opening in space defining elements
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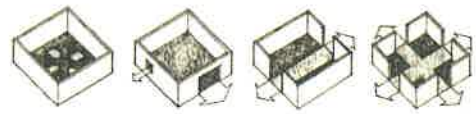
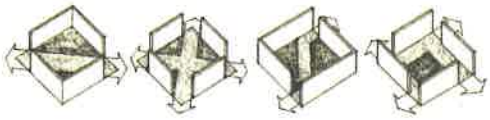
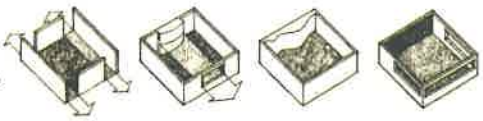






BEYOND VISUAL

Exercise 1 The space is not neutral.

The students were given an assignment to recreate a scene in the Women's compartment in the Local Train of Mumbai. This was followed by a discussion to show how the perception of the space can be different for different people from varied backgrounds and how the spatial needs also differ accordingly. The workshop culminated with a designing exercise in which the students suggested various ways to change the Women's Compartment into a gender friendly environment.

Schedule

4th November
Introduction by **Madhusree Dutta**
Orientation lecture on Modes of Perception and Ways of Seeing, **Arun Khopkar**
Demonstrations / Exercises on the Formal Elements of Construction in Architecture and Painting,
Neera Adarkar and Chaitanya Sambrani

5th November
Points of View in Narratives and Traditions of Performances, **Anuradha Kapur**
Demonstrations/Exercises on the Formal Elements of Construction in Painting and Cinema,
Nilima Shaikh, Nandini Bedi and Ashmaki Acharya

6th November
Looking at Painting and Sculpture, **Gieve Patel**
Non-linear Narrative in Cinema: Screening of *Bhavantaram*, **Kumar Shahani**

7th November
Classic Narrative Structure in Cinema; A Day of Screenings, **Suresh Chhabria**

8th November
The Impact of Market Forces on the Media, with Special Reference to Television,
Kalyan Raman and Saeed Akhtar Mirza
The New Aesthetics of Urban Architecture with Reference to Bombay, **Sen Kapadia**
An Introduction to the Debate on Tradition and Modernity as Reflected in the Arts,
Mitra Mukherjee Parikh
Image-Making: Calendar Art and Popular Iconography, **Sarada Natarajan**

9th November
The Use and Abuse of Tradition and Modernity in Architecture, **Romi Khosla**
Reflections of Tradition and Modernity in Advertising, Mainstream Cinema and Mythological Serials, **Smriti Nevatia**

Open session

Workshop on Modes of Perception in the Performing Arts: Theatre, Music and Dance

In Collaboration with SNDT Women's University

October 19-24, 1997
SNDT University Juhu Campus

Introduction by Madhusree Dutta.

This is the second in a series of workshops on art practices. These workshops are aimed to be appraisal courses, rather than crash courses on various forms. We know that makes the whole thing slightly less appealing. We have been getting queries like, "But can I learn something as well?" Learning, most probably, means how to act, how to use a camera, hold a brush, sing a song. We assume we don't need to learn anything to be an audience, to receive an expression, to even consume an art product. Isn't it rather strange? We need to know language in order to talk, we need to develop a kind of taste in order to eat food, we need to know traffic rules in order to walk in the city but absolutely need to do nothing in order to receive and assess a work of art. We are made to believe that we need not make any effort to accomplish our ability to perceive.

This presumption, in effect, reduces a work of art to a monolithic, linear and neutral experience. As an audience, we need not be aware of anything extra, since there is nothing critical or cerebral involved in perceiving a work of art which means the work has only one reading which is rigid and obvious to all. This, in return, has two effects. One, the work is not created or constructed by anybody consciously and we need not view it as somebody's statement. The work is just there, happens to be there. Secondly, we, the audience, read and perceive everything the same way. There is no possibility, no need to re-read, re-view, or re-assess any work of art. But think of a very simple example: when you watch a film or read a book after a gap of many years, you get different things from it. Has the book or the film changed? No. What has changed is you. Your perception has changed and thus, the narrative or the visual has changed for you. If that could happen over the years, then it can happen between two people in the same frame too.

This workshop is titled "Modes of Perceptions in the Performing Arts". Performing arts, where we watch people performing, do an act, say dialogue, use their bodies, voices, rhythm, choreography, sets, lights, music. How could this be perceived in multiple ways? Does a body mean different things to different people depending on their social-political-intellectual positions? How far can a body be manipulated to control our perception of it? Has anybody actually taught us to perceive a particular body only as representative of a particular code? How have we internalised it? Why are only some acts of viewing seen as entertainment? What is the relationship between pleasure and viewing? How much of the viewing is actually part of the doing?

If we could at least begin to recognise and articulate some of these questions, I would consider this exercise as a success. Let's start digging the sand, we may just find some gold.

Habib Tanvir

Habib Tanvir is known as the doyen of modern Indian theatre. He is a director, actor, musician, playwright, poet, theoretician, and teacher. With rural and folk artists of Chattisgarh enrolled as members in his repertory company Naya Theatre, he has produced plays based on texts from all genres: Sanskrit literature, Greek literature, Shakespeare, Brecht, oral literature, contemporary stories and plays. He is one of the pioneers of the political art movement in India.

Indian Theatre in the Post-Independence Era

Art and culture, men of letters, poets, writers, painters, and scientists are carriers of change. They do not bring about change in any direct manner, but through influencing public opinion. They work on the subconscious and sometimes on the conscious. They question values and norms that have been in existence for hundreds of years.

In the case of the Russian revolution, the change was not brought about only by Karl Marx, Lenin and the Bolshevik Party. The road was paved by Gorky, Chekhov, Mayakovsky, Tolstoy, Dovzhenko, Stanislavsky and the like. I had the opportunity to visit the Soviet Union almost through every change of regime, from Khrushchev to Gorbachev to Yeltsin. In Stalin's time, a play called *Prostitute* was banned. The play looked at how the Communist Party was treating the issue of prostitution. It was a very complex script and boldly critical about sexual morality and the notion of reform. I saw the play when it was revived after twenty years during Khrushchev's time. The production was the same as it was twenty years ago, and it struck me as a very modern production.

On another occasion, I saw a play in a godown in Tashkent. Young professional actors of the state repertory were frustrated with official plays and started experimenting with new plays in a rented godown in their spare time. The godown was lit with improvised lights, but was very creatively designed. The seating arrangements were such that the audience and actors were on the same level. The actors told me that the government wanted to stop the play, but did not know how to go about it since the play wasn't directly political. On the first day of the show, the government sent a plain clothes policeman to spread the rumour that the play had been cancelled. The show had to be cancelled, but the play was revived and it became a hit production.

Then there were underground painters, Boris Pasternak. Art and culture always find ways to survive and flourish and then challenge the very system that has been trying to stifle them.

Perestroika didn't happen overnight. A change was in the air in the Soviet Union, and that air was relentlessly nurtured by artists and writers. What has happened to Soviet Union today is another matter. My point is the role of artists in bringing social change.

Our national movement for freedom had harnessed the services of almost all the major writers in the major languages of the country. Since 1936, several members of the Progressive Writers' Association and Indian People's Theatre Association were involved with the freedom movement. Under the dancer Uday Shankar, IPTA artists picked up Jawaharlal Nehru's *Discovery of India* and produced a ballet based on the book. The production traveled all over the country and earned lakhs of rupees that were spent on the victims of the 1943 Bengal famine. Even before this, in the nineteenth century, Deenbandhu Mitra wrote about the plights of indigo planters under the British regime in *Neeldarpan*. The play was banned, but that was the beginning of the awakening of people. The play itself may not have stood the test of good theatre, but it has become a landmark in the history of theatre and in the history of the nation.

Michael Madhusudhan Dutt, Rabindranath Tagore, Mustafi Ardhendu, Girish Ghosh were all nineteenth century rebels in some sense or the other. Before the nineteenth century, we had Kabirdas, Tulsidas, Meera -- all anti-establishment people. It is the fate of an artist to be anti-establishment, to always try and grope for the truth and to communicate that truth to his or her best ability.

When the undivided Communist Party of India became divided, right in the middle of the 1940s, one side was represented by PC Joshi and Dange and the other by Randive. We had the Communist Party of Indian (Marxist) and later, the Communist Party of Indian (Marxist-Leninist). Then there was the birth of the Socialist Party. So we had many Left parties. Why?

We were in a situation where we did not know whether or not we had attained freedom. Some people said, "The Commonwealth does not mean freedom," and some said, "This is very conditional." Others said, "We would have been getting it anyway; the movement has been let down." They were not too wrong, either, because there was a naval uprising in Bombay that spread right up to Karachi and Cochin, but it was suppressed and underplayed.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhiji was appalled. He believed in the right means to the right end. He did not think that violent means could bring about peaceful ends. The disenchantment after the Partition which many thought could have been avoided had to be accepted. Gandhiji had to be sacrificed, the country had to be sacrificed. How could it survive when there were so many opinions about our status? Also, the enemy had suddenly

Habib Tanvir, the doyen of modern Indian theatre

Scenes from *Mitti ki Gadhi* (an adaptation of *Mrichhakatikam*)

become invisible. Formerly, there was a clear group of target people who could be cited as British imperialists. After Independence, the enemy was right inside the house. It was difficult to identify the "brown enemy".

So IPTA (Indian People's Theatre Association) died a natural death. Through the years there was a revival; now there is a network of IPTA doing all kinds of work, with a new vigour. There is a broader definition of what IPTA ought to do. There is a whole revival of street theatre; there are a lot of younger people actively committed to social values; new forms are coming up in Patna, Jabalpur, Ujjain, Sholapur, Karnataka and many other places.

When the big groups got scattered with the impact of television, it was dismaying to think that everything could be finished. Yet I find, as an incorrigible optimist, that the situation is not so bad. Everywhere there are NGOs. Even in the literacy campaign, there is a new approach; there is something that touches the people. There is beginning to be some sort of coordination between scientists, agriculturalists, educationists and artists that needs to be further galvanised and promoted. Out of this ***manthan*** can come an opinion that might be a minority opinion at the moment, but it is something that can change a large section of people in a meaningful way.

Right now, we cannot treat things in isolation. Satellite television has so many channels raining down on us, there are so many values depicted on television that are alien to us, but this is actually the upshot of a particular kind of attitude in the economic and political sphere. It has become inevitable now, if we go into globalisation of that kind and development of that kind.

How do you define development? Saying that you can buy development is nonsense. Many developing countries have come to a saturation point; they have rich resources, wonderful personalities, they are full of culture, in terms of community feeling and ways of human living, but all of this is being homogenised. I define culture in a very wide sense the way we live, the way we produce, the way we eat, our herbs, our plants. We are all being robbed. We are under a neocolonial kind of attack. We cannot remain isolated. All these developments are reflected in art. An artist is reflecting the reality around him.

All kinds of theatre is flourishing. There is the English type of theatre, the supper theatre for the beer-drinking audience that munches food while watching, street theatre, TV-influenced theatre that has a whole lot of gimmickry. Out of this whole, something more genuine is expected to emerge, despite some very bad omens. When a scene becomes deplorable enough, a change takes place. I think Lord Krishna has taught us that! He was born when things had reached an extreme; seven children had to be sacrificed before Krishna came, because Narada wanted Kansa to continue perpetrating tyranny to such an

extent that it became possible for the truth to dawn. Similarly, I think we have come to the extreme of some very bad signs in our society.

Theatre, art and culture at their best are subversive: they must subvert, because when you want to come to truth, to reality, you will find that it is quite a challenge. You have to subvert because a lot of fake values flourish.

...Translating William Shakespeare was a very exciting experience for me. I never thought I would ever translate Shakespeare, it was formidable. We had been to England with our troupe, and the English Theatre Company's Educational Society approached us, suggesting that we ought to produce a Shakespeare on our own terms, in conjunction with the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre actors. I said, "Well, I can't imagine my illiterate rural actors acting together with English actors in Shakespeare." They told me, "That is not our concern. We trust you. We think you can do it." That kept me thinking for several months, and I thought that we could perhaps take up some play like *The Tempest* in which I could divide the team.

I started re-reading my Shakespeare. I started with the tragedies because I thought comedy would be more difficult. In the end I came to *A Comedy of Errors, As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The moment that I started on it, I felt *A Midsummer Night's Dream* lent itself so well to my medium of writing poetry, which is Urdu. At the same time I became aware that despite my faithfulness, something was changing because of the very nature of the language the metre and the form: *Sabhi firaq ke haathon mein, ab hai vasl ka jaam.*

Now *vasl* and *firaq* have their own traditions, nothing to do with English culture. I felt a great felicity in the translation and did it very speedily and very happily. I did it without adapting it; the names are mostly the same. I realised that the problem with translating Shakespeare in European languages must be very different, because they have some cultural affiliations. It is far removed when you come as far out as India, or further out into Japan. There the transformations will be much more, because the languages, culture and ethos are different. I had to change the names of birds and insects because it would not make any sense to talk about skylarks, daffodils and other such things. So those had to be changed to *champa*, *chameli*, *tota*, *myna* etc.

They wanted to have this production performed in 20 schools in England and as many in India. What drew me initially was that their objective was very laudable. They had come to realise that the ethnic Indian community in England was suffering from a double loss of identity. On one hand, they are being taught English in the English schools and they speak English like the English but they eat Indian food at home. They don't speak their mother tongue; their mother tongue is English. They do not have any idea about Indian culture and

they do not go to the theatre. So they have no idea about British culture. Thus, they are deprived of the culture of their land of origin and they are deprived of the culture of the country of their birth. They know the language, they speak it beautifully, but they have no idea about the culture. So Shakespeare is the bridge. If they could be brought to see Shakespeare, if they could be made to accept Shakespeare as their own, perhaps something would be fulfilled.

I thought it was a wonderful objective, because they were trying to sell Shakespeare as a universal thing. With a group like mine, which had both kinds of actors, it would have elements of both the cultures, Indian and English. I wanted to try that.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I decided that Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia, Helena were to be done by the English actors, and I wanted them to talk in English. In the jungle, all the spirits speak Hindi, and when Puck maddeningly pursues these lovers, the loving couples get doubly baffled by his language, and also by his pranks. I thought all that would come out beautifully. What I liked most was the fact that this play still looked liked like an Indian play. But then I had to launch a version of my own because the government funds stopped. It is the same story everywhere: culture goes for a toss by default; you don't get the money.

My folk actors and tribals have usually been scoffed at in India. For *A Midsummer's' Night Dream*, which had its opening in Delhi, an American Express bus was sent for the tribals. The driver refused to have the tribals sit in the bus because they were barefoot. They are tribals, they are hunters, they are dancers, and are always barefoot on the rugged earth; they have never known the touch of footwear. So I was livid with anger, and we went on our own. Many times when we landed in Gujarat, the host would ask "Where are the actors?" I would have to say, "Right here," and then he would ask again, "These are the actors?" Afterwards, when people saw them perform, they liked them very much, but not to begin with; they thought actors should look very special. Even in Champaran, they sat on the platform of the small station, and the person who came to receive them went up and down looking for the actors for over two hours. When I arrived, I asked them what was going on; why had they been sitting there for so long? Then the person recognised me and asked me where the actors were. So I pointed to them and said, "There they are," and he was quite surprised, because he'd thought they were just farmers roaming around the station. So we have suffered a lot, except among circles of artists in Calcutta and elsewhere. Otherwise, there is just lip service, and of course there is a class bias.

Theatre has to be liberated from western bondage. I am not saying that it is bad to do western theatre, but I am talking about the notion that everything that is western is good. Everything we seem to take or emulate from the west is with a capital A and a capital Cart

and Culture. That kind of mentality must go. You must rediscover your roots, your own traditions, feel pride at taking things from the world, but not at the cost of respect for your own culture. There is this contempt we tend to have for our own belongings. This is what tends to happen with so-called "substandard" language.

The tribal areas have very rich culture in terms of the wisdom that goes into agriculture, into dance forms, in the graphic expressions of their day-to-day lives. They might not have a good vocabulary for science and technology, but they have a good vocabulary for expressing their love for nature and for human beings. They have a lot of wonderful metaphors and similes and allusions. For all the richness and literary beauty you attribute to so-called "standard" Marathi, Hindi or Bengali etc, there will always be a "substandard" current that gives life to the standard. Without Kabir, Meerabai and Tuslidas, you cannot imagine the richness of the Hindi language. The same goes for Sant Tukaram and others. Without them you would be divorced from the very springs of culture.

Once Mr Mani Shankar Aiyar [Congress politician], while lunching with me, asked, "Habib *saab*, why aren't you at the Festival of India? We have taken inspiration from you; you have shown us the way. We are doing exactly what you have done for many years. In our younger days, we saw your plays and were so inspired." So I said, "You were misled by me. You went on your scale and I am working on a different scale. The scale makes a very big difference. You are working on a large consumerist scale, which packages commodities. Culture is being packaged and brought to indifferent urban onlookers returning tired from office, watching the tribals while munching sandwiches, and then going away. I have nothing to do with all this. All this is totally out of context with the culture and place it comes from."

On one hand, these tribals are being annihilated, values that are alien to them are being imposed on them; on the other hand, they are being shown as exhibits and museum pieces. Sending them all over the world for political needs, for need of arms and weapons, and thus *using* your people and culture that is nonsense. If we are talking about cultural authenticity, we are talking about the kind of urban culture that may have grown in the last hundred years or so, in the *jhuggis*, in the urban centres, in the *Bambaiya* language. There is definitely room to produce plays and find the folklore of that particular segment of culture.

Likewise with political autonomy. When you give people autonomy, you allow them to grow on their own lines, make their own decisions; you grant that they know their own problems better than you do, give them the capacity to find solutions to their own problems. But you can't let go of power and control, therefore there is centralisation. They will make a lot of mistakes of course, but they will eventually know how to get the cycle of crops without you telling them. They have the knowledge of so many herbs, of the harvest seasons; they have

rituals for everything. They have a whole system of taboos, beliefs, laws, bylaws. All these systems are there, and they can be improved. They know how to get potable water, but that autonomy is not given, so how can you give them cultural autonomy? Autonomy decides that the forest is theirs, the forest produce is theirs; the wildlife and vegetation will be better protected if they are given the rights. Just as the animal eats its food and then rests without harming anything else unless he is hungry again, in the same way you will seldom find an Adivasi destroying anything without real cause. He might kill an animal for food, burn one tree for cultivation, but this is nothing compared to how much is being destroyed by the others for the sake of commerce.

They asked me to stay in Germany and produce plays there. I said that I could not begin to presume that I knew their culture so well as to produce German plays, Russian plays and Hungarian plays in the same way that I would produce Indian plays in my language. I could produce Indian plays in their language somewhat better than their own directors, but I knew I could not cope with German directors and German plays. I also noticed that I enjoyed Shakespeare better in England than elsewhere in Europe though I saw many Shakespeare plays, and some very good Shakespeare at that, in Moscow and Hungary. Yet I enjoyed it the most in England and not just because I know the English language. I also enjoyed the Russian plays in the Russian language better than I enjoyed their English translations in England, because they had no feeling for Chekhov as they did in Moscow.

In Germany, I saw so many productions of Brecht, whom I read avidly. When talking to actors of the Berlin Ensemble, Brecht was talked of as being so authentically German, which I also read in the apologies that the translators made in their introductions saying that the German compounds and the colloquialisms used by Brecht defy translation, and they find it very difficult to capture the soul of the word. Brecht used working class colloquialisms and made compounds out of them and made creative innovations even in music. His generation was sick of the syrupy sweetness of their music, so they produced new music that was rooted in the German soil.

Having talked about Germany and Brecht and the connection with the soil, I felt that Indian theatre imitating the west can never arrive anywhere. It has to display authenticity and also be very distinctive, so that a foreigner can see it and say, "This is also theatre. I cannot do it in that way." That kind of difference must always be there. That is why I came back to my roots, went to Chhattisgarh, took the actors from there (I come from Chattisgarh), and then I experimented with all these things. My inspiration came from Brecht and my observations in Europe. So three years in Europe made me more Indian than I was before.

We were written about all over India and then in England. I was considered subversive, anti-

Hindu, anti-India. There were a lot of campaigns. When I had a workshop in Afghanistan, I was hounded out by extremists.

Treating their culture with sensitivity can make their culture more authentic than they themselves can. When I first arrived on the scene, there were hybrid songs, film songs, all sorts of things. When I sang the folk songs that I had learnt since childhood, a middle-aged person recalled a song from his childhood and sang it; others also scraped things from their own memories. When they saw that there was value attached to folk songs, they became more and more folk-song conscious. When Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya began to work in textiles using good floral designs that attracted urban women, and they soon became a part of fashion, then the villagers, seeing that you attached value to it, began to wear their own clothes more confidently. No matter for what reason, this does act as a catalyst.

As far as other things are concerned values like avarice for gadgetry, acquisitiveness, no amount of catalysts can stop that. It is happening in the villages right under your nose illiteracy flourishes, boys who used to wear dhotis are wearing jeans, they still don't go to school but are behaving like film stars without any means or money. My actors don't have to go to Delhi or to England to get spoiled; our own values keep a check on them, but of course they have become acquisitive; world forces are always there to influence them.

Scene from *Kamdev ka Apna / Vasant Ritu ka Sapna* (an adaptation of *Midsummer Night's Dream*)

Ashok Ranade

Ashok Ranade is a musicologist, composer and performer. He has been associated with the University Music Centre in Bombay, with the Archives and Research Centre in Ethnomusicology of the American Institute of Indian Studies as well as with research and ethnomusicology at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Mumbai Ranade's publications include Sangeetache Soundarya Ahastra, Lok Sangeet Shastra, On Music and Musicians in Hindustan and Studies in Indian Ethnomusicology. He has edited, composed and compared several music albums.

Music, Sound and Culture: Ashok Ranade

Lecturers came to us when the British introduced a new system of education, in which there was a lecturer and there were listeners. Indian tradition always believed in an exchange of views through discussions and questions and answers. That is why I am going to ask you some questions and you will ask me some questions. Our basis will be what I play back as musical illustrations. I have chosen the theme "What happens in music?" When you listen to a piece, you will have to answer two basic questions: whether you like it or not; and if you like it, then you would have to give me reasons. So you cannot escape the responsibility of imparting knowledge to me.

(Audio clip: some sort of animal sounds, howling and screeching. There is also a sound of flowing water. There are grunts, and a kind of braying).

Ranade: Responses?

Student: It gave an eerie feeling.

Student: It lets you imagine many things.

Student: Can it be called music?

Student: It was jarring to the ears.

Student: It was very funny.

Ranade: So music should always be sweet, it should never be funny. Would you agree with these statements? Perhaps the set of criteria you are using to judge a piece of music might be inadequate if a new piece of music comes along. I am trying to suggest to you that there are different categories of music.

There are five categories of music in India. These categories are fundamental moulds in which all types of music are accommodated and through which we are able to interpret various musical experiences. There are thousands and thousands of musical experiences, and they belong to various musical categories. So if you take a set of criteria that is applicable to one category, and apply it to another category, then you are naturally going to get answers that may not be valid. I am trying to tell you this so that we can keep it in mind when we listen to various pieces of music.

(Audio clip: The track with animal sounds continues. There is still the same combination of grunts, growls and howls and the sound of flowing water. Less eerie than before. Slowly the sounds change. As though the night has moved into day. Because now the early morning sounds are heard of birds, and possibly people who are murmuring. A few howls are still heard but the birds seem to drown them out).

Ranade: Now, compare both these. We heard the first and another followed it. Can you compare?

Student: I wonder whether it is artificially created or is directly from nature.

Ranade: It should not matter, what matters is your experience. What did you feel?

Student: The first one was more disturbing. The second was mixed, it was more pleasant.

Student: The previous sounds were mixed with more animals. Now there were more sounds of donkeys...

Ranade: You raise your eyebrows when you refer to donkeys they will strongly object to that. They have a freedom of expression guaranteed by the Constitution.

(Laughter)

Ranade: So, how would you compare the two clips?

Student: The first music reminded me of the Saturday night movies on TV.

Ranade: These are legitimate responses, but these are called "extra-musical associations"; they are not associated with music, they are connected with you. They are not valid for others, and even for you they won't help you in making a judgement of music. So, coming back to the original question, how would you judge that music, on what basis? When we say "judge", we are not saying pass a judgement on it, but saying, compare quality and quality.

Student: I think we liked this more than that.

Ranade: You know, that kind of statement allows the repetition of an experience. After all, experiencing does not stop there. Because you are part of society, you have to communicate that experience. You talk about it, you share it, you try to re-create it. That is how traditions are created. That is why today we are talking about art and culture. If I stopped at only having something pleasant, then nothing would have been passed on to you.

The whole problem is that somehow, music and fine arts are always referred to in mystique terms. And this is a kind of demystification of it things need to be understood, things need to be analysed, things need to be talked about. There are concepts involved, ideas involved, crafts involved, people involved.

Finally, you really come to a conclusion that everything has a musical potentiality; you can't rule out by definition that this is music and this is not. That is exactly what we are trying to suggest: that supposing this kind of music is not always heard, it is totally new to you and you hear it for the first time. How would you respond to it? The first thing that you have to accept is that this can legitimately be music, even if I don't like it at the moment. You must allow the right of existence to a different kind of vision. This is very important now, in the changing context of globalisation, changing context of media. You face different kinds of music all the time and if you are, by definition, ready to rule out many experiences, then you are the loser, not the music.

And finally you are allowed to decide, "Fine, I like this music," or "I do not," but what are the reasons? Perhaps these could be extra-musical, and it is perfectly all right to have these associations, but it does not tell us much about the music, though it tells us something about the person.

If you want to really elicit anything from anything, you must have a "pro" attitude towards it. If you are totally indifferent towards it, then naturally there is no relationship between that experience and you. We are definitely assuming a desire to receive communication. In fact, I might suggest to you that you are in an era where you are losing the potential of your sense of hearing. And perhaps that is why less and less things are communicated to you through sound, than can be communicated.

Taking the two examples we heard, usually the second one is liked by many. Perhaps because it is nearer to your daily life. There are birdsongs and birdcalls. The first one was a whale song. Whales are great composers, every whale composes his or her own song and that song is stuck to the family. Over a number of years it continues to sing the same song, because the song has the additional quality of marking a territory. When a whale from the Atlantic and one from the Arabian Sea come together, they won't speak the same language.

The same happens in the case of birds. There are many opinions about bird songs. Initially it was said that birds can't sing; it's only humans who can make music. So they said, "Oh! birds only make amatory calls to attract members of the opposite sex." Then they found out that they were making these calls even when they were not interested in mating and had found some new prey. Then they thought they were making these calls when they found some new source of food. Apart from that, birds made other kinds of sounds. So then they said, "There is a residual content to their music making which cannot be accounted for by amatory songs, food, songs." Finally, the scientists relented and said, "Maybe there is something such as bird songs". If you listen to bird songs, the melody of it, then you can definitely espy a kind of constructing ability the bird is "constructing" all that, it does not happen by coincidence.

What are the clues? You listen to it and you feel that it constructs only half, seems to sing it wrong, then stops and corrects itself. And again, there is the same melody. It also teaches those melodies to its offspring; naturalists describe in detail how this teaching process takes place. After being taught, these birds have been recorded practising these songs continuously for eight hours an eight-hour *riyaz*. How else do you perfect all that?

The bullfinch and some other birds have been known for their ability to assimilate sounds. There are people in Russia who taught eight-ten birds Beethoven's symphony. There are some questions involved here. One is, are they musicians because they are creating "our" kind of music? This is a homocentric definition. Do you have a right to praise them only because they are able to imitate you? You never pay attention to what they are saying about you. There are co-ordinated pitches, co-ordinated *aarohas* and *avrohas* (ascending and descending scales), whatever you want but according to the parameters that the whale culture has set for itself. Their music is not going to fit into your definitions.

(Audio clip)

Ranade: There was some kind of question-answer session going on between the birds. A question was asked in song and the answer was given through song. So this was a duet, or it could be a quarrel. Maybe they are more musical than we think, so their quarrel might be more musical.

Student: Does that mean birds and other species like whales speak their own language?
Ranade: We don't know about speech. The moment you talk about speech and language, there is a different kind of argument involved. People have distinguished between speech and music, even in the case of birds, just as they have distinguished between amatory calls and food calls. These things have been recorded and there are laboratories working on this. We are only to take this much notice of it, to expand our own definition, our notion and

understanding of music. Perhaps it will interest you to know that in Indian musicology, the science of music, the very early *shlokas* say that this note was created by a peacock, this one was created by an elephant; a whole musical gamut has been covered by bird calls and animal calls. Of course, I have not heard that kind of music in that kind of scale, with all the animals and birds standing in their respective places and giving me music. But the notion persists and that is very interesting.

(Audio clip: a chorus. Sounds mostly like women, with certain voices dominating and then phasing out, to be replaced by other voices. The sound of a distant drum that occasionally beats but is mostly drowned by the voices).

Students (various responses): It was monotonous... two groups... question and answer probably... it seemed like a dance song... there was an element of tempo, not really rhythm.

Ranade: This was a clip of Gond tribal women's marriage songs. This category is what we call "primitive" music. Whenever we say "primitive" music, we are really referring to a group of qualities. That group of qualities is very important. For example, this kind of music is made for groups and crowds, not really a single person. In this music, the whole community is involved. The function of music in the primitive stage is to gather the crowd. So it has a collective role to play, which is extremely important. That is where music binds society.

So even if you refer to disco, it is primitive, but primitive in this sense, that it has a structure that binds down the collective. We are talking of certain experiences, certain structural features.
In the clip we heard, you might say there are groups singing, and there are overlaps. What does that mean?

Students: Shared experience... continuity.

Ranade: That's it! It has to have continuity. This kind of song can continue for the whole night, and it is essential that it be a continuous activity. Only then is it possible for the whole crowd to participate in a musical activity.

Even if I don't know the language, I can still infer that the clip we heard was meant for this kind of a group activity. But why the high pitch, when high pitches are not always pleasant? That suggests to you one more thing: that music does not have to be pleasant to be music; it has a function to carry out, and that function might not always be sweetness and melody. So when you say, "The whale song is not sweet," then the whales protest very strongly against that. They say, "Why does music have to be sweet all the time?"

Music also tries to match itself to the spectrum of experiences that it is able to make available to you. That is why this kind of primitive music has an important place in our life.

The way we discuss musical categories, you will know that they are not just musical categories, but categories of culture itself. When you are talking of "primitive" and "folk", you are not referring to musical examples per se. You are talking of a particular way of life of which music is a part. Therefore it is very essential to remember that music is not isolated from your life; it is not an artificial activity.

It is only "art music" that is extremely artificial. This is not a derogatory description. Just as when we speak of "primitive" music we are referring to certain structural features and experiences that are inherent to it, so when I say "art music" is artificial, I am suggesting that it is entirely manmade.

When you come across categories of art expression, whether in dance, drama or music, you understand that if they move away from day-to-day life it is because they want to attain certain goals. It is essential to know that, so that your judgement will be in the spirit of the experiment. For example, you will never say that this particular *khayal* or this particular *kruti* does not sing about the travails of modern man. It will say, "No, why should I?" Art musicians always try to maintain a kind of abstracted distance from day-to-day life; popular music does not do so. We will have to accept the legitimacy of all categories of music, because all of them have different functions and different goals.

(Audio clip)

Ranade: Now what kind of music would that be?

Student participant: Devotional.

Ranade: Okay. I would like you to amend that category you can perhaps say "religious", because that is a wider term. Devotional sects are of particular kinds.

What were the other characteristics of the music?

Student: The words are important.

Student: It involves emotion.

Student: A whole feeling is created by singing together.

Ranade: This is where one can see the overlap. Even primitive music tried to bring people together. Devotional religious music also tries to do that, but it always has a more directional

kind of feeling; they are coming together for a purpose.

Won't you say there is a repetition of certain musical motifs? Why so? Why not more variety?

Student: Because everyone has to follow.

Ranade: Why does everyone have to follow? Because if a *bhajan* is meant for specialists, it is not a *bhajan* at all. The basic thing about religious music is that it allows and encourages, in fact, *expects* the widest possible participation. It has to be collective.
You want people to be charged by a particular range of emotions. This "range of emotions" is very important. Sometimes you feel that the person is singing a *bhajan* with the kind of devotion that says, "I am your servant"; another might be saying, "No, after all if you are God and omnipotent, you should be removing all my troubles", so he is the beggar there. Sometimes he might be the complainant saying, "If you do this then you are not God." All this makes religious music a very accommodative category, and it is very essential that you have categories that are accommodative if collectivity is your goal.

There are *bhajans* sung by Lata Mangeshkar bordering on *geet*, a song. When it becomes a song it is a very personal kind of presentation, but when it is a *bhajan* it is not personal. All these aspects are thrown up by tradition; we are trying to deduce certain principles that are current in almost all the regions of India. In addition, you will see that every region has its own folk music; every region has its own religious music. Of the ten major religions in the world, eight have made India their home, and all of them have a very long tradition; all of them are well distributed over the land. That is why one has to realise that what has happened in India is very unique; it has become a crucible for all kinds of experiences, and all of them are available to all of us.

What about the instruments (in religious music)?

Scattered voices: Cymbals... Mridangam...

Ranade: These instruments are also very simple. Once I asked a question to people who practise religious music as well as folk music. I asked, "What really distinguishes the instruments which you use?" One of them, who was very witty and very truthful, said, "Our instruments are special, they don't need any maintenance!" And it is true. If you have the *manjiri*, the *kartal*, what kind of maintenance do you need? The *mridang* needs maintenance when it comes onto the concert platform, otherwise if you listen you will realise that 90 per cent of the time they are out of tune. But it does not matter there. That is why our criteria, which are based on sweetness of music, tunefulness of music, aesthetics of music, are very

narrow. Different musical categories challenge the validity of these criteria. They tell you their aim is different. So then you don't have any right to impose an outside framework on the musical experience, because musical experience is the primary thing, not your cultural theories.

Everywhere, theories will have to be *post facto* deductions something takes place for a number of centuries, in a number of locations with a number of cultural groups. Then you try to make sense of it and say "Oh! This is a pattern," and that becomes a theory. The moment you have another kind of experience, you should be able to relinquish the hold of that theory and try to examine everything afresh. In my opinion, now is the time to examine all our theories again. My pet prediction is that in the coming 20 years, the quality of our brains is going to change entirely. Our perception of time has changed; our perception of space has changed. All our art theories, cultural theories, will have to be re-examined afresh, otherwise we will cling to older theories that will hamper us in receiving new experiences.

(Audio clip: Chanting of Jai Jai Ram Krishna Hare accompanied by loud cymbals and mridangam, in a continuously rising tempo)

Ranade: Apart from the change in tempo from slow to fast, what were the other qualities you noticed?

Student: There was a trance-like quality created?

Ranade: How do you think that trance-like quality was created?

Student: When you say the same chants again and again, and then by increasing the tempo and the volume, you create a trance for everyone sitting there.

Ranade: Trance is a good, useful term, though it's a very high term, implying an altered state of consciousness. This is supposed to take you to a higher plane: forget about day-to-day troubles; forget about your own concerns; don't be self-centred; merge your identity with that of the crowd. That means you are nobody; still you are together. These kinds of feelings are attained easily if sound is used in a hypnotic fashion. That means you don't change the stimulus too much, you maintain the sameness. That slight variation with the rhythm, with the tempo, with the crowd, helps you. When we say this we are not referring to one particular cult or religion, these are common features found everywhere. That means they are human features, not religious features.

(An excerpt from a qawwali in which Yallah Yallah is repeatedly chanted)

Meaningless words are not, as they say, "tainted with the daily traffic of the world". That is

why meaningless sounds form a very important component of all mantras.

This form of music was the *qawwali*. The interesting thing is that both Buddhism and Islam frowned on music. Both these religions felt that if music was allowed to hold sway, it defiled the soul of the devotee. Both these religions ended up not only allowing music, but also encouraging music to a very enriched level.

The point I am making is that no religion can do without music. When you come to the relationship between religion and music, you have various levels of music making. But the primary level needs collectivity. To learn religious music, you don't have to go to a class; you are in a culture and you know about the music; you start participating and it becomes your music. Nobody bothers if you are singing in tune or out of tune. When it becomes art music, then they might bother.

The other point is that religious music builds bridges between music and other areas of your life. That is why it has definite occasions, definite places, definite spaces, definite rituals associated with it. It is a very simple trickof building a web of association. How do you enrich a thing? By placing it in a very comprehensive perspective. For example, you can remember so many things by just remembering the Ganesha festival. Of course now you might just remember the noise. I remember once telling a group in Pune, "The reason Ganesha has such a large stomach and such large ears is that he has to accommodate so many sins of his devotees, and so much noise!"

Religion creates for you a large framework of reference and memory. Then things become meaningful, you can make sense of the situation; otherwise, things fall apart, or they are isolated and you are not able to make connections. This is the logic behind one category of music.
Some categories of music are highly collective, some of them are highly individual, and all of them have a logic.

(Another music clip: Irish church music)

Ranade: Two primary questions you always have to answer: Did you like it? Why?

Scattered voices: Very sweet sounding... There are sort of vibrations... You sort of get goose bumps... Very melodious and soothing.

Ranade: You used the words "sweet", "melodious", "soothing"all these are highly urbanised responses, if I may say so. Actually I would have loved it if you had used words like "evocative" and "moving", and I insist on using these words, because when I say "evocative" I am not referring to any single emotion but I am saying that it appeals to me, it

moves me. That is the essential quality of it. It is not taking you to a particular feeling, it is merely unsettling you for a while. You become introspective when you listen to this kind of music. It creates a space around you, you become quiet. Even in a crowd that tends to happen. You can be most anonymous in the most crowded hotel because there is a space around you that belongs to nobody.

You may not be able to enter the fabric of certain music very easily, perhaps because you are foreign to that culture. Music is culture-oriented; to say that music is a universal language is a myth. Music becomes universal at such an abstract level that it ceases to remain music, it becomes sound. It is only when you come down to the level of dialects that you are able to say that you understand this music.

You have to make distinctions between vocal music and instrumental music. I will give you a simple example. I live in India. I am associated with Hindustani music. I appreciate south Indian instrumental music much better than vocal music. You would do the same thing; if you belong to a particular culture you would appreciate better the instrumental music of another musical culture than its vocal music. This is because the voice is very deeply and intimately connected with a particular culture. Instruments are emotionally and culturally more neutral than voices.

Chanting tends to be minimal as music; it is less complex; it repeats certain sounds. That is why primitive music, even if it is African or Warli, you will be able to understand because it is simpler. Otherwise, maybe not. Just like language. If you listen to a foreign language you may understand the tone of it but not the meaning. So when you say, "I like music, music is a universal language," you are only saying, "It appeals to me but I am not making any sense out of it." You will have to go further and find out what the music is made of, what it means, and only then it enriches you more.

I would suggest you think about three terms: self-expression, communication, art. When you like a song for reasons of your own, then you are expressing yourself, which is a self-sufficient activity. If you start telling others about that song and they have a totally different perception, then what do we share? We only disagree. That is why we move to communication, where we share things: we ask, "What do you mean by this?" and you answer, "I mean..." Then you come to the level of art.

"Without meaning" does not mean "meaninglessness". If you have ambiguity then it is an asset, but if you have contradiction, it is not an asset. If we have a particular experience, it will have components like *a, b, c* it will have a language, lyrics, etc. You may like *a, b* and she may like *b, c*. So *a* and *c* are not shared but *b* is. So there are overlapping areas of appreciation, hence communication is possible. But if there are no areas of overlap, there will be no

communication.

Why is it that all good poetry always attracts the charge of obscurity? You sometimes feel similarly about music, you don't know what it means but you know you like it. This indicates that if you knew what it meant, you would like it even more. There is an overlap when you like something and I like it too. Unless you share you won't be able to communicate, and unless you communicate, really speaking you won't be able to be yourself. Individuals are individuals because they are part of society. That is where meaningfulness comes in.

You need to make a distinction between meaningfulness and significance. Something might be meaningful today but cease to be meaningful tomorrow, that is why it is not significant. Something may appear good to you today, but tomorrow you might turn around and say, "It was not that good. I liked it at that moment, it was good for that moment." I am not frowning upon that. It is like popular music. I often say popular music has a very important feature: topicality. If BEST fares are raised, and I want to protest in music, then I can have a song about that. But can I have a *khayal* or a *thumri* about that? You know, kerosene is really costly now and I suffer because of that but can I have a symphony about that? I can do that in popular music. Popular music means that I can respond to every situation with music.

The Irish Christian music we heard, when you listen to it you realise that not only is it very appealing and evocative, it is also technically sound. You can hear some amount of breathing and even the sound of breathing creates a bond. It makes it very human. The song is coming out with every outgoing breath, that is the kind of feeling you get. You will find that all over India, the chants and the mantras are always associated with *pranayama* techniques. You breathe particular mantras in a particular fashion. Everything is approached from a physio-psychological angle: never body alone, never psyche alone; the two together all the time.

(Audio clip: advertisement jingles)

Ranade: This is one specimen of popular music. Notice how many messages they have given us in 20 seconds. They have used bright colours, quick tempo, voices that are attractive and messages that are short. Just to ensure the message has not been lost, there in a re-enunciation of it. This is what communication means.

I am not saying this is greater than a Shakespearean play but I am saying this is very effective. One should know how it happens, why it appeals? It wants you to concentrate on only one image. They are not opening up issues; instead they are narrowing them down, pinpointing them. All the same, the technique is very interesting and can tell us something about popular music and its reach.

Jingles are very good specimens of popular music. They are propagated by the media, they have the infrastructure of industry behind them, they are very purposeful, they are topical, and they are almost like musical fashions. This is how popular imagery functions it keeps pace with the times, it is with you all the time.

Even the motor horns you get now range in tune from Beethoven to *bhajans*. Just as you can have Hamlet in a comic form, you can have Beethoven diluted down to a motor horn. Film music is one of the great segments of popular music.

(Excerpts from a song from film Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi).

You realise that in three minutes they are doing so many things. There is a duet, there is tonal colour, a change of human voice, there is imitation of instruments, there is a dialogue involved, a picture is created in your mind all these things are simultaneously carried out. So what an art musician requires three and a half hours for, they can create in three minutes. Still, mind you, we are not confusing the categories; we are not saying that instead of Bhimsen Joshi, the popular musician should be given the award. We are just saying that it is a very legitimate category, performing a specific function.

A word about why not to use the term "classical"I feel, firstly, the use of the term "classical" immediately creates the distinction that this one is classical, that means the other one is not worth it, and that is not true. Secondly, "classical" is a term derived from art history, so I don't have to accept it. In India there is a better term. For example all *raga* music is always described as *shastrokta sangeet*. We believe all music has a *shastra*; all music has rules, there is nothing random there. They are very precise, whether it is folk music, devotional or popular. They know what to do, why to do, how to do. So all music is *shastriya*, nothing is random. *Shastrokta* means "the rules of which are spelt out"; that is why *raga sangeet* is shastrokta, all other music is *shastriya*.

I don't use the term "classical", I prefer the term "art" music, because that distinguishes the intention of the artist. The artist always says, "I am creating aesthetically satisfying music". A folk musician will say, "I am singing a song," and if you ask a person who is singing a *bhajan* what he is doing, he is likely to say, "*Main bhagwan ka bhajan kar raha hoon*" ("I'm singing a *bhajan* to God"). He will not say, "I am singing a sweet, soothing song," because he does not intend to do that.

India is extremely rich in music. Unfortunately our knowledge of music, as presented in the media and through various classes and courses, does not do justice to the riches that we have. If I ask what the music systems in India are, you are likely to say Hindustani and Carnatic. There are two more, one in Kerala known in Sopana, and one in northeast India

that has never been termed or analysed properly. In addition, you have folk music systems, then religious music, then primitive music and then popular music. So there have been five categories running simultaneously for almost 2,000 years. There are so many languages, so many people, so many races; all of them are contributing, and that is why the fabric is so rich.

Politically we are one nation, but culturally we are a federation. There are so many people coming from so many different backgrounds, there is a plethora of ideas. Somehow we have not made full use of this diversity. Sometimes I get the feeling that if only I could try to know what is happening in the region next to mine with which I share boundaries, even that would clarify a lot of things. There is a science called ethnomusicology, which means studying music and culture together. One of its basic premises is that a culture cannot be understood unless you understand its music, and vice versa. It also says that music reflects all the nuances of a culture.

I have always maintained that music helps you in prognosis, not diagnosis. Whatever concerns you have are first reflected in music. If you have the ears, you will be able to listen to them and know them. But if you have a definition of music that tells you that music should be sweet and melodious, then you are deprived of a great deal of information and insight, because music is created by your basic identity. Nobody can change anybody's music by forcing music on him or her. Unless I decide to accept that music, I will not change my music. We are using a foreign language, but am I using British music? If I decide to, I will. Eventually it will be my choice, I have started using polyphony, I have started using chords and harmonisation because I have decided to do so, not because there was a law enacted to make me do that.

Vanraj Bhatia

Musician and composer Vanraj Bhatia's works cover a very wide spectrum from western classical to Indian ragas to contemporary fusion genre. A fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, London, he has composed music for about 40 films and eight television serials, and some of his major works include soundtracks for movies and television serials, including Ankur, Manthan, Bhumika, 36 Chowringhee Lane, Khandaan, Tamas, Discovery of India, and Sardari Begum.

Contemporary Experiments in Popular Indian Music: Vanraj Bhatia

Apart from our classical music that goes abroad periodically, we are nowhere on the international scene. Our popular troupes go abroad and play only to Indians who have settled in America or England. Awards are won by Japanese, Koreans, Thais, all the other eastern nations. There are Japanese sopranos singing in opera houses, there are Japanese conductors; now the Chinese have gone into it in a big way. And there is proper western music education in these countries. We too have a hunger for western music, which is coming in through the backdoor, as it were, through western pop, western disco. But people are not being exposed to serious western music at all.

I would like to discuss the word "exposure". I went to a very progressive school called "New Era". We were taken to every single art exhibition, and dance performance whether we liked it or not. So we were exposed to a lot of new ideas that came in. Unfortunately in India, musically, we get exposure of a very limited kind. I do not blame students and young people for this, because there is no training. Unless we systematically train and expose ourselves to world music, we are not going to progress beyond film music. There is nothing wrong with film music, but it is the only music we have that is evolving all the time. Classical music has stopped evolving since the end of the nineteenth century; it has remained where it was. It is what I call "museum music" because experimentation, in classical terms, is not possible. You cannot experiment with a raga because the minute you do, the raga is no longer that particular raga. It becomes something else.

Now this brings us to the question of "experiment" and "fusion". "Experiment" and "fusion" are scientific terms, they are not art-related. When a person creates a work of art, he is not experimenting or fusing, he is what he is, and he is showing us that in that particular work. Like I am talking to you in English, you are dressed the way you are and I am dressed the way I am. I am not a fusion, you are not a fusion either, between east and west; we are what we are, and we are expressing ourselves through the various influences we have gone

through.

Coming back to music, in India we say "ranjayti iti raga" or "That which pleases is the raga". Greek philosopher Longines says art is that which pleases. The major question that arises is, "Pleases whom?" The chaiwalla chhokra? The professor in a music college? What is the yardstick with which you measure art? It is a very difficult proposition. Van Gogh was a greater painter than Paul Gauguin; both were contemporaries. Debussy was a better composer than Ravel; they too were contemporaries. This posterity decides. That which has substance lasts; that which is ephemeral or temporary perishes. We all know the popularity of the song "Ek Do Teen" [from the movie *Tezaab*]. If you put it on now, anybody who is listening will put it off and say, "Nahin nahin, yeh to suna hua hai." It is finished, it has had its day, it has served its purpose, it has entertained people, it has made its money, and then it was over.

Certain songs from older periods, when none of you was born, are still very popular, like the songs from *Baiju Bawra* (1952). And there are so many others of that kind. Why is that so? Because when an artist puts something of real value to himself inside a work of art, then that work of art lives, whether it is a popular work of art or a serious work of art. You can do serious works of art too in a very charlatan way and they won't last.

I am not going to talk about other people's music, I am going to talk about my music. I am going to play certain choral pieces I have done for unaccompanied choir.

Some years ago there was an exhibition in Delhi and I was asked to write something for the Bharat Electronic pavilion. The shloka given to me was from the Bhagvad Gita, of God telling Arjun "The time, the milieu, I am the victor, I am the elements, I am everything."

This was done with the voice, with certain electronic sounds behind. You must understand what an unaccompanied choir is, there is no musical instrument accompanying that choir. We have choral stuff where people are singing in one single tune and there is tabla or dholak or something. This is not choral music in the true sense of the word.

What I have done may sound strange to you.

(Audio clip.)

That was an atonal work. It took almost a year to rehearse for it because it was very difficult to sing. It is a typical choir; one part is spoken, one is half sung, one is properly sung.

I had composed music for Shyam Benegal's television series *Discovery Of India*. For the period of the Guptas, I used eleventh century poems by a Buddhist monk about the

seasons, which were translated by Vasant Dev. I am playing two seasons. One is the harvest season poem, "Utsav ka dhaam bana mati ka ghar aur chaaval ki fasal." The other is about the winter season, "Dadi ko jade ne jakda, haar haar pakda"the poor woman wants to talk all the time and her mouth is chattering away, but she can't say anything. She is wearing a cotton cloth and she is tired from holding her knees to her chest; she has put a sigdi near her and a shawl over her head. So there is a comic description of the grandmother; that is the way winter has been described.

Again this is an unaccompanied choir, two ragas are involved. Des in the first and Shyam Kalyan in the second. If you have a choir, there are no instruments there, they are unaccompanied. So you can't expect a bass, or any singers to just go aaaaaa to give the tonality. That won't work. So this was the biggest challenge how to preserve the raga and still manage to without making someone sing aaaaaa. I had a lot of trouble doing this, and I finally decided that each section would sing the raga, but not together, so that the raga would be preserved. It is up to you to decide whether the raga has been preserved or not.

(Audio clip.)

That is one way of treating the voice. I am starting with voice because that is the primordial thing; we first start with voice and then comes everything else and then comes the instrument. This is the way music evolved.

We needed church music of a very old period. We got the records of a fifteenth century composer, but there was a great problem about copyright. They were asking for a phenomenal amount to let us use just one minute, and we had to have it. So what were we to do? We used a particular instrument here because I could not find singers in India who could sing this kind of music. Besides, we did not have the budget to hire people just for a short bit in a film.

There are no words because we did not have any. This was played on the instrument. It was very difficult to do. It sounds easy but it is not easy at all because it is in the style of that period. When played at a softer volume in church, it sounds like the original.

Kumar Shahani is a very exacting filmmaker. Raghuvir Sahay had written some blank verse which Kumar gave me, saying not a word was to be changed. He wanted two ragas to be included, Jogiya and Maand. I added a third one, Bhimpalashi. So it is a combination of three ragas. This was for a film called *Tarang*. Unfortunately, not too many people in India have seen the film.

I don't break any rules for the sake of breaking them. For example, I would not change a

basic element of a raga just because I felt like changing it. If I really feel like it, then I would change it, but then it would not be that raga. I am going to play you a song sung by Lata Mangeshkar. This was a novel idea the song was to be accompanied by one tabla and a sarangi, plus an enormous orchestra of just strings violin, cello, violas and double basses. Also, it was to be in a very different taal, baramatra vilambit; a taal which never goes into dhrut or any other rhythm. It lasts for six minutes.

The words of the song were "Saari raat sang so jaao, priyatam aao." There were people who thought Latabai might object to singing something like that, but she didn't. She in fact found the words very beautiful, and she has sung it very well. It is a very difficult song to sing and very difficult to perform also.

(Audio clip of Saari raat sang so jaao, priyatam aao.)

To me, this is not an experiment, it is like a baby. A baby is not an experiment, neither are these. It is what you feel; it is there, and it becomes a piece of work.

Now I shall show you another conventional way of putting in the voice. This is a totally Indian context where it is ending with a mujra song. After that, there is a ghazal. I find the present day ghazal and the attitude towards the ghazal highly saccharine and bathetic. It is all "cry cry cry" into your handkerchiefs, a lot of music in between, a lot of crying and soft words. The range of the singers does not happen to be more than five or six notes at the most; they do not go up, do not come down, but run around in the same circle. I wanted to break all these things, so I have done a ghazal, which was like a challenge. All ghazals do not have to be "cry cry cry", so this ghazal is a woman challenging her lover.

Both pieces I will play are from the movie *Sardari Begum*. One is a mujra song where I have shown that Indian classical music need not be garbled in the words. In the old days, garbling was done because people did not like other singers to steal their cheez. So they garbled certain words, so that you could not tell. Even if you hear Kesarbai's [Kerkar] old records you will notice that she changes words towards the end so that you can't absolutely catch what she is saying. This was a way of protecting your bandish from people who would steal it.

I want to make one more digression about how voice has been used traditionally in Indian classical music. When you have dhrupad, the older form that is not so popular these days, the words have very little meaning. You had nom-tom, it just went "nom-tom-nom-tom" and had no meaning at all. The whole alaap was nom-tom; when the words came in they were juggled around so that they were lost in digun, tihai and other devices that were used. That was the dhrupad form.

Then came the khayal, where the words were a little more clear but not so much. Then came the thumri. Thumri became much more popular because the words were much clearer. After thumri, logically you get the qawwali where the words are of primary importance, and from qawwali you get the mushairaa, the recitation of poems by themselves. In Hindi film music, fortunately, every word has to be heard or else the song will not be listened to.

(Audio clip of songs from Sardari Begum. "Raah mein bichchi hain palkein aao", "Huzoor itna agar hum par karam karte to achcha tha")

Classical taans were used here. The instrumentation was the most traditionalthe harmonium, the sarangi and the tabla, and occasionally the tanpura.

There is more pathos when you don't show other people that you are crying. Let them cry; don't cry to show them pathos. This is what I have done with the music you just heard. Now I shall play this music from *Othello.* I have done this for a play. It starts with the curtain opening, then Othello, then Cyprus, and then Desdemona. Out of my piece they made "cues" for the actors. There is only one person involved with the whole thing. There is no other instrument. He plays the flute, the herbs on the synthesiser. Only other instrument I used just to highlight certain points is a timpany drum. Here comes Othello, the man....

(Audio clip.)

It ends on a wrong end. We didn't have time, we had only one day to finish the whole thing. In this piece, there was no string instrument, no herb, no horn. These sounds are being produced today through synthesisers and keyboards. Music training in India is in abysmal state. In old days in school, we had music as a compulsory subject. Now if it is a boys' school, there will be no music teaching. But I learnt music in school. Study of arts in school is very important and not only for girls.

Most professional musicians, as well as painters, are men. Of course, women are also there but that is another matter.

Now Sanjay Randhekar is going to show us how music is organised today.
(Sanjay demonstrates a few compositions and its variants on the synthesiser and keyboard).

Randhekar: Having made one piece of melody which could be called a motif, we can do a lot of variations and present it in different ways. I am talking of background music for films. We use a certain thematic approach where a theme is used differently in different kinds of situations. I have certain sounds here that can be termed "orchestral effects", so with the touch of a key I can produce them. I have it all conveniently on the keyboard, whereas it

could take an 80-piece orchestra to execute the same thing.

Vanraj Bhatia: In India as well as abroad, hiring orchestras is becoming very difficult. Getting live musicians to accompany performances is very difficult, unless they are folk instrumentalists. When I did plays with Ebrahim Alkazi in Delhi, the live musicians would blackmail you at the last minute and say, "Pay us more money, otherwise we are not playing." And they were the only ones who knew the cues, so you were totally at their mercy. When I did the play *Andha Yug*, we dispensed with musicians altogether and it was the college kids from the National School of Drama who sang the choruses, about 30-40 choruses, that too unaccompanied.

There is not a bassoon player except in the Navy, so how are you going to build the orchestra? If you want orchestral sound, then this instrument (the keyboard) has some synthetic quality because it is after all a synthesiser. But we try with samplers, for instance you have samplers for guitars. The guitar makes noises when you slide the fingers on it, and now you have a synthesiser that produces these sounds for you, to get the nearest that you can to the actual sound. It is not the same, it can never be, because the machine is a machine and a human being playing an instrument is a human being.

In India, there is no musical education provided in a systematic manner. I have seen music universities in Tokyo where only music is taught; I have seen this is Taiwan, in Singapore. The constant excuse that Indians give is "Ah! They don't have their own traditional music, so they are learning western music. We have our traditional music so we don't have to learn western music." This is total nonsense! Japan has its traditional music; I agree it is not as developed as our traditional music, and it is not as alive there as it is here except through kabuki. Yet they all have their traditional music; they teach their own instruments, plus they teach western music.

I did music for a fashion show, which dealt with the history of costumes through Hindi movies. Let us see how many do you recognise through its music. It is my version of antakshari.

(Audio clip: soundscape of music tracks from Sant Tukaram, Heer Ranja, Amrapali, Mughal-e-Azam, Reshma and Shera, Saheb Bibi Ghulam, Gandhi and "Dhak dhak karne laga" from Beta).

See, a professional has to do everything! A professional can't say, "I won't do this" and "I won't do that." Whatever the work is, you have to do it, to the best of your capacity. And I try to do that.

Veenapani Chawla and Vinay Kumar

Veenapani Chawla is the founder of Adishakti, a theatre company based in Pondicherry. Chawla's works are well-known for their contemporary reading of traditional forms such as chhau, kathakali and kudiattaym. Trained in many traditional performing art forms, Vinay Kumar has been working with Adishakti for almost a decade.

Note on practical exercises:

Towards a New Aesthetic for Theatre: An Interdisciplinary Approach

Many years ago, there was a sage and someone asked him, "What do you want? Do you want the heads of a thousand cattle with gold rings around their horns? Or do you want the experience of a transcendental reality beyond time and beyond space?" The sage said, "I want both. I want the heads of cattle and I want this realisation of spiritual experience beyond time and space."

The story is from the Upanishads. It talks about two realities. Expressions of art are interpretations of your reality what you think is real, what you perceive to be real. For thousands of years, in this part of the world, reality was perceived to be what you saw and experienced through your senses. In another part of the world, reality was perceived to be a transcendental experience beyond time and space. One led to a total loss of control over material existence, and the other led to a total involvement in material existence. Now, in our century, these two realities are coming together. At one level, perhaps, they are coming together because of neo-physics, which makes you look at your everyday existence in a different way, telling you that what you "see" is not necessarily what "is". On the other hand, there is a revival of thinking that is not exclusivist; it does not believe that only this fragment or this segment is true; it tries to take in everything; it is all-inclusive. It tries to say that what you do not perceive and do not hear may also be reality. It is this inclusive attitude that is making people like Vinay Kumar, Arvind Rane and I look for a language to express ourselves, and to interpret this view of reality.

Just like Albert Einstein's mathematical formulae were his language to express his very difficult ideas, we need another language to express

difficult concepts. We can express them though metaphor, through symbol, through an enhanced physicalisation. I talk about an enhanced physicalisation because in theatre, the expression of ideas takes place through the presence of the actor. In cinema, it is the whole visual. Every art has its own primary way of communicating. In theatre, we are lucky that we have the live presence of the actor whom you can touch and smell and see. Through his inner concentration, his psychological consciousness, through his physical consciousness, he can communicate ideas to the audience. So we have been trying to develop this language by using the instrumentality of the actor.

One of the first things that we did was to turn to the traditional forms that exist in India the traditional performing forms and the traditional martial art forms. There is a theory that martial art forms are the base for all performing arts in every region of this country. We went to Kerala and we looked at Kallaripayet. "Kallari" means "school" and "payet" means "fighting". According to a theory, this form was taken by the Buddhists in the Far East, where it developed into martial art traditions of those places. It is a part of the everyday existence of many people in Kerala even today. We looked into Kallaripayet because we wanted to understand how this neutral, non-performative form became performative and lent itself to other expressions, both folk and classical, in Kerala. We looked at Kathakali and wondered how it developed from Kallaripayet. We looked at their similar movements and tried to guess where and how the changes had occurred.

(Vinay demonstrates various movements from Kallaripayet and Kathakali as Veenapani names and describes them in terms of techniques of breathing.)

Apart from exploring and creating a vocabulary of movement to be used in performance, this kind of work was also done so that the actor would understand each and every element of the dynamic involved in the movement. He would understand where the balance is, because the movement would become so slow that he was able to explore the extension and the balance of each and every unit of that particular movement.

If you breathe in and hold your breath, sustain it and allow only a fragment of it to move your body, holding the rest of it...

(Demonstration along with a student)

Take a deep breath and hold your energy. Allow all that energy to be in your arms. Move.

If I pick up a cup of tea, I use functional energy, I use a lot of breath in that, I waste it. I want to save that breath. I want to pick up that cup of tea but I want to use less breath than I use when I am actually picking up a cup of tea. Use more effort and less breath because then, the energy you get on stage is more powerful and more attractive. If you use effortless energy on stage, it is vacuous. If you have thought and you concentrate on that thought, the energy you generate because of that is more interesting than if you are vacuous. Breath, after all, is a physical expression of emotion and thought. When you feel rage, you breathe in a particular way; when you are talking, you breathe in a particular way. If you simulate that energy by controlling your breath, then one feels there is something more in the actor than just vacant space.

(Demonstration.)

By the time we reached this point, we had worked on kathakali, chhau, and kallaripayet, and we had broken down the links between these. We had done a lot of improvisation so that the dynamics of movement became a sort of automatism in the actor. When we went into production, I would tell Vinay to create images of various kinds and he would use this vocabulary and all the background of our work that was lying somewhere in his unconscious, and we would come up with images that we crafted into the play.

(Performance of an excerpt from Impressions of Bheema.)

The attempt was to deconstruct the epic hero in a subversion of that man of power and strength. We wanted to deconstruct that and finally, in the last scene, to reconstruct him as a psychological hero; give him heroism in a different way.

A study of several cinematic principles was involved in Impressions of Bheema. For us, the principles were "image", the "show, don't tell" principle of a minimal visual text. Another was a rapid change of visuals, with the body of the actor creating images for you that keep you

interested because they are constantly changing and telling you something. The third was layered images, where the image is not illustrative only of what is being said, but sometimes it is also against what is being said. For instance, when he talks about the wild boar having come out, he makes an image of a boar emerging from within him and overwhelming him. So you have the resonance of an interior boar in the external boar that exists in the first scene. You have what I like to call "portmanteau visuals", visuals which are layered and are packed with many meanings. What you also have is an exploration into the time-space dimension, which cinema is so capable of doing. How do you show a rapid change of space and time in theatre?

There are so many transitions of space and time and personality in this play. We have used various devices that come from the traditional forms. When he is looking into yesterday, he turns around in an anti-clockwise movement and jumps into yesterday. This is a device of traditional theatre to change space and time, they never had cinema do it for them.

(Demonstration).

Vocal and psychological expression is a very important and sacred part of theatre. In kudiattam, you have the theory of abhinaya or expression of a particular emotion or power being the result of the concentration of held breath at a particular psychological centre or chakra of the tantric tradition. Thus, if you hold your concentrated breath at a particular point, you can express the karuna (tenderness, compassion) bhava. Sometimes the experience can be so strong that the person who is performing can start crying. In karuna, the energy is taken from the muladhara, which is at the base of the spine. You take that energy and store it at a particular point, so it becomes a knot and exerts some sort of pressure. It can be a little dangerous if you don't know how to do it right. That concentrated breath forms a kind of pain and somehow it triggers off an emotion. You depend on it as craft, because sometimes the actor has to make very rapid transitions and you can't do that sudden switching from one emotion to another.

Kudiattam is a classical form of theatre, unlike the dance form of Kathakali. It originated in the fourth century AD, and is probably the only form of Sanskrit theatre surviving today that is close to what the Natyashastra prescribes as theatre. This particular performance is by

Guru Madhav Chakyar, the greatest living exponent of the form. He is over 80 and has been performing other things, but this particular performance was done after he turned 60. Superficially, it may look like Kathakali, but it is not. This form is older and more restrained, less spatially mobile, less dance, more abhinaya, more mudras, more expression on the face, more language of the hands, and the particular breathing that you might not be able to see because it is the secret of the performer.

(Video excerpt of the performance.)

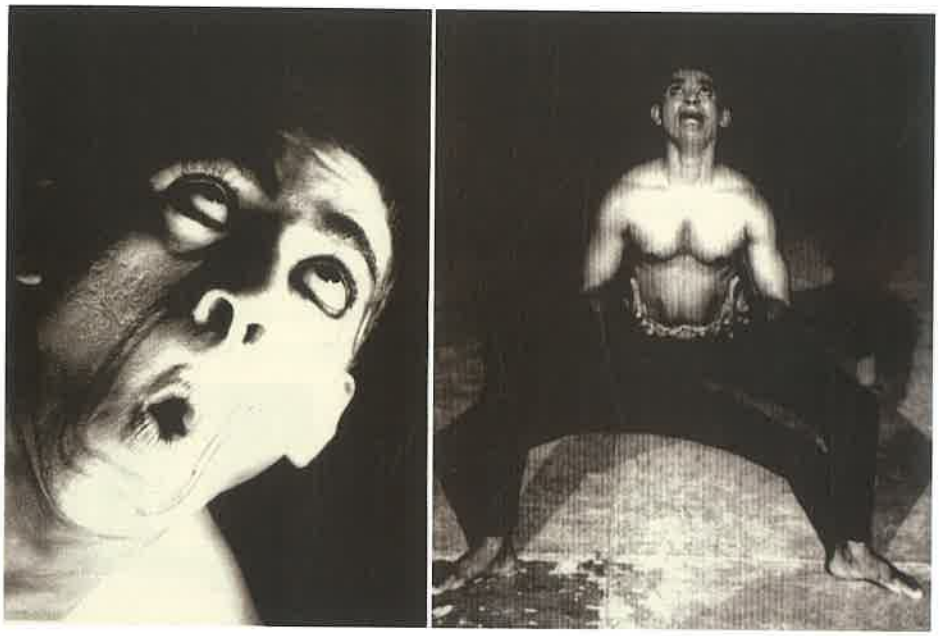
I had just about acquainted myself with Guruji in 1987 and he would not tell us the secret of breath. He had told us about it in theory and had given us a clue. Then it came to us slowly through him, and through his pupil, Usha Nangyar. We explored it in Impressions of Bheema. When the actor has to make these enormous emotional transitions as he did in Impressions of Bheema he was funny up to a point and then suddenly Duryodhana died and the actor had to become tormented, because Duryodhana was a great enemy and also someone for whom he has positive feelings. So we played with the idea of using very little breath during the narration of the text so that you had to struggle for breath. That physical struggle translated itself into a kind of mental struggle. Also we used the principle of karuna which we had a clue about if you concentrate your breath in the chest, you will get this element of sorrow. So that brings us to vachika and satvika, vocal and psychological expression.

(Demonstration of a scene from Impressions of Bheema.)

More recently, this work with breath has also been used for transferring abhinaya into the body. In theatre there are no close-ups, so the emotion has to be expressed through the body.

(Demonstration of the snake movement from kallaripayet.)

This work is an exercise, an exploration. You discover new things at every point. If you want to move your arm, you will discover the initiating impulse in a particular manner. If it is organic, there will be a double movement on exhalation; there is some other part of the body that dips. So it leads to a wave-like movement, which is very sensuous. A small part



Vinay Kumar in rehearsals

of the work we are doing at the moment develops this movement further. The work we are doing is called Brihanala. Brihanala is Arjuna as a female impersonator.

When I started work on Brihanala, the first thing that struck me was that Arjuna was called Savyasachi, which means ambidextrous. In the region I come from, there is a Draupadi cult according to which Arjuna as Savyasachi is related to Shiva Ardhanarishwar, who is half woman and half man. The left side is woman and the right side is man; both are ascetic, both are erotic; both have this element of the feminine and the

Veenapani Chawla in rehearsal / demonstration

masculine. I took this idea a little further and I found that recent medical discoveries are that the right half of the brain governs the left arm and the left side governs the right arm. The left half has feeling states, cognition of space, simultaneity of vision, a metaphorical view of things, and an understanding of music. A person who has damaged one side of the brain might retain the capacity to sing despite losing the faculty of speech, because speech belongs to the other side of the brain. The right side deals with sequential time, abstract knowledge, numbers, speech, and discursive logic. My idea was to evoke these two elements in the scenes. The first fragment is a metaphor for the big question in the Geeta: "What is my dharma?" Dharma actually means "something to hold".

We use the idea of Bheema and not the actual events in the life of Bheema; we use the concept of Arjuna. We are making them do things that they are not doing in the epic. The idea about Savyasachi is something I linked up with the concept of ambidexterity and then took it into brain lateralisation.

Vinay: Theatre groups around the 1980s started to find out about traditional and folk arts. The dead end comes after you learn it and then wonder what you are going to do with this form. When I learned all these skills, I was in a similar state until I met Veenapani. Most people cut from what they learn and paste the stuff into their play. At that time, I had learned a bit of kallaripayet, kudiattam, and kathakali. After meeting Veenapani, I had the option of being a performer of one of these forms. The question was, did I want to do that? If not, then the question was, what did I want to search for in that form? We decided to go into the base principles. Over the years, we have done certain kind of experiments. I like the flexibility, the freedom; I don't have to be rigid in my form. That helps a lot. I think most of the performers are very aware of the pulse they get from the audience. If you sit very quietly, then my performance will die. I throw a thing and you throw something back and I build on it. If you move even slightly, that makes the performer very aware of what he is doing, and his input will change. In each performance, I am able to improvise, and then the next time I can incorporate it as a part of the play. It is a process.

Maya Krishna Rao

Maya Krishna Rao started her acting career in street theatre in the 1980s. Trained in kathakali and kathak, Rao has been working towards a new language in theatre around the genre of dance theatre and body performance. She is a visiting faculty member at the National School of Drama in New Delhi.

Note on practical exercises:

Imagination From the Body: The Process of Creating Dance Theatre

I would like to tell you about the influences that have probably influenced me in the making of *Khol Do*.

I would like to start with Kathakali. What makes Kathakali very rich is that it is a theatre form, in which you come on stage as a character. What makes it very rich also is that the form looks at the performer a bit like the way they do in dance. One of the great strengths of Kathakali is that it breaks up the body into as many parts as possible in its training.

Students spend many years just trying to find the flow of energy into the body without thinking of meaning at all.

Let me tell you about the meanings that got made for me when I was improvising. I was lying down and I had the sense of being on a train. Then at some point, the reverberations of the train got into my personae. Then those arms became the blanket and then I suddenly felt as though Siraj-ud-din [the character in *Khol Do*] was getting a blanket over his body. By the time the blanket came over his body, I sensed "her" [his daughter's] blanket.

When you are making a scene, you are not consciously thinking, "Let's reel the audience in now." This is how the subconscious works, this is how the world of dreams works. So many things flow and break and another flow starts; they interlock and start again.

There was one improvisation day when I told myself, "Maya, play some music, get into the Kathakali stance and see what happens." Beyond that, I did not give myself any other task. Suddenly, with all clarity, I decided, Siraj-ud-Din finds his daughter in dance, in Kathakali. To find her in

dance, he must become the lover. In Kathakali, the moments that are beautiful and full of richness of expression are the ones of lovers meeting. When he creates the image of the lover, then he is truly her. He is her, she is seeing her lover or it is Siraj-ud-Din finding her and together they are both seeing the lover.

In Kathakali, the stage was first created in the courtyard of the temple. Therefore, all movements are always in a square. We use this square minimally. I use a lot of repetition. Even when I improvise, I go on repeating an action just to see what will happen. This actually helps you to get into a world where the mind is not thinking, but it lets something flow out of the repetition. So I kept moving in a square and the repeated expressions started coming on my face. When I look back on it, these expressions are the classic things that a lover goes through: the shringara, the beauty of the lover. You are sad because you know you must part after viraha, there is always room for jealousy because you are going away. I kept practising it in my mind, so it kept going from shingara to karuna to irsha. This kept repeating itself without any context, but that is the way in which I felt more and more like the lover.

For a long time, you are doing one thing without thinking about it, because it has not been put into the context of any character. You keep doing eye exercises for hours together. Then the musculature becomes so tuned and skilled that when you start playing the part, the teacher simply says, "Okay, do this." Even then, the guru will never say, "Smile a bit more," never will he give technical directions. Musculature has been trained, now fill yourself, go ahead and read whatever you want.

After many years, I got the courage to ask my guru, "Please tell me something about breath." Because it's actually a taboo subject. In shringara, you take only half of the breath in, then you see the person and it is only after you have absorbed that beautiful person that you take the rest of the breath in. Then there is exhalation.

If I can tell you another wonderful secret, I met with Madhavachakyar, the great Kuddiattam artist. Kuddiattam is actually the mother of Kathakali. We have taken a lot from Kuddiattam character playing, mudra, abhinaya. Now, Madhavachakyar is 90 plus. There is this beautiful Bali Vijayam story where he goes on playing death. For 45

minutes, this man plays death! Everybody knows and everybody wants to ask Madhavachakyar, "How do you play this?" Everybody knows it has to do with breath, but the question is, "Will he ever tell us?" Of course he does tell his students over years and years, so he is not going to tell you over one sitting.

But he did tell me something. He is the only child of his mother, he was 80 and she was 95 or something when she died. He said, "By that time I had become such an experienced performer and such an old man myself that when I watched my mother die, I was partly the performer watching her die and partly the son and the only child. But I could not cut off that performer who was watching." He had been a performer for so long, it was a part of his identity. He said, "I watched her cruelly. I watched every kind of breath she took and over days I watched it."

Maya Krishna Rao: Scene from *The Job*

I have never considered myself a dancer, I consider myself an actor. Somebody invited me to a dance seminar and asked me whether I would make a little dance piece and be a part of this workshop. I think it was a blessing in disguise, because it helped me get in touch with myself as a Kathakali performer. Now having started on that journey, there is the urgency of "Kathakali is fantastic, I have to dip into it more and more ways!"

I have now edited *Macbehth*. I wonder, can I, with my guru, make a Kathakali performance which is Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in a way that people are not left wondering, "What is the meaning of that mudra?" This is the problem with Kathakali. People cannot understand the meanings of mudras. Can we do it in a way that they can get the fullness of that relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth through this rich medium of Kathakali without us having to get worried about transmitting meaning or not? So that is another challenge.

Maya Krishna Rao: Scene from Kathakali performance

Maya Krishna Rao: Scene from Khol Do

Schedule

19th October
Introduction by **Neera Adarkar**
Inaugural Lecture on Performing Arts and Relationship between Patrons, Artists and Audience by **Anuradha Kapur**
Drama from Text to Production: Roundtable Discussion - **Chandrakant Kulkarni, Prashant Dalvi, Sunil Shanbag** and **Atul Tiwari**
Music in Performance, **Rajashri Pathak**

20th October
Towards a New Aesthetic for Theatre - An Interdisciplinary Approach:
Lecture - Demonstration, **Veenapani Chawla and Vinay Kumar**
What Happens in Music: An Introduction, **Ashok Ranade**

Screening of Bhavantaran, a film on Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra by **Kumar Sahani**

21st October
Thinking of a Performance: Body Language as Subtext, **Kumkum Sangari**
Lecture Demonstration on Tradition and Indian Dance, **Daksha Mushruwala**
Notions of Realism in Performing Arts: A Panel Discussion - **Shanta Gokhale, Anuradha Kapur** and **Arundhati Subramanium**

A performance by **Maya Krishna Rao**, Khol Do based on a story by **Sadat Hasan Manto**

22nd October
Imagination Through the Body: The Process Creating Dance-Theatre, **Maya Rao**
Modes of Narration in Indian Dance and Contemporary Viewing **Jeroo Mulla**
Music, Sound and Culture, **Ashok Ranade**

23rd October
Future of Performance: Music in Transition, **Bhaskar Chandavarkar**
Emergence of the `Modern' in Indian Theatre, **Shanta Gokhale**
Kamdev Ka Apna, Vasant Ritu Ka Sapna An Adaptation of A Midsummer Night's Dream:
Performance by Naya Theatre, Director: **Habib Tanvir**

24th October
An Overview of Multi-disciplinary Approach in Art Practices, **Madhusree Dutta**
The Contemporary Experiments in Popular Indian Music, **Vanraj Bhatia**
Indian Theatre in Post Independent Era: The Indianness and the Theatre, **Habib Tanvir**

Workshop on Tales, Sites and Memory: Reading History Through Living Culture

In Collaboration With MPC3, NCPA

October 26-31, 1999
National Center for Preforming Arts

Introduction by Neera Adarkar

Students are extremely eager to learn more, they want to interact, they want to participate in activities but there are tremendous constraints of academic pressures, of time, not to mention the pressures of this mega-city. Hence, the exposure is very limited; it does not go beyond the areas covered in the academic schedule, or whatever is offered on a platter by the electronic media and print media.

I am a teacher in a college of architecture. Some of us have consistently been arguing with authorities about the admission criteria for architecture colleges. Architecture is supposed to be the mother of all arts, yet the admissions criteria give more weight to physics, chemistry, and mathematics. At the most, there's an aptitude test to check your drawing skills, but otherwise the humanities don't matter. In the first year, there's no history. No history of art, no history of culture, no history of architecture. It all starts in the second year.

Often I come across students who want to do theatre design or who want to take their dissertation in set design, but they have not seen a live dance performance in their entire lives. They have no exposure to experimental theatre either. In one of the classes I took, out of 45 students, only three had visited the Town Hall [the Asiatic Society], one of the most prominent landmarks in Bombay.

That is why, when we were designing this workshop, we decided it would have two objectives: firstly, a multidisciplinary approach, which means we will not deal with only one field of art; secondly, we will expose the students to various ways of looking at a product of art. Through the workshop, we shall be exploring the ways of looking at history; how history is inscribed in our memory through textbooks or through films and also through comic strips like Amar Chitra Katha. We will also discuss the concepts of myths, evidence, and the role of interpretations in the construction of history.

K N Panikkar

Prof K N Panikkar is former Dean and professor at the School of Social Sciences at the Jawaharlal Nehru University. He retired recently from the Vice-Chancellorsip of Sree Sankaracharya University, Kalady, Kerala. He is associated with several universities in India and abroad. His publications include, Against Lord and State, Culture, Ideology and Hegemony, Communal Threat, Secular Challenge and Before the Night Falls: Forebodings of Fascism in India. Among the books that he has edited is The Concerned Indian Guide to Communalism. Panikkar is also known for his articulated commitment towards pedagogy and social activism.

History Through Facts and Myths

Can you name a book of history that you may have read recently? Did you believe what was written in the book? Do you accept that as history, given to you, or do you raise the question, "Why should I believe what is written in this book?"

It is necessary for those who read history to have certain training to test the history that is given to us, particularly since there is no other academic discipline in India today that is as contentious as history. It is necessary to have a public debate about history rather than mere academic discussion in universities and classrooms, because history is being mythified in a certain way. The distinction between history and myth is getting more and more blurred.

French historian Marc Bloch is famous for his two-volume classic Feudal Society: The Growth of Ties of Dependence, Vol 1 and Feudal Society: Social Classes and Political Organisation, Vol 2. This work is considered a classic, and is used by historians all over. He also wrote a book that is more widely used and read, The Historian's Craft. By terming it such, Bloch is suggesting to us that there is a craft specific to history, and that craft is what we historians generally call the "method" of history. The present debate and discussion is all about the craft, the method, which has existed in one form or the other right from the beginning of historical writing.

If history is the chronicle of the past, the past is not entirely given to the historian. The past that he chronicles is something he chooses and constructs. In making a choice, the present is a decisive factor. One of the greatest historians of social history once said that history is all about what one generation considers being worthy of remembering about the last generation. Therefore, history is always something contemporary. It is not purely a matter of the dead past being brought to you.

The historian in many ways is not a free agent. Unlike other academic pursuits, history is not interrogated directly. The historian's dialogue with the past is through the medium of what historians call "evidence". It is through that evidence, and through interrogating that evidence, that the historian approaches the past. There is no history without evidence; this is an important aspect because histories are being written today without evidence.

What constitutes historical evidence? That raises another question - how does a historian approach the past? Through what instrumentality or agency? There are several sources through which a historian approaches the past, among which I may isolate three. I call them facts, myths and memory. Let us first consider facts. What constitutes facts is a very contentious, debatable issue. One, all facts of history are not accessible to historians, because historian has no means to observe and experience what happened in the past. Two, all "facts" are not historical facts. What comes to us as fact is chosen by someone else or is mediated by several forces.

Let me give you two examples. Those who work on ancient history (which is a more difficult period to work on as far as India is concerned, because our consciousness of the historical past is very limited and therefore we have lost most of our historical evidence, unlike most countries in the world) use archaeology. The archaeological evidence is only partial because of the passage of time or elemental or human intervention, a major part is lost to us. Some of it is available to us due to natural survival and some others because of the intervention of the state.

The second example is that of historians using written records as sources, particularly those who use such records for periods when literary sources and written documentary sources of the state are available. These sources are extremely subjective. It contains what is recorded by a person who made choices, and it is possible that the person left out things that a historian today would like to use. Take descriptions of battles, which we have from the times of the Mahabharata down to the colonial records. In most cases, the description is done with a slant; it is done with somebody in mind who is important in that battle. Therefore, a historian's ability to deal with the past is affected by his access to the past. Even then, all that is available to the historian may not constitute historical fact. Only when a historian chooses it does a fact become a historical fact. Given that choice, I would say that there are two types of facts: hard facts and subsidiary facts. What is a hard fact? Say, for instance, that "the Babri Masjid was destroyed on 6 December, 1992" is a hard fact. But then there are several subsidiary facts. For example, if we ask, "Who destroyed it?" the answer could be, "A group of Hindu fundamentalists." Another answer could be, "A group of nationalists and patriots." Another question could be, "What did the leaders do?" and the answer could be, "attempted to prevent it". Another answer could be, "encouraged it".

Babri Masjid demolition on 6th December 1992 in different stages. Source: (Outlook 1992)

(The most authentic map of Sri Ayodhyaji) Locally produced campaign material for the Hindu fundamentalists. Source: Roadside vendor / Bharti Kapadia

The "fact" that is privileged involves an element of interpretation. If you are saying that it [the demolition] was done by a group of Hindu fundamentalists, then there is an element of interpretation involved in it. If you say that it was a group of nationalists and patriots, there is once again an element of interpretation. Or, for instance, if you take the Marxist interpretation of history and compare it with some other interpretations. You take one in which the individual is important and, as a result, facts are picked up from the past on the basis of this "individual-centred" narrative of history. On the other hand, a Marxist historian will not pick up facts to show the importance of that individual, but will use them to construct an analytical framework which would highlight the evolution of social forces. Or, for that matter, postmodernists are not likely to emphasise meta-narratives like colonialism or nationalism but would concentrate on picking up facts from local history or fragmented history, and so on.

There is nothing absolute about historical facts. This selection of facts, or turning facts into historical facts, is not whimsical. That is where the method of history re-enters in the writing of history. Any of these facts that are turned into historical facts need substantiation. There cannot be any historical fact that cannot be substantiated, proved or demonstrated.

If you want to believe a historian, the historian's craft should be available to you. You should be able to verify whatever is stated as historical fact. If it is not verifiable, then you have to question the veracity of that "historical fact". However, verifiability does not really mean truth. It does not establish what one can call historical truth, since there is no one truth in history.

For example, Peru was a colony, conquered by Spain. If you look at the documents and the narratives of the colonial conquests, be it in Asia or Latin America or in Africa, they are all narratives of conquest created by the conquerors. Modern historians will use these narratives for the purposes of historical construction. The Spanish narratives of the conquest of Peru are all written from the point of view of the conquerer. But a historian named Nathan Wachtel wrote a remarkable book called *The Vision of the Vanquished.* He reconstructed the entire Spanish conquest of Peru from the point of view of the conquered and re-read all the narratives available to make it the voice of those conquered. Similarly, you can now see this approach in many areas. In India, for example, an activist (not a historian) wrote the history of a district as *A History Without Documents.* He constructed this history without documents by going from one family to another through the entire district. He narrated history as people remembered it. The importance of this was that he reconstructed their history from the point of view of the oppressed. There is a qualitative difference between the ways in which truth is understood. The version of the landlord

about what happened will be different; the peasant's version will be different.

When we talk about truth of history it gets linked with the question of objectivity. A historian picks up a particular fact because he has a bias. If there are A-Z facts and a historian picks up A, X and Y, it is because he has a bias towards these. The question of objectivity is very problematic: a completely objective historian is one without a viewpoint; the type of history that is so written is unreadable because there is no interpretation, no viewpoint.

Having said that, let me introduce at this stage another problem, the distinction between facts and myths. Myths are, in a way, the opposite of facts, in the sense that unlike historical facts, what constitutes a myth is not "verifiable". Despite this, myths and history cannot be counter-posed as true and false. That history is true and myth is false is not the proper way of approaching the issue. This is because myths also represent reality; in fact all myths have an element of reality. Myths represent reality symbolically and metaphorically. But then, why call them "myths"? If it reflects reality, then why not "history" and why "myth"?
To a large extent, myths arise out of the human desire to understand reality. For instance, "Why do day and night happen?" When at first man started looking at this, he could not find an answer. Therefore, the Greeks created a myth about it, and the myth they created was of the sun god Helios drawing his chariot across the sky. The sun was his chariot, and when the sun comes the day comes, when the chariot goes under, the day goes. This was perfectly satisfactory for the Greeks. I think that is the quality of the human mind. You are looking for an explanation, you are trying to reason it out and when you can't reason it out, and yet having the urge to understand reality, the myth arises.

At the same time, the myth masks reality. Therefore, myths are illusory representations of man and his world. Given that illusory nature, a myth may not help discover the historicity of an event. Most of the myths are timeless, in a way. Yet, myths are created in a particular society, at a particular juncture in society, and a historian asks, "Why did this myth arise at that particular point of time?" So, as a reflection of a social, intellectual reality, and cultural reality, the myth is important, and therefore myths constitute a source of historical writing.

The myth performs several other functions. Myth is an agency of legitimisation in a society, and in fact there are large numbers of myths, which play this role. In this domain, history and myth overlap each other over a period of time. Let me take a myth about the creation of the southernmost tip of India, which consists of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The myth is that this part of India was created by sage Parasuram. He threw an axe into the sea and as a consequence a landmass surfaced. I wish it were that easy because then, we could have more land in India and thus solve our population problem! What he did was to reclaim the land and give it as a gift to the Brahmins, and being Brahmins they did not plough or

cultivate. So they gave the land to others, and those others cultivated it and gave the fruits to the Brahmins. Thus the appropriation of wealth by Brahmins was legitimized. It is very difficult to say when this myth originated, but maybe during the eighth or ninth century, when cultivation became more widespread and there was need for land to be controlled. This myth legitimised the strength and the power of the Brahmins. And those who believed in this myth are those who became the victims of this legitimisation.

Another myth that I want to draw attention to in little more details is the myth of Ayodhya. Today a popular history of Ayodhya is being constructed from a series of myths. First is about the location of Ayodhya itself and of the janmasthana (birthplace) of Lord Rama. The myth is about the time and location of Ayodhya. It is said that a saint told Vikramaditya, when he was looking for Ayodhya, to leave a calf loose, and the place at which the calf secreted milk would be the point where Ayodhya was. Vikramaditya did as he was told, and where the calf secreted milk he located Ayodhya. Then, of course, he established his power there and also derived legitimacy from Ayodhya as Rama's birthplace. The second myth is about the existence of a temple at the spot where the Babri Masjid stood. The reasoning is as follows: If Ayodhya was the birthplace of Rama, then a temple inevitably existed there and, if there was a temple, the mosque was constructed by demolishing it. The third myth is that from 1528 onwards there were 77 attempts by Hindus to reclaim the temple.

Most of these myths were created in the second half of the nineteenth century. Today, they form part of the popular history of Ayodhya. For instance, "1,74,000 Hindus sacrificed their lives defending the temple" and "3,00,000 died in 77 battles subsequently". Exact figures are given, which impart a certain sense of historical veracity. So these myths have now become authentic histories; not only are they paraded as historical facts, they have even become part of the textbooks. Over a period of time, many of these things that have no verifiability or no substantiation would become part of popular history and a part of the curriculum in schools and colleges. The distinction between facts and myths is completely blurred.

How does this blurring take place? That is where the connection between myth and history really comes in. Both share a common truth; it is not that myths are purely false constructions. In Vikramaditya's attempt to derive legitimacy from the association with Rama, there is an element of historical truth about Vikramaditya. From that, the whole myth of the temple is created. If the myth of the temple is created, the construction of the mosque then follows by another set of myths. That a mosque was constructed is a historical fact, but a myth is created around that truth. One myth is that when Babur's general tried to construct the mosque, the constructed portion would crumble on its own at night. This

happened every day for months together. Now this myth is seen as a fact that this shows the strength of Lord Rama, and so on.

There is also an element of truth about these 77 fights. In 1855, there was a fight about the Hanuman Garhi temple, which is slightly away from the Babri Masjid. The fight took place when a group of Muslims said that there was a mosque below the temple. A group of about 500 people attacked the temple, and the Muslims were defeated by the sadhus. After this fight, during the course of the nineteenth century, the myth about the 77 battles arises. The point I am trying to make is that in all such creation of myths, there is an element of history that provided the factual core around which the myth is created. The factual source helps to legitimise the myth as historical fact.

The best way to explain the relationship between popular history and history is through an anecdote. Sometime in the early 1990s, I was invited by a Rotary Club in Delhi to give a lecture. I spoke on the history of Ayodhya on the basis of known historical evidence. Once the lecture was over, I could see quite a few people were visibly enraged. One of them stood up and said, "You being a historian, what you are saying may be true but that is not my history." I said, "There is no way I can change your notion of history. Perhaps that is not even needed. But in terms of the larger social relevance it is necessary."

This is a very important question. One of the ways by which mythified popular social history can be contended with is by creating local histories. Each locality has got a history of its own, and this history could counter mythified popular histories.

Let me relate this to another common area between history and myth their relationship with memory. Both history and myth are passed on from one generation to another through oral traditions. It is through oral traditions, through what we will call "social memory", that history, particularly popular history and myth, are passed on. Today, oral traditions are very important sources of history. There are attempts now in India, and very good work being done on the basis of memory, such as Shahid Amin's, and, in a different way, the work by Urvashi Butalia. At the same time, myths are primarily circulated through oral traditions, and because of that there is an intersection between history and myth. As a result, myth often occurs as historical memory. I think that explaining this intersection, and how to differentiate between the two, is where the historian's craft comes into play.

History is not a discipline that can be used without training. History is like cricket those who do not practise are greater experts than those who actually do. The practice of History is not very simple; it is quite difficult to master. History like other disciplines has a method which is central to the construction of history, and if that method is not respected in the production of history, myth may replace history and tailored memory may be represented as historical fact.

Discussion

Student: When the method or the craft is itself a creation of the human mind, how much authenticity can be attached to the same?

Panikkar: In the creation of the method, the historian is interacting with the subject. The method arises out of this interaction, and therefore, this method is an evolving method. In fact, even though I use the word "method," there are several "methods". These methods interact with each other and that has pushed the frontiers of historical knowledge from the early to the present times. The problem today is that if you have the creation of histories without any respect to any of these methods.

Student: When popular myths act as a medium for social reform, is it necessary to project a contrary historical viewpoint, which might at best serve the purpose of academic interest?

Panikkar: I think this is a complex question. The complexity begins with the first part of the question, which presupposes a process taking place in society that people who try and change society have necessarily had to have certain agencies. For instance, in the early part of the nineteenth century, religious reform worked as an agency of modernisation. Similarly, certain myths could be used in order to oppose certain tendencies in society that act against the interests of society. If you are doing that, then you have to be conscious of the fact that these are myths, not histories, and the use of the myth has a specific purpose.

But the use of the myth as a lever to create consciousness is of doubtful importance. For instance, if you want to remove from society the superstitious practices, which are associated with religion, then a reformer might use religion in order to remove those superstitious practices, but he should also be aware of the fact that the consciousness he is creating in society is within the parameters of religion.

Student: Someone told me that the textbooks he has read still use communal categories to explain history. Why is a different explanatory model not used?

Panikkar: There are two representations of history in India that project history in a very wrong fashion. One is tourist literature and the other is textbooks. Those of you who go to tourist centres will realise that in the so-called tourist guides, the garbled communal history they give to us is incomprehensible. I was in Chittorgarh once, and this gentleman who took me around gave me such a garbled version of history. At the end I got so disgusted, I told him, "No, what you are saying is not correct." So he said, "How do you know?"

The history of India is derived from various sources. One is colonial historical writings, which have a very strong influence on historians even today. The colonial history interprets

history on communal line, the history of Hindus and Muslims and Christians and so on. The second is that there is a conscious attempt to project the history of India as Hindu history, that is Indian history can only be understood in terms of religious affiliations. VD Savarkar wrote a book called *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History*. According to him, India as a nation came into being as a result of the continuous fight of Hindus against foreigners from the times of the Shakas to the British. The communal interpretation, which is now getting into textbooks, is modelled on Savarkar's text. So the textbooks contain a combination of the present communal and the colonial communal, since they are easily available to those who are writing textbooks.

Student: If historical writings from the past could be biased, how can we ever know the truth?

Panikkar: Historians test the veracity of an event on the basis of a multitude sources. Just reporting a historic event, however authentic, does not persuade a historian to accept it as historically correct, because there can be different constructions. Some constructions may not have anything to do with the actuality of the event. Therefore, testing is very necessary.

When I was doing research for my Ph D, I came across an incident about the son of Bahadur Shah Zafar captured and taken from Humayun's tomb to the Red Fort. There are two reports in the East India Company's record about what happened during that event, and how people responded to it. These two accounts given by the British officials were absolutely contradictory. I, as a young novice, did not know how to handle this. I talked to several historians. Then somebody told me to meet and discuss with Dr. Paramatma Saran. He was an outstanding medieval historian. He gave me the way to resolve it. The way to do it was really by going through the internal structure of these two documents and then asking the question, "Is it possible to relate this structure of events with a third possible source?" And he gave me a Persian source. So a historian does that all the time, and then accepts facts on the basis of their verifiability through the comparative study of sources.

I was travelling from Delhi to Madras at the height of the Ayodhya movement. Next to me was a sadhu, whom I recognised as Swami Avaidhanad of Gorakhpur. I asked him what was happening in Uttar Pradesh, and for the next two hours he gave me a lecture on Indian history. I asked him some innocent questions and he gave me perfectly convincing answers. Anybody would have believed him. About half an hour before reaching Madras, he asked me, "Aap kya karte hain?" I told him I teach history at Jawaharlal Nehru University. He remembered my name because both of us had appeared face to face in one of the newspapers. After that, he did not speak to me. Anybody else hearing him might have believed what he presented as history of India, though it was completely imaginary or distorted. This is the problem with history.

Student: How do tourist guides come up with their incorrect facts?

Panikkar: In order to appeal to the local pride. The local personalities are presented as larger-than-life individuals. If you hear a description of the Battle of Haldighati from a tourist guide in Udaipur, you would be led to believe that it was one of the biggest battles in the annals of military history. Secondly, most tourist guides do not have proper training . They have to speak to a group of people for about 45 minutes and the material that the Tourist Department gives them is only for ten minutes, so they have to make up the rest.

That is why you need to have a movement for local history in this country. That is the only way in which history being used for the purposes for which it is being used can be countered. For communalism in India, history is the most important ideology, and after two generations I think our society will not even know the history we are talking about.

The first step in creating local history is the collection of evidences. This kind of evidence is strewn all over. Our families are the locus of a lot of historical information. Even the revenue records of the family can be a good source. There is always the possibility of exaggeration, but if it is a movement and you are conscious of this danger and the people who are involved have a certain professional knowledge, such dangers can be taken care of.

I have a number of criticisms about writing the history of the fragment, as the post-modern historians are advocating. If you start writing the history of the fragment without being conscious of the relationship between the micro and the macro, then history may not capture its essence.

Student: Nobody gives much importance to history these days. Young people especially are more concerned with the present. In such a situation, making them aware of the things you have been talking about seems very difficult.

Panikkar: There was a time when reading history was considered to be an essential part of culture. Today, it has gone out of the mainstream. Particularly given the technological advancement that has taken place, the importance of liberal education is going out of the mainstream. One of the states in India divided academic disciplines into two categories, "useful" subjects and "non-useful" subjects, and decided that these non-useful subjects should not get any state funding.

I personally find this a very sad situation. I think that a total revolution in the field of education has to take place in this country. I was involved in the Education Commission for one of the states in India for two or three years, and we have made this suggestion, which the State Education Minister threatens to accept. The suggestion is that the distinction between science, social science, and humanities should go, and there should not be anybody who does not have a modicum of knowledge in all these. Such a change is necessary.

Flavia Agnes

Flavia Agnes is an advocate, legal scholar and rights activist. She is a founder member of Majlis. Since the women's movement of 1980s, Agnes has contributed greatly towards the discourses on women's rights and minority rights. Her publications include Law and Gender Inequality, My Story, Our Story...Of Rebuilding Broken Lives, State, and Gender and Rhetoric of Law Reform.

The Construction of Community in History

I will discuss the construction of communities during the colonial period. How are laws around communities created? First, I would like to ask you a few questions. When we talk about our rights within the family, we use words like marriage, custody etc. I wonder whether you know what it is, the law that we are governed by in respect of marriage and children's custody.

Student: Personal law?

Agnes: What do we mean by personal law?

Student: Depending on the community the person is from.

Agnes: What are the areas it covers?

Student: Marriage, adoption, divorce, inheritance...

Agnes: We have a whole range of laws like environmental laws, human rights laws; these are the more progressive ones. More conservatively, we have civil law which deals with property. We also have a realm called family law. Now for many women, this law governs their whole life. Their only interaction with the legal machinery is through family law. If they are not working, they are not governed by labour laws; if they don't own property, they don't come under civil law. But most women get married; most of them have children. Some of them may get deserted, may get divorced; some may ask for maintenance. So they are governed by a body of law, which is generally called family law.

People governed by their community law is one thing, people governed by their religious laws is something else. So which do you take as correct? Communities governed by their law means communities make their own law. Everybody agrees that this is the law, and this is what we will be governed by. Or we say there are fixed religions and religious texts, and people are governed by their religious texts. Which is true?

Student: Different communities could have the same religion. Hence both statements are true. There can be a Gujarati, Marathi, Punjabi, but they could all be Hindus.

Agnes: There is an inherent dichotomy. Can you give me examples of differences between communities, where one community has one practice and another community has another?

Student: The Nairs in Kerala, where matriarchy operates. In case of property rights for the Nair sect, the women have no problem.

Agnes: That means women have the right of inheritance. Property used to go from mother to daughter. Used to, it is no longer so. We are talking about a family law called "succession" here. We'll have another community, which says property goes from father to son. So broadly we call that a patriarchal system or, rather, patrilineal. So is there a religious text that will overwhelmingly operate for everyone? Or a statute that will centrally operate?
Student: Basically, what we have today is adopted from our ancient texts.

Agnes: Now we are in two different realms. In one, we are saying the community makes these customs regarding marriage, divorce etc. Then we are saying there is a religious text, maybe there are a hundred religious texts. Maybe every community, which has a certain practice, may have a source for it in some religious text. That is possible. So you cannot say there is one religious text. There are many religious texts, there may even be contradictions among them .If what you are saying is correct, if you make one text or one law for all, then if what the Nairs do is not acceptable because what the rest of India does is something else, then that is to be imposed on the Nairs. Are we now trying to homogenise and bring everyone into the mainstream?

Student: So if you have to take a code, whose code do you impose?

Agnes: Not *if* you take, but we *have* taken. Now if you are a Hindu, what are you governed by? Is it a religious text, is it a statute, is it up to the Parliament, what is it? In a modern situation, suppose you get married or want a divorce, are you governed by the Hindu Marriage Act?

What I am trying to say is that very different community practices have been followed. Then there are religious texts, which are also diverse.

Now there could be one Muslim, one Hindu and one Christian, and all may have followed the same practice earlier. Is that possible?

Students: Probably there was an intermingling of different customs and practices.

Agnes: Not intermixing. We are saying that geographical communities evolve their local

practices. When we talk about personal law, we are actually talking about succession to property. In a pre-industrialised agrarian society, land was property. Inalienable land was property. This is where your revenue came from. The community governed decisions on the land and how it was to be passed on. Never mind the superimposition of different religious beliefs and norms. People managed their land in a particular manner in a particular region. Take the Khojas. The Khojas and Bohras come from Gujarat, which consists primarily of trading communities. Never mind if they were Baniyas or Khojas or Memons, they all followed one kind of practice. Another example: one of the few places to still have matrilineal practices is Lakshwadeep, which is 90 per cent Muslim. It is because communities evolve their own practices. Everyone had religious texts and religious norms; these were quite different from how people handled their property.

Today we have a code that says never mind which community you come from, Hindus will be governed by Hindu law and Muslims will be governed by Islamic law. Christians in Kerala also followed the matriarchal pattern at one time. Never mind if they had changed their religion, as religion came externally, and communities had evolved their own practices locally.

Now if I am saying that Hindu law is applicable to Hindus post 1955, when did Muslim law become applicable to Muslims?

In 1937 an act was passed called "the application of the Shariah". From this point, the Shariah was to be made applicable to all Muslims which means that until then, it hadn't been. From 1937 onwards, if you go to court then the Shariah must be applicable if you are a Muslim, the Hindu Marriage Act must be applicable if you are a Hindu.

The problem is this: in order for a particular law to be applicable to you, you have to prove that you belong to that religion. So my question is, how do you define who is a Hindu? The Act must define who is a Hindu. How did the Act define who is a Hindu? What categorisation did they use? Was it foolproof?

I will just tell you the definition of who is Hindu. It is a concentric definition: first there is a small group which is Hindu; then a slightly bigger circle is drawn, these are also Hindus. Then an even bigger circle is drawn, and whoever is not on the outside is on the inside. This Act was passed in 1955. This Act applies to any person who is Hindu by religion (some of us are also Hindus by birth) in any of its forms and developments, including a Veerashaiva, Lingayat, or follower of the Brahmo, Prarthana or Arya Samaj. These sects are specified because they all fought against Hinduism and said they were not Hindus. By this Act, they are still Hindu. The next sentence says the Act also applies to any person who is a Jain, Buddhist, or Sikh. So we have had small sects incorporated, but now we also have whole

religions. Buddhism consists of people who said that they were not Hindus 2,000 years ago; according to this Act, they are still Hindus. The third circle is the best, taking in "....any other person domiciled in the territory to which this Act extends who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew by religion".

First, you include everyone who is a Hindu, meaning basically a *sanatani*. Then, you include everyone who protested, like the Lingayats and Veerashaivas who came up in twelfth century Karnataka. Then in the nineteenth century there was a major rehauling of beliefs through progressive sects like the Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj, who said they didn't believe in the Vedas, they believed in one God etc. With this Act, these groups were included under Hindus. Then we say that if you can say you are something else, with a religion or a text to your credit, if you can state that you are Christian, Parsi, Jewish or Muslim, then you are *that*, if you are not *that*, then you are Hindu. By this, we bring in a whole population which may have belonged to different tribes and castes and which may have been rather varied.

My problem with this code is that you are formulating a code for a particular group of higher-caste people who were following a particular text. By extending it so much, you are making it applicable to people who don't even know it is applicable to them.

I will give you one example. Firstly, the main feature of the Hindu Marriage Act is that it gives women the right of divorce. This Act is considered progressive because it gives Hindu women this right. Which women did not have the right of divorce? Upper-caste women belonging to orthodox communities that advocated child marriage and sati. So this Act kept those women in mind, and liberated them. There were whole communities that allowed divorce. Many women had the right to divorce and remarriage before this Act was introduced. Even today, many people believe that if a husband consents to his wife marrying again, or the other way round, then you can have a customary divorce or a remarriage, which have community-oriented names. In Maharashtra, it's called *paat,* in Gujarat, it's *naat.* Yet, we say we are liberating all these people by giving them the right of divorce. Many communities don't even know this Act has given them the right of divorce, because many communities don't even go to court.

Coming back to the 1955 Act that defined who is a Hindu. In 1966, there was a case where the question of who was a Hindu came up. This case regarded Harijans being allowed to enter a particular temple. The temple belonged to *satsangis* who said they were not Hindus. The Act stated that Hindus must grant temple entry to Harijans, so these people claimed they were not Hindus at all, they were *satsangis* and hence not governed by the Act.

The courts say "belief in the Vedas with reverence, belief that ways of salvation are many

and a belief that there is a multiplicity of Gods makes you a Hindu". How do the Brahmo Samaj and Prarthana Samaj come into this? Each of these orders revolted against the Vedas and other religious texts. So it was very difficult to classify people, and that is why we had to have the last clause by which whoever is not anything else is deemed Hindu. My next question is, where does the word "Hindu" come from?

Student: Originally I think it applied to whoever was on the other side of the river Sindhu.
Agnes: That means somebody must have given this name. Somebody must have said, "They are on the other side of the river Sindhu," and from there came the term "Hindu". This means that it has nothing to do with religion; this is a geographically defined area. But there is another term it comes from.

There is no Hindu religious text like the Koran or the Bible. When I say "Hindu text", I mean the revealed word, like the Christian text or the Parsi text. Yet, we have a Hindu people. The Hindu people, according to me, means those who are not anything else. So all they needed to give us was Clause 3, they did not have to give us Clause 1 and 2. Buddhists, Jains and so on should not come under it at all; those are different religions.

So where does the word Hindu come from? Well, it comes from the word "gentu" a word used by the Portuguese for pagans. The first British administrators said that this was the land of *gentus*. *Gentus* meant those who did not believe in Christianity; they believed in many kinds of God; not monotheism but polytheism.

Why did we have the need to label people? The culmination of that process was the Hindu Marriage Act. Where does this process begin, to label people? What is the source through which this labelling takes place?

Student: There were Muslim rulers and Hindu rulers; they categorised people according to religion, to begin with.

Agnes: They always characterised according to communities, which is why we have the Nairs until now. No Hindu ruler or Muslim ruler interfered with practices within communities.

Student: Then it was the British policy of divide-and-rule.

Agnes: What was the process? Why did they do that?

Student: To govern the communities.

Agnes: Right. When they came here, they came as traders. All fighting people always want an arbitrator. Earlier people used to go to the king; the king used to ask what their law was, and

accordingly he would decide. When the British came as traders, the situation in India was very bad. Kings had stopped carrying out the role of arbitration within communities. The first instance of the British coming into the community to arbitrate is at Surat. The local ruler had abrogated his responsibilities, and the people were forced to go to traders to solve their disputes. The traders kept on asking, "Who are you? What is your law? What is the custom you follow?" So there was no question of a religious text at that point of time.

When the British came to Bengal, they thought that just as Christians had priests who know the Bible, so there must be priests among the Hindus and Muslims who know their religious texts. So they began to go to the *pundits* or the k*azis* and ask them to sit in with them while they tried to solve problems. By then, the British had political aspirations; they wished to "govern the people". However, they had no concept of the law. They were traders first and then they were administrators, but they had no legal background. So they had to go for help to those who knew something about the people's laws. Unfortunately, the people they went to were of a certain caste, and they did not know the customs of the lower castes.

What I would like to say is that in the laws that got formulated, there is a higher-caste bias, there is a Bengal-region bias. A heavy Sanskritisation and Islamisation took place around this time. But there were problems. Hindu customs being so diverse, for every problem there were diverse and contradictory solutions. Whichever person the *pundit* wanted to side with, he could. It is possible to have some religious text that will support your position for the time being, as everything is there in the texts. The British began to realise that these people were fooling them; that they were often corrupt and not neutral. So then they decided that they would study the texts themselves.

The person who initiated this process in Bengal was Warren Hastings. In his plan of 1781, there is a regulation that says they will apply the Law of the Koran to Mohammedans and the Law of the *shastras* to Gentus. For the first time, communities are officially given a religious identity. So from this point onwards, Hindus are to be governed by Hindu laws and Muslims by Muslim laws, in the same way that Christians are governed by Christian laws. However, this was easier said than done.

These communities never had any concept of being governed by a religious text at all. But from 1781 till 1955, the process of defining communities goes on as new legal systems are put in place. In 1860, after the administration of India is taken over from the East India Company, the British Parliament has the power to make the laws, and it sets up hierarchical codes. Earlier, what Bengal did Bombay Presidency did not have to do; each was a separate unit and there was no hierarchy. In 1860, the British created the Privy Council as the final authority, the final arbitrator of any dispute. What the Privy Council says becomes law, not

only for India but for the whole Commonwealth. So we have the lower courts; each Presidency has its High Court; beyond the Presidency we have the Privy Council in London.

People always go to court due to a core economic issue because of which there is a civil dispute. A civil dispute means a property dispute even if it's about the price of labour, somebody's economic survival is at stake. Today we have other kinds of law regarding the environment, or public interest litigation. But in general when two people are fighting (we call it a "suit"), one person is asking for a right against the other. Even in the case of marriage, they come to court because the woman is thrown out, she has no shelter; she must file for divorce; she must ask for maintenance. There is always an underlying economic issue; otherwise people would lead their lives the way they wanted. They come to court because something is to be gained. This is the primary basis of civil law: without property there is no litigation.

Earlier, property was located within families, so families went to court to decide whether the father should have made a will that deprived the son, or whether the widow or the son should have the right, and so on. It had already been said that shastric law was to be applied to Hindus and Koranic law to Mohammedans. But then the question was how to decide who these people were, so as to decide which law to apply.

Here is one of the litigations that happened in 1882. The son of a zamindar in Kanpur went to court because his father had willed away the property. The question was, what was the *zamindar*'s religion? The *zamindar* had donated part of his property away. Since they were Hindus and the property was jointly held, the son, being the only son, was entitled to half the share as per Hindu law, and the father had no right to donate the property. The *zamindar* pleaded that he was not a Hindu and was not to be governed by the Hindu law. But the court was perplexed because the litigants weren't Mohammedan either. So which legal regime would they be governed by?

The findings of the trial court are interesting, and indicate the dilemmas of many communities at that time. The court found that the parties practised both religions, they recited the *namaz* and the *kalma*, offered the sacrifice, observed Ramadan, gave *zakat*. They were attached to Muslims peers, but they also described themselves as Kayasthas. Their wedding rituals included *baaraat* and *ganna*. They celebrated Hindu festivals and did not bury their dead. There was no circumcision. There were no fixed notions here: if you are observing Ramadan you are Muslim; but you are not burying your dead, you are cremating your dead.

Confronted with these contradictions, the court held that it was impossible to hold that persons following such inconsistent and irreconcilable practices were followers of either of

the religions. The Hindu religious law should be applied to orthodox Hindus and Muslim law should be applied to orthodox Muslims. Yet, a solution had to be found. So, based on the principles of justice, equity and good conscience, they upheld the Hindu law and stamped this community as Hindu at the end of the whole litigation. I am sure over a period of time they gave up all their Muslim practices and became orthodox Hindus.

The period from 1860 to the beginning of this century is a very exciting period, where a lot of things get fixed and which give birth to the nationalist movement. But you can see the turmoil of the people, because a system of administration is introduced, a code about which people have no clue. So gradually, case by case, you stamp or label these people.

I was talking about the Kolis. They become converts to Christianity. Now in this particular community, the custom was that when the daughter gets married, you give property to the daughter. If the daughter dies, the property will come back to the mother and these are very strong communities where the daughters' right at the time of marriage in the form of *streedhan* was very strongly recognised. Supposing the daughter dies, the property should only go back to the female line; it cannot go back to the husband's line. So if the daughter was gifted a house by the mother, that meant the mother had enough to give a house to her daughter. So when you say, "The new law liberated women", the question I want to ask is, "Which women?"

There is this 1890 case, when women go to court and fight. The daughter was gifted a house by the mother and was also entitled to a share of the mother's property as per the custom. After the daughter's death, her husband sued the mother for the daughter's share. The mother claimed that though they had converted to Christianity, they were not governed by Christian law; they were governed by customary law. But the court disagreed. They said that once you take on the fixed religion of Christianity, then you could not claim custom. The woman argued that they had changed their religion but not their property practices. She said that this amounted to religious prosecution; just because they had changed their religion they were being made to follow a law which they had nothing to do with. Yet, it was held that since they had converted to Christianity, the daughter's property would now go to the daughter's husband and not to the mother.

There are times when the lower court holds one thing, the higher court holds another, and the final court holds as the lower court held. This is because each judge has his own notion of what the community is. A South Indian migrated to Burma and married a Burmese girl. They even had children. He was quite an influential man. Then he died on his way to England, but he had made a will giving his property to his wife, the Burmese woman. Then his relatives came forward saying that he was a Hindu and had no right to will his property to his wife; the "reversionary" principle applied here, which meant the property must come

back to the male relatives of the husband. This case went right up to the Privy Council.

The man belonged to the Kalai community. After migrating, he had married a Burmese woman. He was an opulent and prominent merchant of Rangoon. Although he came from an obscure class of migrants, he had amassed wealth. He had given donations to Buddhist monasteries and had advocated the cause of Buddhism in Burma. He had represented Burma during King Edward's Coronation. He had gone on a pilgrimage to Ceylon, to the temple of Kandy. He admired Buddhist doctrine, and while advocating the cause of Buddhsim at Bodhgaya, he had confronted the *mahant* of a Hindu temple. He had also sent his sons to Buddhist monasteries and to Buddhist priests for instruction, and had married one of them to a Burmese girl according to Burmese custom. So there is so much in favour of him being a Buddhist.

However, the factors in favour of his Hindu status were equally valid. He worshipped at a Kalai temple. He was an integral part of the Kalai community in Burma. He was a trustee of the Kalai temple and, after his death, his body was sent back from England and was cremated as per Hindu rites and his ashes were sent to Benares. In a case concerning his daughter who had eloped in 1906 with a Burmese, he had gone to court and said under oath that he was Hindu. So now where do you put this man?

To a greater extent he was a Buddhist; this is what the trial court felt. The high court upheld that he was a Hindu and that his property should be governed by Hindu law, and therefore it invalidated the will. The reasoning of the court was insightful. It reasoned that he was a man of ambition, and since he sprang from an obscure class of migrants, he had little chance of holding a leading position if he was not Buddhist. By throwing in his lot with the Burmese, he hoped to enter some position of distinction. The court felt that it was all ambition; he wanted to be a prominent citizen and, unless he supported Buddhism, he could not be. However, in his heart of hearts, he was a Hindu. He was a Hindu by blood and manner of life. The marriage of his son to a Burmese girl according to Burmese custom was a serious lapse on his part. This was due to the general laxity among the Kalais with regard to marriage customs.

So the court was saying they are generally lax people, they are not really Hindus of the Sanatan caste, they are Kalais of a lower caste. So these lapses are allowed among the lower castes. However, this cannot be regarded as a ground for his having abandoned Hinduism.

In appeal, the Privy Council held that he was a Buddhist, because now the question was of the woman's property. Whether the Burmese woman would be left in the lurch that was the real issue. The Privy Council held that he was a Buddhist and hence governed by the rules of the Indian Succession Act, which predated the Hindu Marriage Act where Buddhists too

Posters sold by roadside vendors

are Hindus. So then the Privy Council said if you were a Buddhist, you were not a Hindu; you came under the residual law of the Indian Succession Act, where women also had a right to property, and there was no co-parcenary. The court held that "the continuity may not have been destroyed but there is a limit to such practices". Certain lapses were possible, but this man had strayed too far away.

They further stated that Hindu law as administered by the courts related to the *shastras* followed by the Brahmins; this had no relevance to the Kalais. They were outside the purview of these religious dictates. So ultimately, they are saying that he was not Hindu. It is not a question of how much he strayed from the Sanatan practice. From his own community in South India, he strayed far away to Burma. So how can we now call him Hindu? The court further opined on his personality and held that he was a man of exaggeration. Each statement of his was made for a purpose, and could not by itself be held to construe the true nature of his religious beliefs. For instance, to prove elopement by his daughter as against a marriage by consent, he declared himself a Hindu under oath during litigation in 1906. He was also a part of the congress that represented the Buddhist community before Lord Curzon. So how can he be Hindu and Buddhist at the same time?

This kind of dilemma comes up all the time. Especially since there are conversions taking place; people are moving from agrarian to industrial locations and are leaving behind their property, so the issue is of property, women's rights and family disputes. Now this man was not bothered about what he was, but upon his death we have to fix this stamp on him. By this, the Kalais were held to be outside the pale of Hinduism, and if they moved far enough away, they could be termed Buddhist or anything else, and would be governed by the Indian Succession Act.

The Act on widow remarriage is also supposed to be a very progressive Act, but what it does is to deny women property rights upon marriage. There were many communities that allowed widow remarriage, so the question came up whether they had been practising it before the Act, or after the Act. If they were practising it before, the women could get property, but if only after the Act, then they could not get property. If they were lower caste that was fine, but if they were higher caste women they would be governed by something that Brahaspati said, that a woman was a living part of the husband, so his property was something she held as a living part of him. So if you believe even faintly in Sanatan Dharma, you cannot remarry even if your custom permits it. The same thing happens to *streedhan*: a whole lot of other issues, whether issues of property or of women's rights, are the ones that underlie the litigation, but the community gets stamped, and that too in a regressive manner.

What I really want to ask is, if this is not fiction, then what is fiction?

Urvashi Butalia

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The Other Side of Partition

I am going to talk about writing Partition history, and about writing the book that I have written on the Partition. Through the telling of this story, I hope to be able to raise some questions with you: What is fiction? What is fact? How are communities created? How do they crystallise? How are the borders of communities drawn? How porous are these borders? When you try to find out these things, where do you go and how do you look for them?

I am not a historian, but I did study history in college. I suspect that like all of you, the bit that I learnt about Partition is what we all learn: that simultaneously with independence in 1947 came this event called Partition, which meant a lot of rioting and violence; that Partition happened because the Congress and the Muslim League, the two key political actors at that time, were not able to agree upon a formula for forming a government in independent India; and that the British, on knowing that they would have to leave, manipulated the divisions that were already growing between these two political parties and the Hindus and the Muslims. The Sikhs were part of the Hindus.

There is another history that existed inside many families, including my own. Both my parents came from Pakistan to India. They were not married at the time; they married later. They brought with them their histories, which were not necessarily histories of violence, but histories of dislocation and displacement, and we used to hear about them like all first- and second-generation Partition children do. But like everyone else, we paid no attention to them: the old people tell you stories that you listen to with one ear and they are out of the other ear.

Several things happened to me that made me look at this history. First of these was 1984. Indira Gandhi [the then prime minister] was killed by her bodyguards. In Delhi, there were five or six days of anti-Sikh rioting where around 3,000 Sikhs were killed because they were

seen as Gandhi's murderers. This happened on the outskirts of Delhi. For those few days, the administration of Delhi completely collapsed. For the first time, middle-class people like me who had lived in Delhi all their lives suddenly saw violence at close quarters.

My own family is half Sikh (many Hindus inter-marry with Sikhs), so the borders of those identities are very blurred you don't know where Hinduism starts and where Sikhism ends. My father's family is all Sikh and my mother's family is all Hindu-Punjabi. So the only way to identify us as Sikhs (my father does not wear a turban any longer) is our name, Butalia, which is a Sikh name.

In Delhi at that time, you became extremely vulnerable if your name could be identified as a Sikh name, or the men could be identified as they wore turbans. There were times when we were very frightened. Since the administration had completely collapsed, a number of citizens' groups got together and started to do relief work. I worked with one of these groups. It was when we started to write these people's stories of what they had been through that I started to notice this complete slide between 1984 and 1947. People would be talking of '84 and then in the same breath talking of '47. They would be saying, "This happened to us in '47, we never thought it would happen again."

I suddenly realised that the Partition is a history I have not paid any attention to at all. If '84, which in numerical terms was so minimal compared to '47, could affect someone like me (who was not even close to the violence), then what must '47 have done to the millions of people in our country? Why have we not paid any attention to it? So I thought I had to begin exploring this history. Simultaneously, some friends of mine were making a film on Partition and they needed someone to do the research. They called on me and asked me if I would help them. They asked me, since I was a Punjabi, if I could go to Punjab and identify people. So I went and started randomly meeting people and listening to their stories.

I began to feel this was really a history that we had ignored, and I wanted to learn more about it. I thought I would start with my own family. My mother's brother had stayed behind in Pakistan in '47. He had opted to become a Muslim; he had kept my grandmother back and stayed on in the family house. We are not a religious family. The reason he became a Muslim was supposedly for the property. However, my mother and her sisters refused to have any contact with him. No contact at all for 40 years, until I became interested. I tracked him down. I knew he lived in my grandfather's house, and we had the address. So I went to Lahore. I spent three days plucking up enough courage to go and see my uncle.

It was 10 pm. I was standing outside my uncle's house wondering what to do. Then I thought, "Well, I have come here now, I have no choice." I rang the doorbell. His wife and daughters came out. They were extremely warm and invited me in, they instantly knew

Kissa ZainabButa: A tale of two abductions 2001 by Nilima Sheikh, Tempera on Sanganeri Vasli

Panghat Stories: Part of a series of paintings on Partition 2001 by Nilima Sheikh, Tempera on Sanganeri Vasli

who I was. We spent an hour talking. My uncle was not there. He was away on tour and was due to return at night. I left, but left my phone number behind. I thought. "Okay, this is it. I have done my bit. That is the end of the story." But of course, it wasn't. At midnight, the phone rang in my friend's house where I was staying. She picked up the phone and he said to her in Urdu, *"Hamari beti aapke yahan thairi hai, hamari beti ko bulaiye."* ("My daughter is staying with you, please call her.")

I went to the phone and he said, "*Beti tum wahan kya kar rahi ho, tumhara ghar yahan pe hai, tum apne ghar aao.*" ("What are you doing there, child? Your home is here. Come home.") I was really surprised. I told him, "Oh, it's midnight... You have just come back..." I made excuses. I said to myself, "It's weird. I don't know this man and he is just assuming a family tie, a blood tie. How can I go to some unknown person's house at midnight and stay there?" But I was also very curious. So I told him I would come the next morning. He said, "Bring your luggage. I am not going to let you go back, you must stay here." I did not take my luggage but I went. Immediately, when he saw me, he asked where my luggage was, then he put me back in the car, brought me back, picked up my luggage, took me there.

I spent a week with him and a little more. We talked and we talked. It was very emotional and very intensive. He told me that it was the first time he had ever spoken to anybody about what he felt. I got his side of the story, which was very different from my mother's version. I asked him, "Why did you stay on?" He told me, "Well, I was 19. I had no choice. I didn't know where to go. I didn't think this big event would actually disrupt our lives in the way that it did. I did not think it would be permanent."

With Partition, a lot of people did not believe [its impact]. People left only when they were pushed into leaving. My uncle had opted out of college and he did not have much of an education. His mother was not in her right senses and his father was dead. All his sisters except one (my mother) were unmarried. Who would he go to? In Hindu families, you don't go and park yourself with your sister if she is not married, and if your married sisters don't ask you to come, what do you do?

I talked with my uncle for a long time and took his messages back to my mother. I asked him once, "How did you feel about conversion? Are you really a believer?" He said, "I have not slept one day not regretting my decision, but I have had nobody to talk to about it." One day he was talking to me, and I felt very oppressed about what he was saying, and I thought, "It's weird we are having this conversation. If I had met this man in the market, I would not have known who he was." So I said to him, "Why are you talking to me like this? You don't know me, we just speak the same language!" And he said, "My child, this is the first time I am talking to my own blood." I was really shocked. I told him, "What do you mean! I am not

your blood, your family is." He said, "No, it's not them, it's you, because you know what I am talking about."

Then he told me how, in order to feel more legitimate in Pakistan, he had actually become more Muslim than the Muslims; had externally become more and more of a believer; had internally become more and more *kattar* Hindu everyday. It was incredible, the split he described: he watched the Indian news on TV, but rooted for the Indian cricket team. He used to say "*Mera watan to wahan hai*" ("my homeland is there") though he had never been to India except once, for three days. He had never been to what became of India. Still, for him, home was India. For my mother, home was Lahore.

I brought his stories back to my mother. I brought some letters back. For a while, there was a lot of resentment. My mother and her sisters did not want to know. They were angry with me for having opened up this communication. Gradually, they started reading his letters, and started crying and laughing. Suddenly, the family connection opened up again. Those borders that had been drawn suddenly collapsed. We ourselves had made so much of those borders in our mind; suddenly everything became possible.

I took my mother and her elder sister for his daughter's wedding. Again, it was a very strange experience because they went to their old family home after so many years. They were extremely awkward with each other to begin with. They had not seen him for 40 years. He was 60 when they met him, he had been 20 when they left. After a few days of hedging around each other, they began to talk. Suddenly all the barriers were broken. They went around the house, looked at everything, and touched every tree.

Having seen how our family's life had been touched [by violence] and we had not even had a glimmer of violence, I thought of exploring other stories. One of the first stories I came across was what had happened to the women. Now, Partition history makes no mention of the fate of the women. Twelve million people were displaced, and a million people died. There hasn't been a migration like this in human history. You look at the kind of literature that exists about the Holocaust all over the world, and the ignorance there is about Partition, internationally and within our own country. In a sense, we have colluded with this ignorance.

I came across the histories of women by chance. I would be talking to somebody and that person would say, "Why don't you talk to this person, his sister was abducted." I found that at least 75,000-100,000 women had been raped and abducted at the time of Partition, by men of the other religion and, sometimes, as happens in times like this, by men of their own community who used the occasion to fulfill old rivalries. After the scale of this rape, abduction and violence became clear and families started filing reports with the police. The

governments felt obliged to take a stand. Both India and Pakistan, as early as September '47, gave each other the power to go into the other's territory and find these abducted women and bring them back to their home country.

Now the "home" country was defined as "the country of their religion". It did not matter if it were a Muslim woman who wanted to live in India. If she was Muslim, she had to go to Pakistan. If she was Hindu or Sikh she had to come to India.

The 'Central Recovery Operation', as it was called, went on for nine years with social workers, mostly women, and some policemen going into each other's countries and using all kinds of strategies to find abducted women. They found a very small percentage, and they brought them back. Sometimes, the women were not willing to come back because by the time they had been found, they had actually been married or had children by their abductors or had been sold to somebody else. Why should they now want another disruption? However, they had no choice in the matter.

What is interesting is that this is the time that India was framing a constitution, assigning rights to its citizens and talking itself blue in the face about "no discrimination on the basis of caste, gender, religion". Here were these women saying, "We don't want to go back, we want to stay with this man whose child we have," but the government was saying, "No! You belong to the country of your religion because that's your home." Many women were forcibly brought back but by the time they returned, their largely Hindu families refused to take them back because the women had, by then, been "polluted". They had lived with and had sex with men of the other religion. Many of the women who were not taken back lived their life in ashrams, and died there.

When I was looking at this history, I came across another history which somewhat surprised me. During communal riots and sectarian violence, the violence is always located in the other side and comes from the "other" community. So Hindus will say that Muslims attacked them, and Muslims will say that Hindus attacked them. This was true of the Partition, but it was also true that people attacked women of their own community. Sikh men killed their own women in order to save them from possible rape or conversion, and to save the "honour" of the religion and the community. The honour of the community was a burden on the backs of women. I first came across a story like this in Amritsar. I was at a bazaar where a lot of people said to me, "Talk to this man, he killed several members of his own family." They talked about him like he was a hero.

I met Mangal Singh, a wonderful old gentleman. We got talking and he told me this history. He and his brothers had decided that while they could run away and escape the violence, the women probably could not. So they lined up 17 women and children and killed them.

He refused to use the word "killed". He used the word "martyr". He did not say, "*Humne shaheed kar diya*" ("We made them martyrs"), he said, "*Shaheed ban gaye*" ("they became martyrs"). Mangal Singh had a nephew who was nine years old at the time, called Trilok. This little boy said, "Please don't kill me. I will find my own way. Please give me a chance to escape." They gave it to him. They told him to go, but they did not give that chance to the grown women. Even a nine-year-old boy's life had more value than an older woman's.

I asked Mangal Singh, "How did you live with the grief of doing this? How did you forget?" He said in Punjabi, "My child, you never lose the grief, but if you look around you in Punjab, which we call the *sone ki chidiya* (the Golden Bird), then you will see that we have put all our forgetting into this land. We have given it our tears and our love, and it has given us back all this in the greenery, the fertility."

I came across many more similar stories, and I was faced with a real dilemma. I thought that these men I was talking to are actually murderers, they have killed the women and children of their families. Yet they are seen as heroes, they see themselves as heroes, and I actually like them. They seem to be nice people. What do you do when you are trying to recover a history like this? How do you deal with your own emotions? How do you deal with the sense of right and wrong that you have been brought up with all your life? I still haven't resolved this dilemma.

I talked to an older woman called Basant Kaur who told me about an incident similar to the one shown in the television serial *Tamas*, the incident of women jumping into a well. That incident really happened, it took place in a village called Thoa Khalsa. I talked to one or two women from there, including a woman who had been a part of that group; she had jumped in but hadn't died because the well had filled up with bodies and there wasn't enough water in it. I talked to her and see what was the motivation. It was very difficult to find out, because what she described was that in the village, there had been a lot of discussion about what should be done with the women and children. Some of the women themselves said, "Don't worry, we will kill ourselves." For the historian trying to recover this history, where do you draw the line between coercion and choice? How do you read back coercion and choice into this very old incident? There is of course a certain element of coercion, and a certain element of choice.

This history led me to yet another one, the history of children. When we are writing conventional history, we never think of children as actors in that history. During Partition, thousands of children were lost or killed, or became destitute. When people moved on foot, it was women and children who got left behind a lot of the time. What happened to those children? Nobody knows, and nobody tried to find out. What's more, many of the women

who were abducted and then recovered had children. While some families were willing to take back the women, they were not willing to take the children, because this country is big on re-conversion and purification. The women could be reconverted back to Hinduism, but the child's veins have mixed blood, and you don't know where the Hindu blood starts and where the Muslim blood ends. There was a huge debate in the Constituent Assembly at that time about the law, which said that the mother has a right over the child only until a certain age. However, the parliamentarians said that the natural father, even if he was the abductor, should have the right over the child.

Since I'm not a historian, I had not chosen a place or a sample or a time. I was randomly talking to people I met. I spoke to a woman in Batala, which is in Gurdaspur district near the border in Punjab. She is a sweeper who worked in a school and she is a Harijan. She said that at the time of Partition, her village was sometimes rumoured to go to Pakistan and sometimes to Hindustan. Each time, the people of the "other" community would get scared and run away. As soon as they ran away, the children, including herself (her name was Maya Rani), would jump into their houses and steal everything. I asked her, "What happened? Why didn't anybody try to attack you?" She said, "Well, we are Harijans, why should anyone want to attack us?"

Earlier, Flavia [Agnes] talked to us about the definition of "Hindu" and what it encompasses. We have so internalised this definition as middle class Indians that it never struck me that Harijans could see themselves as outside the pale of Hinduism. Suddenly I began to see this differently, and I thought that maybe, there was a history that I needed to explore over here.

Partition has always been seen in terms of Hindus and Muslims. These are the two identities that were in conflict. Hindus include Sikhs. We never think of what this event did to the other minorities in the country. What happened to the Christians, the Parsis? If any of you have seen the movie *1947*, you can see the dilemma Parsis were in. What happened to eunuchs, people whose identities are at the border of gender rather than of religion? Even they had to choose. And to choose whether to go to India or Pakistan, they suddenly assumed a religious identity as opposed to a gender identity, which is their struggle. The religious identity is not their struggle.

Similarly, what happened to Dalits? Just as there had been a demand for Hindustan and Pakistan, the Dalit community, which at that time was organised because of BR Ambedkar and other such leaders, had made a demand for their own homeland called Achhutistan, and they had actually said that if Hindus could get Hindustan and Muslims Pakistan, why couldn't they get their own land?

Both India and Pakistan fought over Dalits at one stage. Now the Dalits are the ones who perform all the menial tasks that hold communities together. So a lot of these functions in people's lives suddenly got affected. It was the absence of Dalits that made people realise the importance of this invisible class of people in their lives. Many Dalits were waiting to migrate from Sindh to Bombay by sea. Only a certain number could be taken everyday, so a lot of people waited in transit camps. As a result of the movement of the Dalits into transit camps, the whole sanitary system of Karachi city suddenly collapsed, since there was no one to clean the drains and the toilets. The Pakistani government did what the Indian government routinely does they imposed an act called ESMA (Essential Services Maintenance Act) on Karachi, declaring sweeping and cleaning of toilets as an essential service. Therefore, people who did that work could not actually leave.

I want to draw some general points out of all this. To me, this process of moving from one history to another, to another, to another, was a very revealing process, because I realised that the way our histories are written, the bit part players don't get taken into account. The histories that lie underneath facts and figures don't get taken into account. If we want to arrive at these histories, how do we do it?

One of the methods is that of oral history, doing interviews with people. To me, oral history has some very major advantages. One of them is that it functions outside of the given time frames. Historical events locate Partition in August '47, but if you actually talk to people, it is located in their lives by many events that may have happened before or after. The actual violence in Punjab started in March '47.

The second thing is that when you are looking at memory, all history is about memory. Can we, with any assurance, say that the history we know of the Muslim League and the Congress and Mountbatten and Nehru and Sardar Patel and others is the only factual history? What people remember individually, in families, in communities; is that factual? Because surely what they remember and how they remember that event governs how they live in the world today.

For example, why is it that so many of us have so internalised stereotypes about Hindus and Muslims without having any reference to this major event? I can understand it for my parents' generation, but my parents' generation also had very deep friendships alongside very deep prejudices. Where do those prejudices come to us from? To me, they are handed down through family histories. This is why we need to pay attention to those histories.

So I began to realise that history is not and cannot be located only inside the covers of a textbook, it is located in multiple sites, and a lot of these are in people's memories.

When you are approaching this history, what are your responsibilities as a researcher? I came across this dilemma many times. For example, many of the women I spoke to had never told their stories, not even to their families. They were now married and were leading "normal" lives. Their children, their husbands, didn't know they had this past history. What right did I have to walk into their lives and say, "I want to hear about this time in your life?" In the beginning, I simplistically thought that I must get the women to talk, and it is easy enough when you are a researcher. The question is: are you willing to take responsibility for what you open up through that talking? You know we are talking about historical silence. If you articulate the parts history has silenced, can you be so sure that there is an easy equation between speech and liberation? I don't think so. I realised also that as a researcher trying to locate hidden histories, you have to achieve a position of some compromise where you impose your own silences. You have to say, "Well, I don't think I can push this person beyond this; I must only speak about what this person wants to say."

My *mama* (uncle) said many things to me that I felt I could not ever speak or write about. After all, he lives in Pakistan, and I have a responsibility towards him. History for me is my interaction with the informant, my responsibility towards that person and towards that history; finding a balance somewhere in between, which is both ethical and responsible and has some integrity.

When you divide a country, so many things have to be divided. You have a job, but now your office is across the border and you are here. At the time of Partition, a number of scholars were abroad on scholarships from the Government of India. Suddenly, the Government of India became the governments of India and Pakistan. Who would now pay the scholarships, what would happen to bank accounts, what would happen to railway lines, to rivers?

One of the things I discovered was that initially, Pakistan had no currency. For a year after the Partition, India was producing Pakistan's currency and exporting it to Pakistan. I wondered why we were never taught the history of Partition like this. Why were we never told how they divided the Delhi Public Library? What did they do with the books? Who got what?

When you divide one administrative system into two, who gets the files? Our country is so reliant on files. You divided the administration, but you did not know which person would go to which country, which country would get which file? They took a decision at the time that I find quite peculiar and telling. Pakistani officers would come and sit inside Indian ministries and copy all the files by hand (there was no photocopying at the time) so that everybody would have a copy of each file. I kept wondering, what if someone felt sleepy,

or just out of bloody-mindedness copied two pages wrong! These files are the sources of history, and yet if we look at incidents like this, we know how completely vulnerable they are. So in a sense the whole process raised for me questions about the making of history. Who makes it? How? Why? What is the motivation? And when you try to unmake that history, what do you do and how do you approach it?

It is time that we, as citizens of this country, started raising questions about the way in which our history has been written. It is time that we started to look beyond the given histories at what lies behind and beyond and beneath. We can do this at least with regard to the last 50-60 years because people are still around.

I am not saying that one should reject all the old histories and replace them with some new ones, I don't think that's the point, I think we should start looking for a way in which the histories that we know can accommodate the histories that we might add to them the histories of people like women, children, Dalits, who have always been marginalised and who are now crying out to be included.

Discussion

Student: There is a story by Sadat Hassan Manto in which men of one religion raped a woman of the same religion. Was it a major phenomenon?

Butalia: The story you're talking about is called *Khol Do,* also known as *Sakina.* Yes, there was definitely a lot of that, as there is in all times of violence. Although the major actors are the opposing communities, the violence becomes an excuse for people to settle old scores, and of course women are always vulnerable. If men are rapists in normal times, they will definitely not put a brake on themselves in such times.

Again, this is something that is never talked about, because the history of Partition is a history that has always located the violence "out there" among the Muslims. So the official history cannot talk about Hindus raping Hindu women or Hindus and Sikhs killing Hindu and Sikh women.

Student: Once the boundaries were drawn, did it heighten the sense of division, especially for those living close to the border?

Butalia: The border does not have barbed-wire fencing all along. It can be very porous for those who live in the vicinity. For example, from Gujarat there is no land frontier. Fishermen from Gujarat and from Pakistan go fishing in the sea and sometimes they cross the border. They end up getting jailed in each other's countries. Sometimes they even cross the borders to visit; there is a lot of intermarrying between them.

In Rajasthan right now you have about 300,000 people who crossed the border in 1971 after things became difficult between India and Pakistan after the Bangladesh war. They are Hindus who had been living in Hindu majority villages in Pakistan. Theoretically, they are citizens of Pakistan, but actually they are now on Indian soil. The Indian state gives them the allowance it gives refugees, about Rs 300 a month, but it is yet to recognise them as Indian citizens although for them there is no going back.

The women of that community at some point decided that they needed to earn money, as the money from the state was not enough. They began to cross the border and go into Pakistan to learn the skills of embroidery from the older women; then they brought back those skills and set up co-operatives to earn money. People at the border have allowed them to cross it, and they have then come back into India. So there is a certain flexibility. If people have no choice, such as when half the family is here and half is there, they find a way of crossing the border.

Student: Could you tell us if there is any difference with respect to Bengal, since it also got partitioned? Were there similar brutalities?

Butalia: One thing that has always surprised me was how little effort had gone into studying Partition. Any country that was interested in its history should have put in a lot of effort to actually recover the histories of Partition before all the people who lived through it died. Many of them are now dying or close to death, and you'll never again have the opportunity to record that living history.

I think for the State, this history is a history of shame. It is a dark spot in the history of the Independence movement, and it is not a history the state wishes to explore. There is another dimension to it: unlike the history of the Holocaust, where there is a very clear line between the good guys and the bad guys, here there is no clear line. You can't say the Muslims were the aggressors, and the Hindus were victims. Everyone was implicated. Even if you did not actually perform the violence yourself, you might have been implicated in it. Again, there is a reluctance to open up this chapter of history, because of which even within families, it is passed down in a way that allows the family to present itself as victims.

There is a tremendous need to explore this history and see its many dimensions. One of the dimensions is that it took place very differently in Punjab and in Bengal. In Punjab, the break was sudden, in Bengal the break happened over a much longer period of time. Bengal had already had an experience of a kind of partition before. Then somehow, there seem to be stronger cultural ties in Bengal. I am not sure whether the Hindu-Muslim aspect was as strong as it was in Punjab. Then, land relations in Punjab were completely different from Bengal, so all of these things governed these histories.

Madhushree Dutta: It has been said that the history of Partition has been dealt with only through fiction and films.

Butalia: Yes, it has largely been dealt with only in fiction and films. But given the scale of the event, fiction and films are minimal compared to what happened. There are so many aspects that we do not know or have not explored. We have never thought of how people's food habits changed after Partition. If you look at the pre- and post-independence food habits of Hindus and Muslims, you'd realise the cultural break that was sought by identifying them as separate communities. I was talking to someone the other day, and when I asked him which community he belonged to, he said, "We are Husaini Brahmins, because we are a caste. We were the only ones who had the right to carry the *tazia* at the time of Moharram."

So this is a very rich history to explore, and it would be really interesting to look at what happened to music, to food. For me it is really interesting to know what happened to book publishing. The entire book publishing industry moved from Pakistan to what became India. Most of the publishers of textbooks at the time were RSS members. What did they come here and do?

Student: Have you met people, for example Hindus, saying they killed five Muslims or some Muslims saying they raped Hindu women? Have these people really been able to be at peace later on?

Butalia: I have met some. I talked about some in the book. How have they resolved this? Well, some have and some haven't. I have chosen to talk about just two or three in the book because I was so horrified at people who continued to be proud of having killed other people. I met someone in Chandigarh who said that he had killed 90 Muslims and he could kill a hundred more. I did not want to have anything to do with the man, even though I knew that academically, I should understand what the motivation was. But at that moment I couldn't face it. Maybe later.

Arshia Sattar: From the position of the researcher and the responsibility that one has to take on as a researcher, there are questions that we have to ask. What kind of moral judgement are we called upon to pass? Do we pass moral judgement, or do we hold it back?

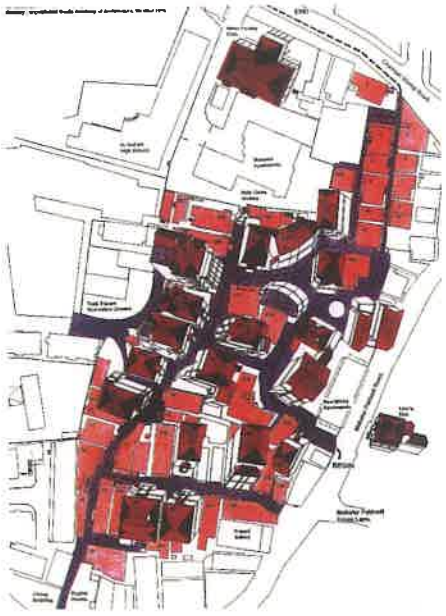
Butalia: I don't think I can suspend moral judgement because that is part of my being and the context out of which I grow. Just as I don't think I can suspend my politics. So I come to this work as an Indian who believes deeply in secularism and in feminism. Those are the two things that have governed my entry point into this enquiry. Therefore, even though I may, with empathy and compassion, understand what drives people to commit acts of violence, I

still feel great criticism, condemnation, and horror about those acts.

Mangal Singh and I established a grandfather-granddaughter relationship. It was a very warm and close relationship, but one part of me could not believe that he had killed all these people, and that he had rationalised it in his mind in the name of valour and honour. I would go through this thing of loving him and then wanting to shake him and shout at him. I don't think I could suspend the morality that I had grown up with.

But yes, beyond the morality, you can try to understand. Just as if you are working on prison reforms, the prisoners become human to you, there is a point that you cross, and then you recross it. This is why it is a very difficult book to read; it was definitely not an easy book to write.

Mahatar Pakhadi



Pankaj Joshi

Pankaj Joshi is an architect, urban designer researcher. He teaches at the Rachana Sansad college of architecture. He has been involved with various citizens' movement concerning issues of urban development. He is presently director of UDRI (Urban Development Research Institute), a development action group in Mumbai.

Note on practical exercises: Mahatar Pakhadi: A Stroll Through a Twilight Village

Time has all but obliterated a gamut of settlement patterns in Mumbai of their splendid glory. Mahatar Pakhadi, an enclave in the busy humdrum of Mazagaon in Mumbai, seems to be one of those areas that time forgot. Less than five kilometers from downtown Mumbai's glittery world of cinema halls and commercial centers is Mahatar Pakhadi a sleepy hamlet that has magically paused in some bygone era.

Contrary to the local meaning of the term Mahatar Pakhadi i.e. Old People's Garden, the enclave got its name from its tenancy in 1767, when it was let out to a "mahatara" (the wise one in Sanskrit) or a vereodore (Portuguese) who was appointed by the then East India Company Government to prevent fraud, alienation or destruction of the company land.

By early nineteenth century, Mazagaon was a large fishing village with a dock for small ships. It was lined with the smaller settlements of Mahatar Pakhadi and Mazwar Pakhadi and their orchards. The mango fruit from these orchards had made Mazagaon a celebrity in the east.

In the book *Western India in 1838*, MRS Postans remarks, "The largest Portuguese village or town of Mazagong, which is dirty and swarming with pigs, is, however, finely situated, occupying the shore between two hills, and is moreover celebrated as being the place at which the fine variety of mango, so much in request, was originally grown. The parent tree whence all the grafts were taken which have supplied the neighboring gardens, was said to be in existence a few years ago, a guard of sepoys being stationed round in the proper season to preserve its fruits from unhallowed hands. From these groves in the time of one of

the most luxurious Moghal Emperors, Shah Jahan, the royal tables of Delhi were furnished with their principal vegetable attraction, couriers being dispatched to bring the far-famed mangoes to the imperial court."

By the late nineteenth century, Mahatar Pakhadi had developed into a dense residential settlement. The act of intervention for conservation of historic or culturally significant settlements and precincts is normally understood to be in the form of policy and physical planning. Policy and physical interventions often fall short of resources and they will, since the priorities of state/user are different. However in several cases in Mumbai, enhancing the level of awareness and confidence of users in built forms as an important medium of their cultural existence has significantly complemented the conservation process. Mahatar Pakhadi is one such case where, through the process of documentation and research, a few residents got interested in the idea of conservation through maintenance and timely repairs. They managed to carry out small jobs, such as replacing rusting nails, cleaning and repairing woodwork, repainting walls with lime wash, cleaning gutters, changing plumbing and repairing drainage. These small gestures, and an emphasis on regular maintenance over the years, virtually transformed the precinct. A walk through this area is an intervention in itself, reinforcing the confidence of the residents in their conservation and enthusing the visitor to do his bit to participate in the process.

The Walk

On reaching Mahatar Pakhadi Lane during a recent walking tour, participants in the walk were disappointed at first glance. The post-1920 development of Mahatar Pakhadi does not even faintly suggest quaintness or old world charm. The enclave can be accessed from any of its six entrances the more interesting ones are in the south and west. The south entrance is through a narrow lane sandwiched between Mazagaon Rest House Building and Regina House. Though some decrepit houses greet you, as well as a sleazy bar, the picture changes as you move along this axis northwards. A pattern slowly emerges of small cottages with staircases and elaborate verandahs.

The street winds along an organic path that, though narrow, is

punctuated by open spaces. These multi-functional spaces, though small, function effectively as play areas for children, and as a stage for religious activities and congregation.

The first such activity node is formed at the junction of Mahatar Pakhadi lane and Club Lane. Club Lane is the Goan section of the enclave. It comprises a number of clubs (subsidised boarding lodges for single working migrants). The clubs contain huge dormitory halls without any furniture. Storage trunks used by the residents during the day double up as beds by night. Amparo House Club has an interesting altar, which is proudly displayed to inquisitive visitors. These clubs are not very well maintained, but are excellent examples of a public utility dwelling of the mid-nineteenth century.

As we move along the main axis of the Mahatar Pakhadi lane, the enclave progressively reveals itself. The street elevation exhibits the interrelation of key horizontal elements, such as cornices that demarcate floor heights and plinths, and rooflines that harmonise and bind entire facades. Elements such as railings, roof projections, eaves boards, cornices and fretwork on balconies, verandahs, porches and outdoor rooms convey a sense of substance and sensuality to structures. The outdoor room of God's Gift, the dollhouse-like Anthonio's Rest, the elaborate Miranda residence and the huge wooden trellis facade of Keepsake finally leads you to your goal, the Holy Cross Oratory at the north-west corner of the enclave.

The Holy Cross Oratory was built in 1904 on a cross to seek deliverance from the plague that year and as a thanksgiving for its end. I quote from *The Charm of Bombay* by RP Karkaria, "The presence of plague in Bombay was noticed in 1896 with the death of hundreds of people subsequently. Thousands of people fled the island of Bombay, with people of Mahatar Pakhadi fleeing to Salsette only to return after the holocaust was brought under control by 1902."

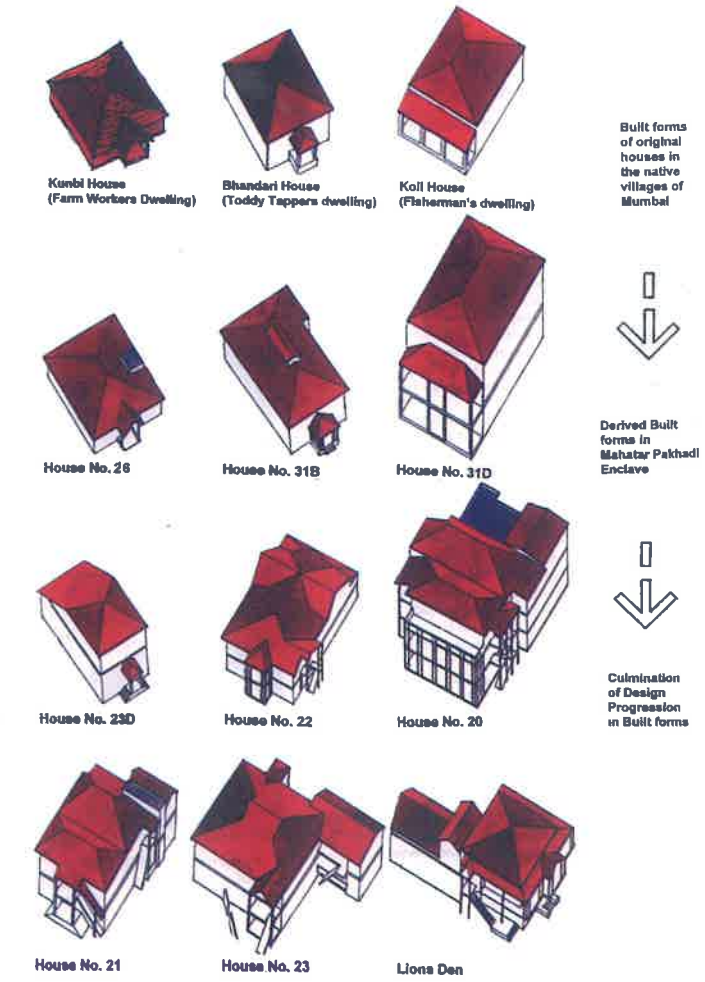
On May 1, a feast is celebrated at this little oratory. It is the annual feast of the village heralding the month of Our Lady by the people. A nine-day novena is concluded with a prayer of thanks, conducted by the parish priest who is invited to officiate the religious part.

As we head northwards, we come across a tiny Hindu shrine. The plaque

on its facade displays more Catholic names than Hindu ones. Even the tiled face of the temple is composed of depictions of all religions in the city of Mumbai resolute evidence of the secular fabric of the precinct.

Moving away from the shrine along a narrow pedestrian strip, we head towards the northern extremity of the enclave. The awe-inspiring houses slowly transform into decrepit housing, proof of the assaults and insensitive repairs carried out by civic authorities. Westwards from this end is the massive timber-colonnaded porch of the Matarpacady Club. This structure is among the buildings that represent the culmination of a design ethic at work in this settlement. Matarpacady Club, set up in 1907, is the oldest functioning recreational club outside the urban agglomeration of south Bombay. The walk ends further down Champsi Bhimji Road at Hasanabad, a blue structure with a golden spiked dome and minarets of HH Aga Khan's tomb.

Mahatar Pakhadi is an example of a generic pattern of settlement that is observed in the remnants of the original village enclaves of Khotachiwadi (Girgaum), Mahim, Shirley Rajan and Ranwar (Bandra), Amboli and Marol (Andheri), Manori (Malad), Gorai (Borivali), Uttan (Bhayander) and Vasai. These enclaves can be classified as belonging to the pre-industrial phase of building activity, which was characterised by the land-owner applying the expertise of the master builder to build his own house. Though the tradesman was involved in construction, the owner was an important participant in the building process. Mahatar Pakhadi thus swings between past and present, between the daylight of growth and night of decay hence "a twilight village".


Kunbi House
(Farm Workers Dwelling)
Bhandari House
(Toddy Tappers dwelling)
Koli House
(Fisherman's dwelling)
Built forms of original houses in the native villages of Mumbai
House No. 26
House No. 31B
House No. 31D
Derived Built forms in Mahatar Pakhadi Enclave
House No. 23D
House No. 22
House No. 20
Culmination of Design Progression in Built forms
House No. 21
House No. 23
Lions Den

Amrita Shodhan

Amrita Shodhan is an independent scholar and currently serves as an Adjunct Assistant Lecturer at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Her area of study is political identity, gender, imperialism and human rights. Her publications are A Question of Community: Religious Groups and Colonial Law and in Gujarati, Ittihaslekhan ma(n) Nari ané Nari Ittihas - Women in Historiography and Women's history.

Note on practical exercises:

The Idea of India through the Ages

Our educational pursuit is centered on the students, thus, we facilitate learning by collectively drawing out the students' experiences for reflection, awareness-building and analysis. Further, we draw out rather than impose opinions and perspectives so that students are encouraged to transform their present state. They should find the learning process to be liberating.

With this conviction we included two historical exercises for students to go through during the week's programme. Here the students drew on their own understanding of India and their knowledge about aspects of Indian history in a structured exercise. They worked in small groups and shared their work.

We hope that you will go through a part of the same exercise with us in this publication.

Exercise One:
First answer these questions, then look at the maps and answer them again.

1. What are the significant cultural/ historical areas you would find in a map of India from the earliest period to the 1st C. B.C.?
2. During the time of the Lodis 1451 to 1526 what is happening in south India
3. Up to what period do we include the North-west frontier and southern Afghanistan in India?

These are different maps of India through the ages (pages 167-169). Please look at them and answer the same questions again.

List one : Set of historical maps of India

Map 1. Sites of Harappan and contemporaneous cultures
Map 2. Vedic India.
Map 3. Sites of ancient copper and bronze artifacts (shows the north east being very active)
Map 4. South Asia in the time of the Lodis (The Status, Age and Nature of South Asian Boundaries)
Map 5. Post Harappan iron age pottery sites
Map 6. South India 1485-1605

Afterward

The aim of the exercise is to study the idea of India in the maps showing India in different historical periods.

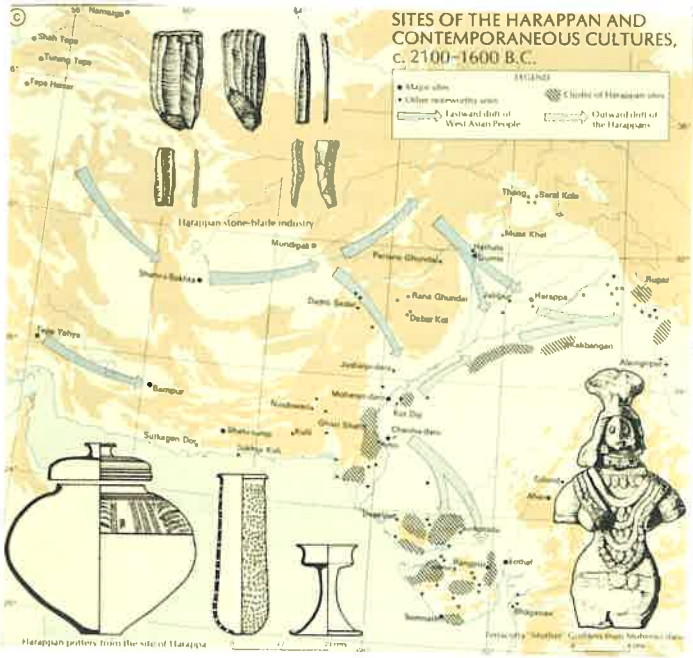
From pre-history to the modern age we have studied Indian history. The graphic representation of this India of the past on a map helps us understand the idea in the historians' mind of what India is. We study Harappa and Mohenjodaro as India even though the sites lie physically outside the boundaries of modern India. We study Afghanistan and Gandhara in history upto the Kushana period as India but do not study the history of these sites in later periods of Indian history.

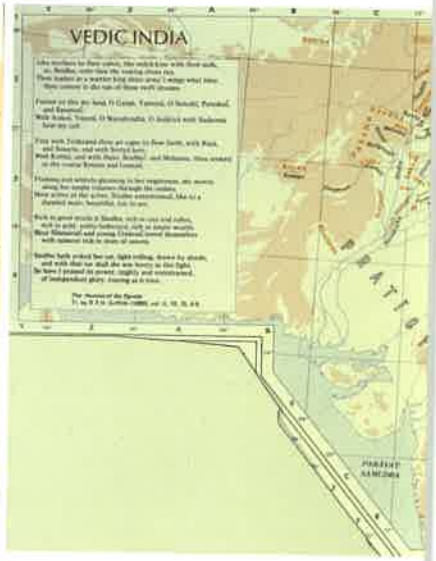
On the other hand we do not study the history of south India during the Harappan, Vedic, Maurya periods. India during those periods is primarily the story of north India. We hardly study what happened in Assam, Nagaland, and other eastern states in any of the periods of 'our' history. Thus India for the historians is the land of the Gangetic basin sometimes extending to the south.

Historians are interested in particular cultures identified as Indian, Hindu, Buddhist and later Mughal. We are not interested in the history of Islam per se even though it forms a part of our past and present.

Boundaries and Borders

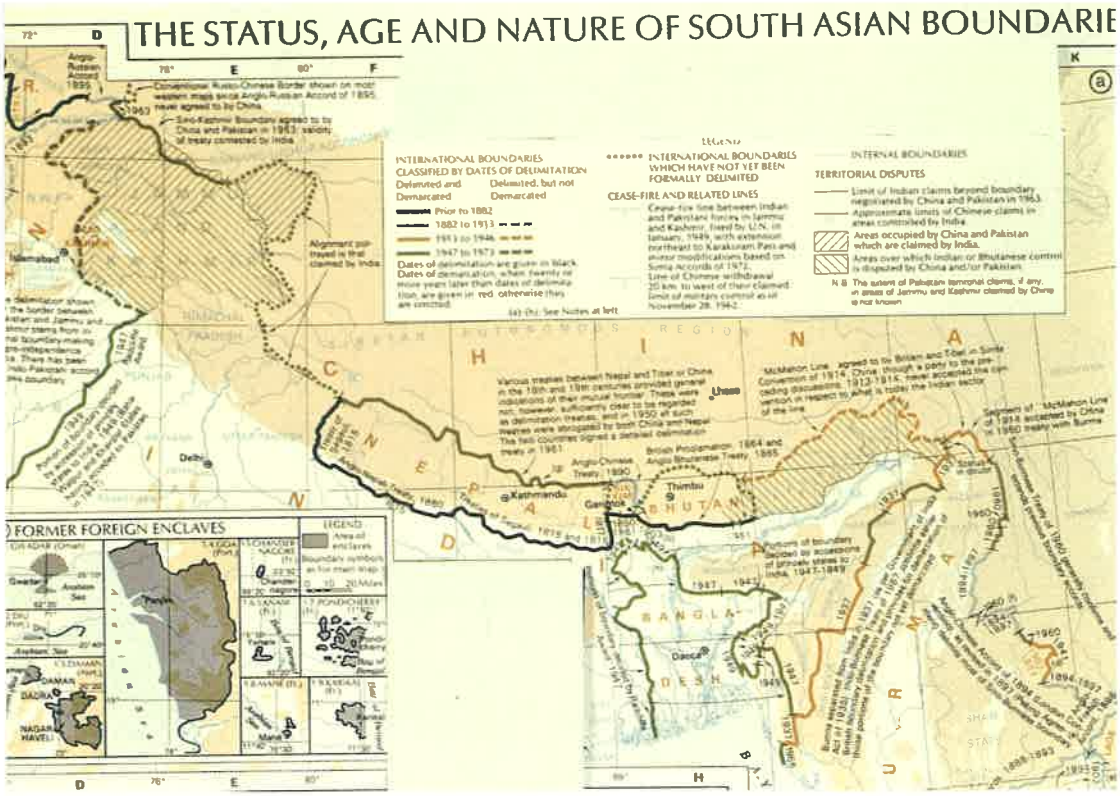
When discussing the various maps of Indian history one notices how historians tend to give boundaries to Kingdoms - Magadha, Mauryan empire and so on. However the notion of boundary has changed.

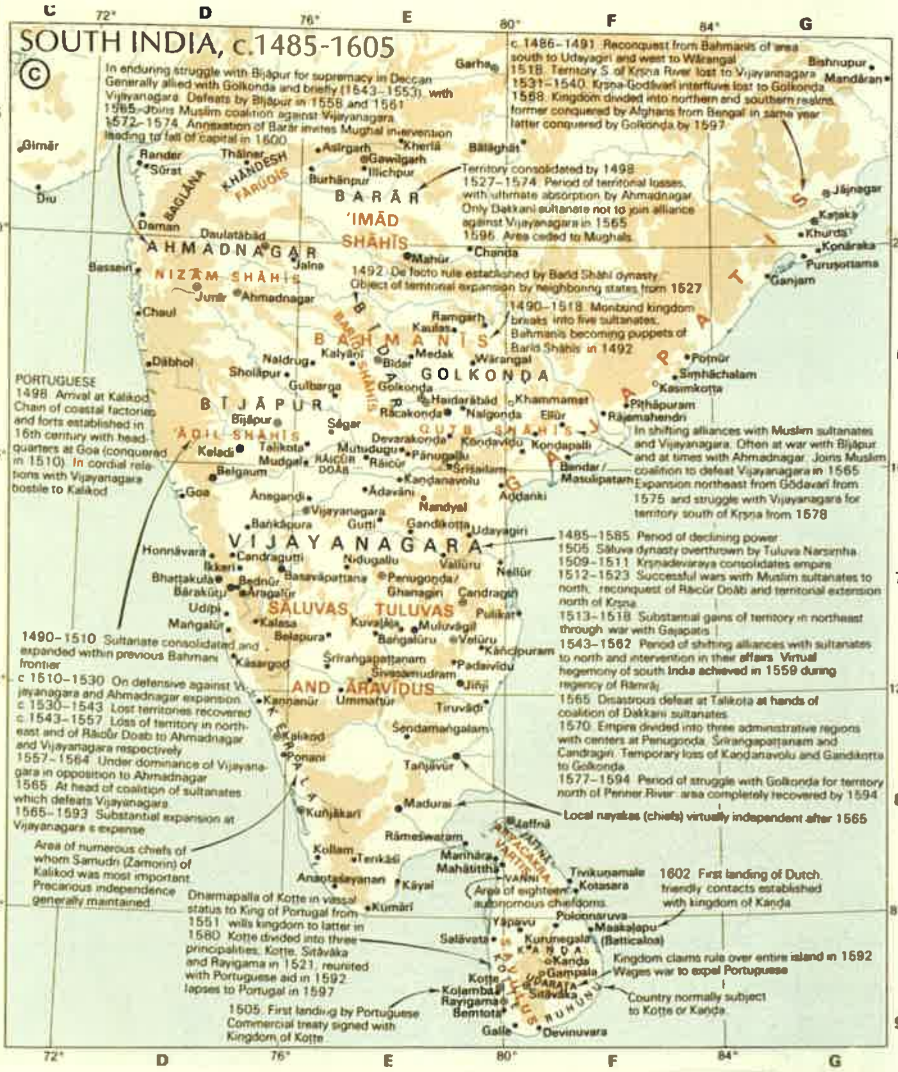




Clockwise: Map1, Map 2, Map 3, Map 4, Map 5


SITES OF ANCIENT COPPER AND BRONZE ARTIFACTS
LEGEND


THE STATUS, AGE AND NATURE OF SOUTH ASIAN BOUNDARIE
FORMER FOREIGN ENCLAVES


SOUTH INDIA, c.1485-1605
In enduring struggle with Bijāpur for supremacy in Deccan. Generally allied with Golkonda and briefly (1543–1553) with Vijayanagara. Defeats by Bijāpur in 1558 and 1561. 1565 Joins Muslim coalition against Vijayanagara. 1572–1574 Annexation of Barār invites Mughal intervention leading to fall of capital in 1600
c.1486–1491 Reconquest from Bahmanis of area south to Udayagiri and west to Wārangal. 1518 Territory S. of Krsna River lost to Vijayannagara. 1531–1540 Krsna-Godāvari interfluve lost to Golkonda. 1568 Kingdom divided into northern and southern realms, former conquered by Afghans from Bengal in same year, latter conquered by Golkonda by 1597
Territory consolidated by 1498. 1527–1574 Period of territorial losses, with ultimate absorption by Ahmadnagar. Only Dakkani sultanate not to join alliance against Vijayanagara in 1565. 1596 Area ceded to Mughals
1492 De facto rule established by Barid Shāhi dynasty. Object of territorial expansion by neighboring states from 1527
1490–1518 Moribund kingdom breaks into five sultanates. Bahmanis becoming puppets of Barid Shāhis in 1492
PORTUGUESE
1498 Arrival at Kalikod. Chain of coastal factories and forts established in 16th century with headquarters at Goa (conquered in 1510). In cordial relations with Vijayanagara, hostile to Kalikod
In shifting alliances with Muslim sultanates and Vijayanagara. Often at war with Bijāpur and at times with Ahmadnagar. Joins Muslim coalition to defeat Vijayanagara in 1565. Expansion northeast from Gōdavari from 1575 and struggle with Vijayanagara for territory south of Krsna from 1578
1485–1585 Period of declining power
1505 Sāluva dynasty overthrown by Tuluva Narsimha
1509–1511 Krsnadevaraya consolidates empire
1512–1523 Successful wars with Muslim sultanates to north, reconquest of Rācūr Doāb and territorial extension north of Krsna
1513–1518 Substantial gains of territory in northeast through war with Gajapatis
1543–1562 Period of shifting alliances with sultanates to north and intervention in their affairs. Virtual hegemony of south India achieved in 1559 during regency of Rāmrāj
1565 Disastrous defeat at Talikota at hands of coalition of Dakkani sultanates
1570 Empire divided into three administrative regions with centers at Penugonda, Srirangapattanam and Candragiri. Temporary loss of Kandanavolu and Gandikotta to Golkonda
1577–1594 Period of struggle with Golkonda for territory north of Penner River: area completely recovered by 1594
1490–1510 Sultanate consolidated and expanded within previous Bahmani frontier
c.1510–1530 On defensive against Vijayanagara and Ahmadnagar expansion
c.1530–1543 Lost territories recovered
c.1543–1557 Loss of territory in northeast and of Rācūr Doab to Ahmadnagar and Vijayanagara respectively
1557–1564 Under dominance of Vijayanagara in opposition to Ahmadnagar
1565 At head of coalition of sultanates which defeats Vijayanagara
1565–1593 Substantial expansion at Vijayanagara's expense
Area of numerous chiefs of whom Samudri (Zamorin) of Kalikod was most important. Precarious independence generally maintained
Local nayakas (chiefs) virtually independent after 1565
Dharmapalla of Kotte in vassal status to King of Portugal from 1551 wills kingdom to latter in 1580. Kotte divided into three principalities, Kotte, Sitāvāka and Rayigama in 1521, reunited with Portuguese aid in 1592, lapses to Portugal in 1597
1505 First landing by Portuguese. Commercial treaty signed with Kingdom of Kotte
1602 First landing of Dutch, friendly contacts established with kingdom of Kanda
Kingdom claims rule over entire island in 1592. Wages war to expel Portuguese
Country normally subject to Kotte or Kanda
Area of eighteen autonomous chiefdoms
AHMADNAGAR
NIZĀM SHĀHIS
BARĀR
'IMĀD SHĀHIS
BIDAR
BARID SHĀHIS
BAHMANIS
GOLKONDA
QUTB SHĀHIS
BIJĀPUR
'ĀDIL SHĀHIS
KHANDESH
FĀRUQIS
BAGLĀNA
GAJAPATIS
VIJAYANAGARA
SĀLUVAS, TULUVAS AND ĀRAVIDUS
JAFFNA
KANDA
RUHUNU
RĀICŪR DOĀB
Girnār
Diu
Daman
Rander
Sūrat
Thālner
Asirgarh
Kherlā
Gawilgarh
Illichpur
Burhānpur
Bālāghāt
Garha
Daulatābād
Jalna
Bassein
Junīr
Ahmadnagar
Mahūr
Chanda
Chaul
Dābhol
Naldrug
Sholāpur
Kalyāni
Bidar
Medak
Wārangal
Ramgarh
Kaulas
Gulbarga
Golkonda
Haidarābād
Khammamet
Rācakonda
Nalgonda
Ellūr
Bijāpur
Sāgar
Devarakonda
Kondavidu
Kondapalli
Keladi
Talikota
Mudgal
Mutudugu
Rāicūr
Pānugallu
Srīsailam
Belgaum
Kandanavolu
Goa
Anegandi
Ādavāni
Nandyal
Addanki
Bandar / Masulipatam
Vijayanagara
Bankāpura
Gutti
Gandikotta
Udayagiri
Honnāvara
Candragutti
Nidugallu
Vallūru
Nellūr
Ikkeri
Bhattakula
Bednūr
Basavāpattana
Penugonda / Ghanagiri
Bārakūru
Āragalūr
Candragiri
Udipi
Pulikat
Mangalūr
Kalasa
Kuvalāla
Muluvāgil
Belapura
Bangalūru
Velūru
Kāncipuram
Kāsargod
Srirangapattanam
Padaivīdu
Sivasamudram
Jinji
Kannanūr
Ummattūr
Tiruvādi
Sendamangalam
Kalikod
Ponani
Tanjāvūr
Kunjākari
Madurai
Rāmeswaram
Kollam
Tenkāsi
Anantasayanan
Kāyal
Kumāri
Bishnupur
Mandāran
Jājnagar
Kataka
Khurda
Konāraka
Purusottama
Ganjam
Potnūr
Simhāchalam
Kasimkotta
Pithāpuram
Rājamahendri
Jaffnā
Mannāra
Mahātittha
VANNI
Trikunamale
Kotasara
Yāpavu
Polonnaruva
Salāvata
Kurunegala
Maakalapu (Batticaloa)
Kanda
Gampala
Kotte
Kolamba
Rayigama
Sitāvāka
Bemtota
Galle
Devinuvara

Map-6

Today's idea of boundary is a limit that the state recognises for itself. It agrees to limit itself within that boundary. It also creates an ideological unity of the nation within those geographical boundaries. For example all people living within the borders of India are expected to be Indians sharing common values and morality and adhering to a notion called Indianness. The Indian nation as united and uniform in culture having a similar identity for all its members is a recent idea. Whereas in the past the Kingdom centered in the capital recognised frontiers as regions of aggression and inter-penetration with the neighbouring state. Thus the sense of belonging and being a citizen of an empire with a single culture did not prevail in the past.

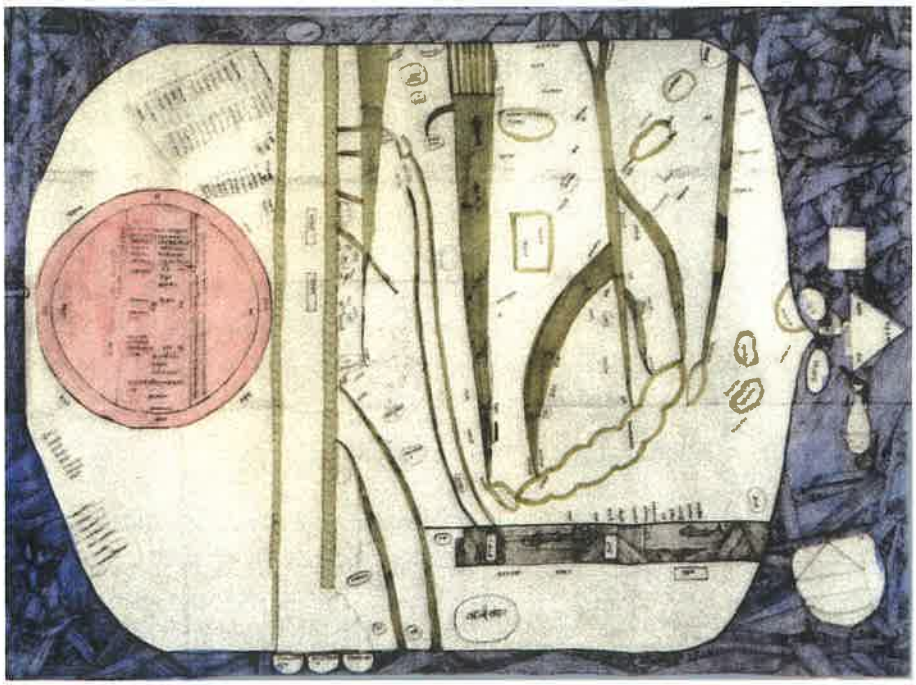
Modern India

When did the modern idea of India as in today's boundaries develop? One would imagine in 1947 on independence. But there is in fact no map of India from August 15 1947. At that time no one knew for sure and exactly what were the boundaries of the country. The latest boundary of India was formed in 1973 with the accession of Sikkim formalised in 1975. The map provided shows the various periods in which the various boundaries of India were formed. This shows that the map of India is constantly changing and is a negotiated reality.

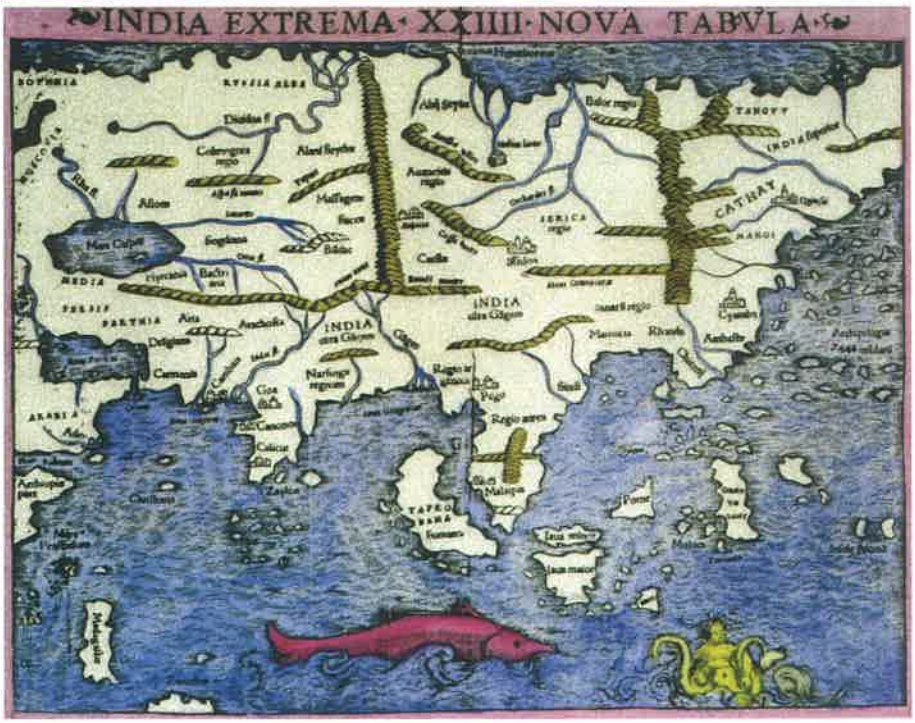
Thus India as nation state where there is a unity of geography, people and government that rules itself is a modern notion and does not necessarily conform to historical ideas of ourselves and our culture. The diversity of ideas of what is us can only enrich our selves and make our past and present more interesting. Unfortunately sometimes cultural ideas of India's past chosen and selected for us by historians are made to give meaning to political boundaries of modern India and then these boundaries are fought over and disputed.

Exercise Two: To display the different ideas of India in the past.

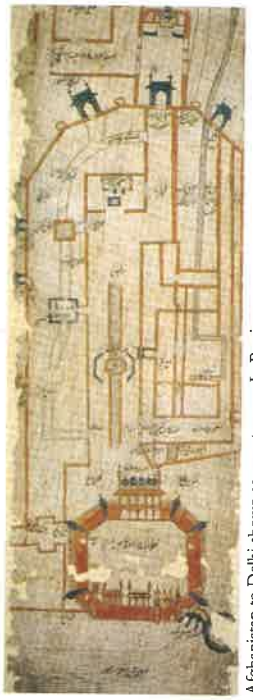
The term India comes from the Greek and Persian terms for the land beyond the Indus (sindhu). The map the Greeks and Egyptians used of India around 1st C. B.C. was made by Ptolemy. The map shows India as basically a coastline from Sopara (north of Mumbai proper) to Bengal. They paid little attention to inland India.



Prithvichi naksha - A marathi map in Devnagri and Modi, East on top.

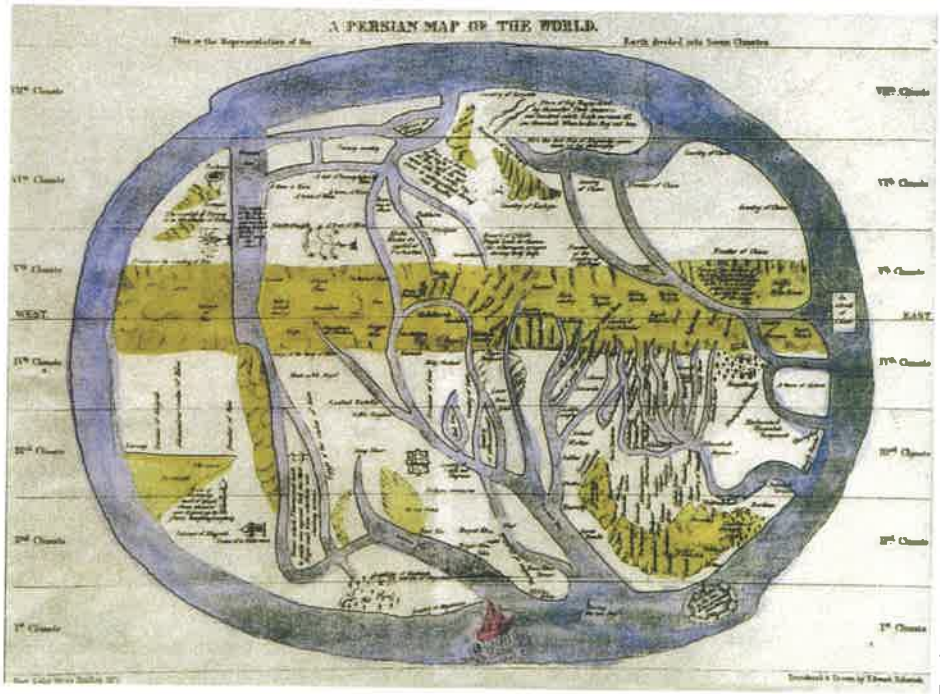


Ptolemy's map of India (Circa 1" C. A.D.) as edited by Munster A.D. 1540

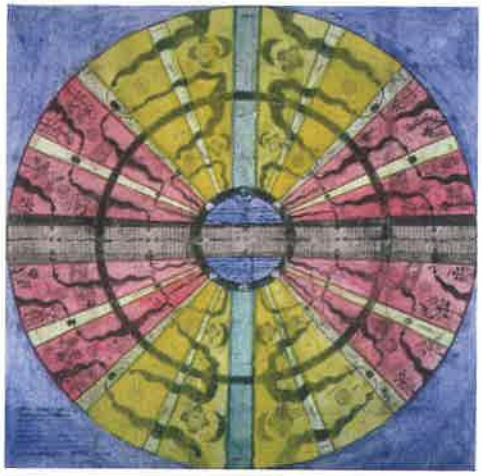


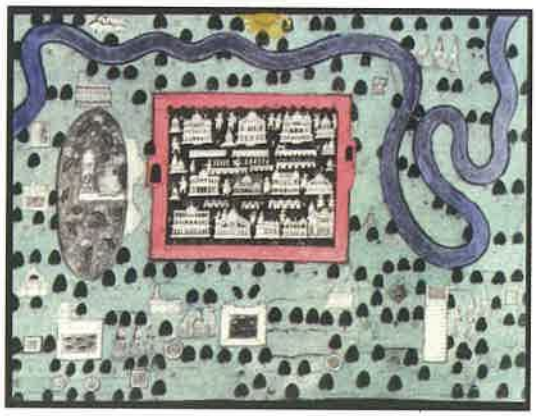
Afghanistan to Delhi shown as a route map. In Persian

Map of the world with showing China, India and Western Asia



Persian map of the world in Rehatsek's transcription





Religious maps:
Clockwise:

Jagganath Puri - temple complex.

Vrindavan - Jamuna river and the pilgrimage spots.

Ujjain (late 18th C.) with the town, the river Sipra, the tnaks and groves.

A Jain map, Jambu Dvipa - Diagram of the Adhai Dvipas, 1505 A.D. Calico Museum of Textiles, Ahmedabad.

The term Bharat comes from Puranic accounts of this land. Maps of Bharatvarsha show the land in a mythological context or in the Modi map in a combination of mythology and topography. Another term used for India is Jambudvipa - the Jamun (roseapple) island. This was a term used in Jain and Buddhist maps of Inida. They show the land in a mythological context. The mythic geography shows Mt. Meru at the center of the land - surrounded by a sea and watered by rivers.

Another word for the same land mass is Hindustan. These maps are in Persian. And mostly concentrate on northern India stretching from southern Afghanistan to Bengal with very little or no information on south India.

One can see many other such maps. Most of them were developed for trade and travel. There were religious maps showing pilgrimage sites as considerable travel was for religious pilgrimages. Often they show the route to a particular religious place to another. They also give us a ritual insight into the place. Devotees even made do with these representations when they couldn't travel. Thus, the map representations were to show the route as well as to show the symbolic importance of the place.

These different maps show the various ways of thinking about Indian past and places.

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Schedule

October 26
Introduction By **Neera Adarkar**
History Through Facts and Myths: An Introduction by **K N Panikkar**
Indus Valley Civilization: Interpretations and Theories, **M K Dhavalikar**
An Exercise on Using Archeological Evidence in History Writing
Public Lecture: Culture, Nationalism and Communal Politics, **K N Panikkar**

October 27
Multicultural Settlements and Homogenised Narratives **Mubarak Ali**
on Karachi and Hyderabad, Sind
Sufi Settlements **Subur Manji**
Multicultural Trading Complexes of Calicut **Ruchira Banerjee**
Influences on Mumbai City **Arvind Adarkar**

October 28
Construction of Communities in Colonial India **Flavia Agnes**
Gandhi and Modern Playwrights **Y.d. Phadke**
Other Side of Partition **Urvashi Butalia**

Film Screening: Sardar By **Ketan Mehta**

October 29:
Field Visit, **A P Jamkedkar, Nasreen Fazalbhoy** and **Pankaj Joshi.**

October 30
Tales of History in Textbooks **Arvind Deshpande**
Tales of History and Mythology Through Cartoon Strips **Arshia Sattar**
Tales of History Through Popular Films **Gayatri Chatterjee**
Film Screening: Subarnarekha by **Ritwik Ghatak**

October 31
Open Session
Making of India Through Centuries: An Exercise with Maps, **Amrita Shodan**
Documentary Film: Seasons Outside by **Amar Kanwar**
Role of Past And Memory in Contemporary Life **Uma Chakravarti**

Workshop on Literature and Literary Practices

October 18-22, 2000
YB Chavan Centre, Nariman Point

Introduction by Madhusree Dutta

When I reached this venue in the morning, I was overwhelmed with contradictory emotions. The queue for registrations had reached the middle of the staircase. In this workshop, we plan to provide for around 30 students, and today, more than 50 of you have already registered. This is the third workshop in the series, and it is really heartening to see that the outreach is expanding to such a scale.

At the same time, I was wondering whether this has something to do with the topic of this workshop, Literature and Literary Practices; whether general interest in literature is substantially more or may be somewhat more articulated than in other art forms. Or is it that we believe that in order to access literature, we need some skill of negotiation that is not required for cinema, theatre, or architecture? Is that something to do with the notion of literature being a high form of expression, while the others are associated more with popular culture? Literature is not part of that mundane and daily. Is that so?

Is literature different from literary practices? Isn't literature an outcome of literary practices? Do all literary practices find a space in literature? What merit does a "practice" need to have in order to qualify as "literature"? How and when were these parameters of qualifying merit decided? Were we part of deciding the parameters? Who among us were part of it and who were not? Does this parameter include or exclude our or anybody else's way of living and chronicling? What happened to those excluded chronicles? Does some literature exist beyond letters and libraries? We hope to raise and address some of these questions in this workshop.

We shall also extensively deal with the "politics of translation". We often use terms like translation, transliteration, and transmission. These are acts of deliberation, they need a via media. What happens when a text travels through that via media? Is that a neutral space or a space of transformation? We will deal with the relationship of literary texts with other and younger art forms, such as painting, theatre and cinema.

Dilip Chitre

Dilip Chitre is a poet, fiction-writer, playwright, painter and filmmaker. He writes in English and Marathi and also translates into both languages. He has published a translation of Bhakti poet Tukaram's poems called Says Tuka. He is Honorary Editor of the quarterly journal New Quest (Mumbai/ Pune, India) and Honorary President of the Sontheimer Cultural Association', a folk heritage foundation in Pune.

Telling Tales - The Evolving of Oral Literature

Where are we born?
All of us are born at different places, but all of us are also born into our mother tongues. The first territory that we experience is the territory of the mother tongue that is spoken around us as infants. We are surrounded by voices; before we begin to speak in our own voice, other voices have already enveloped us. So I would like you to go back as far as possible into your own memory. Most of us use language for a lifetime, but we forget precisely how we learnt it, and how we personally learnt a language is not what linguistics explains to us. It is something that we have to explain to ourselves.

You can imagine a time when the entire population of the earth was like the population of, say, Calcutta, something like 10,000 years ago. The whole planet had less human beings than a single city today. These were not people who lived in cities together, but people who lived in groups, small bands, wandering from one place to another. There were different races, different tribes. Fifty thousand years ago, people lived apart from each other, but they often crossed over, or married outside their own groups. When you marry, in the biological sense, outside your own band, own family or own tribe, you marry another dialect. So languages have always been interacting, languages have been connecting with other languages. Before man knew the word "translation", human beings had been translating one dialect into another, one community language into another.

You can imagine that at that time, the mother's language and the father's language could have been different, or they may have been different dialects. We talk about the mother tongue because the mother nurses and brings up the child. Since the mother is close to the child from childhood, we have the concept of mother tongue, but not the concept of father tongue. So language is, in a sense, matrilineal rather than patrilineal.

There is a sense today of an elite language. The elite in human society was the dominant gender, i.e. the male gender, the father, and the mother was a second-class citizen. The

father, along with others from his gender, would evolve a language of power, rule, aggression, and victory over other tribes. When you have a hierarchy, you have to have a hierarchy also of voices, of languages, of styles, and so in this hierarchy n elite style evolved, a style of the rulers.

Nearer home, we have the example of Sanskrit theatre in which the upper-castes, the Brahmins and Kshatriyas, speak Sanskrit, and the women and the servants speak the common Prakrit. Thus, there has always been a tendency to relegate the mother tongue to the background and choose an elitist alternative. As part of this process, when man invented writing, the elites started insisting upon written texts as something superior to what was being spoken by people. Today you know how we live in a text-dominated society, so that the text has become superior to the actual human voice. We forget the actual human voice; instead, we consider its representations in signs and symbols as superior. We spend a lot of time interpreting the signs and symbols, as though they were not associated with any human voice; so we de-humanize language in order to create texts.

Today, there is a whole tradition of literary criticism, and all kinds of disciplines where a sign is more important than a voice. In literature the human voice has always been the underdog, ever since texts were created.

If we look at the history of our mother tongues, and I come to my mother tongue Marathi, the very few people who could read and write it were the Brahmins, and they guarded the sacred texts and passed them from one generation to another. Texts were memorized and were taught only to a select few; an elite was created which alone knew the texts. Only these people knew the meanings of the texts.

You can call it some sort of hermeneutic dictatorship, the dictatorship of the interpreter. So anyone who interprets a text is superior to anyone who just reads the text, and a person who reads the text is superior to anyone who just hears the story. A storyteller is considered very inferior even to a bad writer who can write and publish. There are excellent storytellers all over India among tribals, among illiterate people, fantastic storytellers who could be regarded as creators of great fiction, but the minority which is literate and the super-minority that can interpret texts has hold of the situation.

I think we have already lost democracy in the world of literature and art, and to restore it should be our agenda. We are entering another millennium and that should be the millennium of the return of the human voice rather than of the sign dominating us, otherwise we will be a society in which people communicate merely by writing emails to one another without even knowing the person at the other end. They will lose even the sensuous feel of language that you communicate through a voice. We will forget all the gestures

accompanying language. This is already happening, if you look at urban cinema and the language spoken in it, and the language that people actually speak.

When we come to the city, we have a vast congregation of people, but all of them speak or try to speak a standardized language, and live in tiny compartments. Cities are great places for human isolation. If you look at modern literature, most of it is about the alienation of the human being. Most of these alienated people live in cities, not natural settings but manmade settings, and alienation itself is something that is manmade, it is created socially and systematically. It is created because a system is created, and the system is dissociated from the human being.

The performers for this afternoon are Varkaris. Many of you may not have even heard of these people. These are not a minority, but a majority in Maharashtra. One thing to know about them is that theirs is the strongest and most continuous literary movement in Maharashtra. They have been around for at least 700 years, producing literature. They have learnt it by heart and have kept it alive by singing it. Stories are sung as well as lyrical poetry. Subjective experiences are voiced.

The Varkaris are pilgrims. This community is referred to as Varkari because *vari* means "trip", and Varkaris make at least one trip annually to Pandharpur, which is their sacred city. Most of them walk to Pandharpur from all parts of Maharashtra. On the eleventh day of Aashaadh *(Aashaadhi Ekadashi)*, there is a big festival at Pandharpur, and if you attend it even once out of curiosity, you will be overwhelmed. When students come to me to learn about Marathi literature, I actually take them for the last three days of this pilgrimage.

The Varkaris have created stories for themselves, stories about Pandharpur. In this afternoon's performance when you listen to a Varkari *kirtan*, I will not provide a translation at that time and thus take the spirit away. They say, in one of the poems, that Pandharpur was created before heaven was created. "First Pandharpur was created and then Vaikunth was created." Now this is a reversal, and you would notice that Pandharpur is on earth and heaven is a manmade concept that came later. They say that at first there was no heaven; Pandharpur was the model for heaven.

The point is that all these people speak one mother tongue, but with many variations to it. They speak different dialects of Marathi, they come from different regions. Imagine people doing this pilgrimage for 700 years continuously. They have created a language, sustained it and developed it by doing this pilgrimage, because during the pilgrimage, different bands of Varkaris perform, sing and interact with one another, asking one another, "Where do you come from?" A man coming from Vidarbha would not know, would not have visited the Konkan. A man from Konkan and a man from Vidarbha meet in the pilgrimage and

interact. Long before we had the media or the magazines, people had this kind of a living magazine.

Like you, I went to a college in Bombay. Like you, teachers who got their concepts from Europe taught me language and literature. Those European concepts did not make me aware of the living traditions of language and literature. They taught me that texts are superior to the human voice, which I had to unlearn. Then I thought that the whole agenda of literature was in fact the rediscovery of the human voice rather than the discovery and perpetuation of a few texts. If you were a true democrat, you would say every human being's voice mattered, and if language is like a galaxy, then every human voice is like a star in that galaxy. Everyone has something important to say, but we are taught from the start that unless we say what we want to say in a certain manner, it is not acceptable or valuable, and very soon our individual voices are systematically destroyed and replaced by texts and textual discourse. They continue, and they dominate, and there is a whole political system behind it, which wants most of us to be dehumanized so that we can be controlled easily, and so signs and symbols become more important than voices.

My great grandmother was no less than writers who win the Nobel Prize, but it took me a long time to realize that she was as respectable a storyteller as any other fiction writer, because I was taught to consider the individual human voice less valuable than the disembodied voice of a text.

When these Varkaris perform, they think that the poets whose *abhangs* they sing, such as Sant Dnyaneshwar and Tukaram, are with them. When they carry the *palkhis* to Pandharpur, they carry symbolically the sandals of these poet- saints from different parts of Maharashtra. They believe that the poet is accompanying them in spirit. They are voicing his poetry; they are not reading it as a text. Many of these people are illiterate, but I do not know anyone who has memorized so much of rich literature as an average Varkari. Each one of them has already surpassed most Ph D students in terms of his grasp of what he sings and what he can perform. It is all a part of their daily lives, and of their peak celebrations in the year. Everything is bound to the calendar and the seasons of the year

Some of the people who will perform this afternoon drive rickshaws in the city of Pune. They regularly go on pilgrimage to Pandharpur, but they would come together to perform a *bhajan* rather than go somewhere else. These are people who enjoy the physical presence of other people, being together and singing. They understand what they sing, have different flourishes each time, they dwell on a particular word, sing it a certain way. .

Students of literature get confused when they are confronted by a text heavily mediated by their teachers. The professor speaks a lot to create a kind of foregrounding of a poem or

Top: Pandarpur Jatra, Bottom: A Pilgrim Photo by Sandesh Bhandare

short story, hence students are already worried that what they are dealing with is mysterious or complex. Here are people who are enjoying literature that is great by any standards, they are not students or teachers but ordinary human beings; they have not ceased to be human beings in order to be appreciators of literature. That is because they are in touch with the human voice, they use their own voices and they talk about these texts.

I had to do a lot of de-schooling in order to understand that you have to understand literature and language not in the decontextualised manner in which it is taught and received, that you have to return to the context. The context is a human being, it is the human community; the context is individuals. I think we are losing our capacity to imagine other individuals. We are being made increasingly lonely, and we are being isolated. It is true that we are congregating, it is true that I speak to you, it is true that someone will take notes, it is true that some of this will be used somewhere else, but each of us will return to our own isolated loneliness, and we will begin wondering about the real meaning of a text because we have forgotten the fact that language is a collection of voices and there is such a thing as a continuing voice, otherwise there would not be a continuing language.

A Pilgrim Photo by Sandesh Bhandare

What we call the state of the language today is not something created just now; it has a past. Unfortunately, the interventions of texts and interpreters of text have disrupted oral traditions, and this disruption causes a loss in a culture like ours because our culture has had oral traditions as the larger context of all literature. If you look at any great literary classic, you will see that it has borrowed from folk literature, borrowed from some oral tradition or the other. If you hear the same story from two different people they will both invest the same story with different moods; one may make it sinister, one may make it ironic.

It is not as though man has recently learnt to interpret texts. We have always been interpreters of voices. We have had translators of religious texts. Now, because we have lost a great deal of religion, instead of the priestly class, we have the critics. So you have lectures on post modernism because this is what the Brahmins of today do. Their *Vedas* will be some literary texts. They are the privileged that'll tell you how to interpret the text. You almost have to belong to a secret group to understand literature. So it is almost like the mafia, it is a secret society. Literature was never a secret society, it began with the human voice and the human voice wanted to reach out to another human being.

Writing is merely a technology, yet it tends to make us consider every illiterate an inferior human being, something less than a human being. It makes us think that oral traditions are not literature. In fact they are the mothers of literature. Which is why I talked to you about the mother tongue, the fact that we are born into a mother tongue. What happens is that the mothers create and the fathers take over.

The trend is being reversed: if you look at Hispanic American fiction, it takes you back to the voices of the people and to oral traditions. It takes you back to the communities masked by texts; it unmasks communities. In the world, there are hidden communities and hidden voices concealed from us, and these represent the oral tradition. I wish that students of literature could be looking at the rich oral traditions that still surround us in India. The contemporary Bengali writer Mahashweta Devi works among tribals. Why doesn't she work among the people of Calcutta, why not work with the Bengali bourgeoisie? Because she finds that forces are dehumanizing the tribals of which the urban Bengali is an agent.

I am somehow being unfair to the people who are going to perform. You are urban people. Some of you went to different language schools. Things which people outside the city are not surrounded by surround you. You perhaps subconsciously imagine that you have a vantage point to culture and civilization because you live in a city. These people would normally not perform here, so I am being unfair to them because this is a kind of decontextualised performance for them. They perform before other people like Sant Dnyaneshwar, one of the architects of the Varkari tradition who insisted on writing in his

mother tongue, Marathi, rather than Sanskrit.

He did this because he did not want to speak to an elite class, he wanted to communicate even to women who otherwise would not be allowed to study Sanskrit, and Shudras and other castes who would not be allowed access to texts. This is something that has been happening all over the world in literature, not just India. You have another example, almost a contemporary of Sant Dnyaneshwar, Dante. Dante could not have written his *Divine Comedy* if he wanted to address his poem to scholars. Instead, he wrote it in what was then known as "vulgar Italian", which was like a dialect, a coarse language. Dnyaneshwar was also using Marathi, he was proud to do so because by doing so he was empowering his listener. He was being inclusive; his audience became larger than it otherwise would have been. He wanted a larger language universe in which to live, rather than a small enclosed space in which scholars discussed with other scholars the secrets of literature. Literature was never meant to be secret.

There are contemporary people who use only the oral tradition, tribal people for example. You would not call them modern because you have divided the world into the modern world and "others", the rest. In fact, a larger proportion of the world is not modern, but it is not considered the superior world. Modernity itself has some kind of value preference attached to it, as though being modern is not only inevitable but is something desirable. The point is that people who create the oral tradition live in their own time. The modern writer has to struggle to live a little ahead of history. Modern writers or literary artists want to write for future generations as well; there is a kind of power attached to this. There is a kind of ambition that drives them; their audience is an audience that comes to them. Their audience consists of people like them who participate with them; here they are in a non-participating situation, maybe many of you don't even speak their language, but you will understand their music, their energy and the vigour that they pour into their performance.

It's not the kind of music that MTV would ever put on. The Varkaris will never ever make an album, they don't need to because they personally go on pilgrimages and many of them manage to go every year. To my American students, I say Pandharpur is the original Woodstock festival, because for years these people have been going there and singing and dancing and enjoying themselves. Yet it is different from Woodstock or other such contemporary festivals because when they go to Pandharpur, all Varkaris think that they are going to their parents' house. For them, it is like coming home. They all live in different parts of Maharashtra, but Pandharpur for them is like home.

The lecture was followed by a Varkari performance

Ganesh Devy

Ganesh Devy is an eminent laureate, linguist and culture activist. He has initiated a cultural movement among the tribal communities of western India and has set up the Tribal Academy at Tejgadh for carrying out research in tribal culture, languages and oral literature. Bhasha Center, a part of the academy, is engaged in conserving tribal culture and redefining its identity in the contemporary context. The organization works with denotified communities in the states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka and West Bengal.

Speaking of Margins: Literature of the Notified Tribes

साहित्य के क्षेत्र में अपने देश में विविध परम्पराएँ रही हैं। जब तक लिखित साहित्य की परंपरा उभर नहीं आई थी, printing technology नहीं थी, तब तक जिसे हम साहित्य नाम से पहचानते हैं, ज्यादातर वह मौखिक साहित्य था। जब कागज़ कवि के हाथ में आया तेरहविं सदी में, उसके बाद लिखित साहित्य की अपनी एक परम्परा होने लगी। साहित्य में लिखित साहित्य और मौंखिक साहित्य, ऐसा भेद रखने की जरूरत नहीं है, साहित्य साहित्य ही होता है। दूसरी एक परम्परा हमारे देश में बहुत प्राचीन समय से आयी है इसे अंग्रेजी में हम "hypocrisy" कहते हैं। हमारे देश में एक constitution बनाया गया है जिसके आठवे परिशिष्ठ में भाषाओं की एक सूचि बनायी है। आज उस सूची में 17 भाषाऐं हैं। लेकिन इस देश में और बहुत सी भाषा बोलनें वाले लोग भी हैं। और उनकी भाषा इस आठवें परिशिष्ट में नहीं है। इसका परिणाम यह है कि ऐसी भाषा बोलने वाले जो बच्चे होते हैं, उनके लिए न स्कूल का प्रबंध होता है, न यूनिवर्सिटी का। जब वह पढ़कर बड़े होते हैं, उनकी नौकरी के लिए मराठी भाषिक, बंगाली भाषिक, गुजराती भाषिक, अंग्रेजी भाषिक context में काम करना पड़ता है। अपनी भाषा भिल्ली है, मुंढारी है, यह कहने में शरमाते हैं। यह भी होता है कि उन्हें कहा जाता है, "आप साफ- सुथरी भाषा बोलिए। यह खराब सी भाषा मत बोलिए।" जब कि इन भाषाओं में कुछ 2000 साल पुरानी है, कुछ 500 साल पुरानी हैं। 1971 census में ऐसी भाषाओं की संख्या 90 बतायी गई है, 1981 census में इनकी संख्या 90 से घटकर कम हो गई, 1991 census में इनकी संख्या और भी घट गई। इस से कोई फर्क नहीं पड़ता, क्योंकि हमारे यहाँ किसी की कोई विशिष्ठ मातृभाषा भी नहीं होती है। हम census में convenience के लिए entry दे देते हैं कि "मेरी मातृभाषा मराठी है।" शिव सेना बहुत जोरदार रही, तो मराठी बोलने वाले बढ़ जाऐंगे BJP जोरदार रही, तो हिन्दी बोलने वाले बढ़ जाते हैं, Congress जोरदार रही तो अंग्रजी बोलने वाले बढ़ जातें है। हमारे देश में किसी की मातृभाषा नहीं होती। अब यह है वह "hypocrisy" की बात, जबकी हम कबूल करतें हैं कि तुकाराम, एकनाथ मराठी के बड़े साहित्यिक हैं। मौखिक साहित्य जो है, वह मराठी साहित्य का अभिन्न अंग है, यह मान्य है। लेकिन जिन भाषाओ में लिपि ही नहीं है, जिन भाषाओ का समावेश भारत के संविधान में नहीं हुआ है, उनका मौखिक सहित्य, भारत के साहित्य के किसी भी इतिहास में नहीं आता है।

मैं बहुत आत्मविश्विास के साथ कह सकता हूँ कि आदिवासी लोगों की भाषा में जो साहित्य है, वह बहुत ही ऊँचे दर्जे का साहित्य है, यह मैंने पढ़ा है, सुना है और अनुभव किया है। उसके कुछ उदाहरण आपके सामने रखता हूँ। हम जानतें हैं कि भारतीय साहित्य की जो नींव है वह 'रामायण' और 'महाभारत' है। शायद भारतीय संस्कृति का foundation वेदों में मिलता होगा, मुझे उसके बारे में ज्यादा जानकारी नहीं है, लेकिन 'महाभारत' में जानता हूँ और 'रामायण' भी जानता हूँ। 'रामायण' लिखा गया epic हो सकता है, मौखिक था या नहीं था उसके बारे में सही पता किसी को नहीं है, लेकिन 'महाभारत' oral epic था, यह हम सब जानतें हैं। और 'महाभारत' में बड़े युद्ध की घटना वर्णन की गई है, यह भी हम सब जानतें हैं। किसी ने कहा है कि 'महाभारत' इस देश के लोग जानतें हैं क्योंकि वह 'महाभारत' कभी पढ़ते नहीं हैं। यह oral literature का बहुत ही बड़ा

असर होने का लक्षण होता है। हम अभी भी जो 'महाभारत' की संहिता स्वीकार करते हैं, भंडारकर इंस्टिट्यूट की बनाई हुई, उससे अलग भी 'महाभारत' की कुछ संहिताएँ उपलब्ध हैं और उनमे से एक है भिल्ली लोगों की बनाई हुई। यह भिल्ल लोग रहतें हैं राजस्थान में, मध्यप्रदेश में महाराष्ट्र में और गुजरात में इनकी भाषा शायद 1500 साल या उससे भी ज्यादा पुरानी हो सकती है। आज इनकी भाषा एक भिल्ली भाषा स्वरूप में उपलब्ध नहीं है क्योंकि जिस भाषा को लिखित स्वरूप दिया नहीं जाता,

उसका standardization होता नहीं है और इसलिए उसमें regional variety ज्यादा रहती है। लेकिन फिर भी यह बात सच है कि महाराष्ट्र का भिल्ल मध्यप्रदेश के भिल्ल के साथ बिल्कुल सही तरह से बातचीत कर सकता है। राजस्थान और गुजरात के सीमा में रहने वाले भिल्लों की अपनी एक 'महाभारत' है, उसमे उनके पात्रों के नाम अलग है। द्रौपदी नहीं लेकिन धोपा बोलतें हैं, अभीमन्यू नहीं, एमंत बोलतें हैं उस पात्र को, उनकी कथा अर्जुन को नायक के स्वरूप में स्वीकारती नहीं है, क्योकि ये जो भिल्ल हैं वे तीर चलाते हैं रोज़, उनके बच्चे भी चलातें हैं, तो उनके दिल में अर्जुन की कोई खास जगह होने की कोई ज़रूरत नहीं है, क्योंकि अर्जुन ने सिर्फ एक समय, एक तीर सही तरीके से चलाया था, बाकी पूरी ज़िन्दगी गलतियाँ ही गलतियाँ करता रहा। उसके दिल में द्रौपदी के लिए बहुत प्यार है। उनकी कथा में अर्जुन हमेशा ऑफिस जाता रहता है - भिल्ली में उसे "कचेरी" बोलते हैं और वह भी बहुत contempt से। उन्होने कोई महल का वर्णन नहीं किया है, बस 'कचेरी' का वर्णन किया है। द्रौपदी बहुत ही स्वतंत्र, जिसमे बहुत आत्मसम्मान है जिसका अपना मन है, अपनी इच्छा है और जो अपनी इच्छा पाने के लिए युद्ध का मार्ग निकाल सकती है, ऐसी स्त्री है। बहुत सक्षम और इस लिए बहुत सुन्दर स्त्री है वह। द्रौपदी भिल्लों की 'महाभारत' में हर प्रकार के कार्य करती रहती है, राज्य चलाने का कार्य भी वह करती है। उनके भारत में जो युद्ध होता है उसे नाम दिया गया है "भारत"। भीलों की भाषा में युद्ध शब्द के अर्थ के लिए "भारत" शब्द है, या India कहते हैं।

डांग district जहाँ पिछले साल कुछ चर्च जलाए गये, ऐसे तो डांग के लोगों को चर्च जलाने का भी पता नहीं है और उसके बारे में कोई विरोध होने का भी पता नहीं है वहाँ फिर भी तीन मंत्री चले गये थे, एक देव गावड़ा, दूसरे अटल विहारी वाजपेयी और सोनिया गांधी गई थी। वहाँ के लोग जो हैं, जो किसान हैं, उन्हें ऐसा कुछ पता नहीं कि डांग में बहुत कुछ हुआ। क्योंकि वह ना तो अख़बार पढ़ते हैं ना ही उन लोगों को जानते हैं। डांग में किसी को भी पता नहीं कि वाजपेयी इस देश का पंत-प्रधान है। मैं अज्ञानता का समर्थन नहीं कर रहा हूँ लेकिन उनका इस देश की तरफ देखने का तरीका, एक अलग ढ़ंग का है, और इसके बहुत सारे कारण हैं। उस डांग जिले में जो गुजरात और महाराष्ट्र के बार्डर पर है, उनका अपना 'रामायण' है, उसको वे सती माता की कथा बोलते हैं। 'रामायण' को वे राम की कथा नाम से नहीं पहचानते, उनके 'रामायण' में सीता राम से बढ़कर होशियार है। दूसरी बात, उनकी 'रामायण' में राम रावण को मार नहीं सकते, केवल लक्ष्मण मार सकता है। जो युद्ध होता है, उसमें राम कुछ ज्यादा शौर्य भी नहीं दिखाते। कोई राम जैसा ही पुरूष हो, ऐसी उनकी कल्पना नहीं है, लेकिन सीता जैसी स्त्री हो ऐसी उनकी कल्पना है, और वह बहुत बुद्धिमान, धैर्यवान स्त्री है दीर्घ कथाएँ हैं जैसे 'सालवा' और 'मानसिंह'। 'कथा' नाम का दिल्ली में जो एक कार्यक्रम चलता है, उस किताब में उनकी कथाएँ छप गयी थी और उन्हें oral litrature का prize मिला था। बहुत सारी कथाएँ हैं लेकिन जब कथाएँ पेश करतें हैं, वे साथ नाचते हैं और कुछ चित्र भी निकालते हैं, और उन चित्रों में सब पात्र होतें हैं। उनका एक वाध्य है थाली। थाली के ऊपर एक ज्वार का stalk ले कर जब घूमातें हैं तो violin जैसी आवाज़ आती है, बहुत ही सुंदर, अद्भुत वाध्य होता है। उसके साथ वे गाना गाते हैं और episodic presentation करते हैं।

एक नाटक आदिवासियों का है, उसके बारें में मैं बताऊँगा। पुरूलिया नाम का जिला है बंगाल में, वहाँ सवर नाम के लोग रहतें हैं, वे de-notified tribals हैं। यह de-notified कौन है, उसके बारे में मैं बाद में बताऊँगा। इनको हिन्दी में "यायावर" या "विमुक्त" कहतें हैं। बूधन नाम का एक आदिवासी लड़का जो बुधवार को पैदा हुआ, उस लिए उसे "बूधन" कहा गया, उसको पुलिस ने पकड़ा उसे custody में लिया, वहाँ बहुत पीटा और फिर वह मर गया। यह हुआ 1998 फरवरी में अब अहमदाबाद में छारा नाम का एक आदिवासी समूह रहता है, जिसे हम अंग्रजी में "ghetto" कहतें हैं। यह जगह "ghetto" क्यों हैं ? शायद अब मुझे de-notified tribes के बारे में कुछ कहना पड़ेगा।

British जमाने में जिन्होंने भी अंग्रेजों का विरोध किया था, एसे समूह को अंग्रेजों ने अंकुश में रखने के लिए एक कानून बनाया था 'The Criminal Tribes Act of India (1871) जो भी अंग्रजों का विरोध करते थे, उन communities को गुनहगार ठहराया गया था। इसमें दक्षिन भारत के येन्नाड़ी, येराकुला आते हैं, महाराष्ट्र के कैकाड़ी वड्डर, भामटा आते हैं, उत्तर भारत के साँसी आते हैं, वैारिया आते हैं। वंगाल के लोदा, सवर आते हैं, western India के बजानिया, नट आते हैं। वहुत सारे लोग इसमें आये।

In 1952, the Govt of India decided to remove this stigma of criminality and these communities become the de-notified communities. इन लोगों के लिए कुछ अलग कैदखाने वनाए थे अंग्रेजो ने। उनका PWD specification होता था। चौदह फुट ऊँचाई की barbed wire की fencing वनाना, उनको रात को पुलिस थाने में रिपोर्ट करवाना दिन में उनको हाथकड़ी लगाके काम पे ले जाना - ये जो विक्टोरिया टर्मिनस स्टेशन वना है, यह इन लोगों ने वनाया है। इतने पुल, रास्ते इन कैदखाने में वन्द लोगों ने वनाए हैं। यह ही नहीं, अंग्रेज़ों ने इनमें से कुछ लोगों को वेचा भी था दक्षिण अमरीका में, सिंगापुर के मार्केट में एक छोटी तख्ती लगी है कि भारत के गुनाहगार जमाती के लोगों ने यह इमारत वनाई है। तोछारा नाम का एक समाज अहमदावाद में रहता है। महात्मा गांधी का जो सावरमती आश्रम था, उस के पास अंग्रेज़ो ने छारा लोगों के लिए settlement वनाई थी। गांधीजी इतने व्यस्त थे कि उनको इन लोगों को मिलने के लिए समय नहीं मिलता था। इनको ब्रिटिश "criminal" कहते थे और गाँधी वहुत law-fearing थे। इस लिए "criminal camp" को visit करना उनके लिए संभव नहीं था। खैर वह वात अलग है। छारा लोगों ने एक demand निकाली थी कुछ साल पहले, उन्होने कहा कि उन्हें किताबें चाहिए थीं। इस लिए उनके लिए library वनाई गई। वहाँ वे किताबें पढ़ते थे, और जो भी विमुक्त जन जाती के साथ हो रहा है, उसकी चर्चा भी करते थे। तव उन्होने सुना कि पुरूलिया में वूधन मारा गया है, और महाश्वेता नाम की औरत है वहाँ जिन्होने वूधन की पत्नी श्यामली को कुछ compensation मिले इस लिए जिन पुलिस कर्म-चारियों ने वूधन को मारा था उनके खिलाफ, केस दाखिल किया है। जव कलकत्ता high court में इस केस की hearing शुरू हुई तव अहमदावाद के छारा लड़को ने इस विषय पर वहुत सुन्दर नाटक पेश किया था। वह अपने कपड़ों में ही आतें हैं लेकिन यह street play की तरह नहीं है, कोई तय की हुई जगह होती है। एक ही लड़की जो महाश्वेता और श्यामली दोनों की भूमिका निभाती है, और चार लड़के - यह सव मिल कर नाटक करते हैं। यह ड्रामा इतना powerful है, मैंने वहुत वार देखा है। मैं वहुत sentimental हिन्दी सिनेमा देखकर रोने वालों मेंसे नहीं हूँ, मेरा थोड़ा पत्थर दिल है, लेकिन मैं हमेशा रोया हूँ, यह नाटक देख कर। मैंने महाश्वेता देवी को भी वहुत ही रोते देखा है इसे देखते समय। इतना ही नहीं, गायत्री स्पिवाक नाम की जो critic है, उन्हें भी यह नाटक देखते समय मैंने रोते हुए देखा है। उन्होंने और वहुत से लेखकों नें फिल्म directors ने इस नाटक की प्रशंसा की है। जैसे कोई genre या कोई form हो वैसे 'वुधन' Drama form हो गया है और वह हमेशा नई कथा लेकर ड्रामा आगे चलाते हैं। कुछ दिन पहले, पूना में वारामती गाँव में तनूजा दीपक पवार नाम की एक स्त्री थी। तनूजा एक भिख्वारन थी क्योंकि वह शराव नहीं वनाना चाहती थी। दीपक उसका पती था, तनुजा देखने में वहुत सुन्दर थी। पुलिस ने उनको कहा कि या तो शराव वनाओ या तो police informer वनो। दीपक ने ना वोल दिया और इस के वाद पुलिस ने कह दिया कि वह उसे habitual offenders act के अन्दर गिरफ़्तार कर सकतें हैं, और arrest न होना हो तो तनुजा को उनके पास भेज दे। दीपक ने फिर "ना" कहा और फिर दीपक और तनूजा भागने लगे। उस समय पुलिस की गोली चली और दीपक मारा गया। अव इस विषय पे वूधन के गृप ने वहुत अच्छा नाटक वनाया है। अपनी ज़िन्दगी में मैंने कुछ गिरीश करनाड के नाटक देखें हैं, और उनसे मेरी वुद्धी वहुत प्रक्षुव्ध भी हुई है, लेकिन मेरी चेतना प्रक्षुव्ध हुई 'वुधन' देखके। इसकी एक वजह थी कि इस नाटक में काम करने वले हर लड़के और लड़की के माँ-वाप जेल में हैं। वह कोई गुनहगार नहीं हैं। वह innocent हैं, लेकिन वहुत से denotified tribals को अपने देश में जेल में ही मरना पड़ता है। इनकी तादाद अपने देश में 6 करोड़ है।

कुछ दिन पहले साहित्य अकादमी के लिए मैंने चार पुस्तकें तैयार की थीं, गढ़वाली गाने, वारली गाने, ऐसे विषयो को लेकर। उसके पहले भी महाराष्ट्र में लक्ष्मण माणे और लक्ष्मण गयकवाड़ उनकी किताव यहाँ है the branded. इसको साहित्य

अकादमी का award मिला है। साहित्य अकादमी Award से literary quality को मापना सही नहीं है, लेकिन लक्ष्मण जो खुद भी केवल नौंवी कक्षा तक पढ़े हुए हैं, उन्होंने अत्मकथा लिखी। यह एक powerful autobiography है। मराठी साहित्य में कुछ नया प्रभाव आदिवासी साहित्य से आया है।

अगर उनके महाकव्य हों, उनकी अत्मकथाएँ हों, नाटक हों, उनका कथा सहित्य हो, इन साहित्य- धाराओं की परम्परा हो और ऐसी परम्परा न केवल एक भाषा में न हो पर भाषाओं में हो, संथाली में हो, मिज़ो में हो, भिल्ली में हो, पावरी में हो, और अगर हम उनके वारे में कुछ भी न जानतें हों तो शायद साहित्य के वारे में हमारी रूची में कुछ वहुत ही वड़ी खामी है। मैं यह नहीं कहता कि आदिवासी गरीव हैं, इस लिए उनका साहित्य वहुत अच्छा है, मैं यह नहीं कहता कि वह marginalized हैं इस लिए उनके साहित्य को आप सर पर उठा लो। मैं यह भी नहीं कहता कि हमारे वाप दादाओं ने कुछ खराव काम किये हैं और उनकी गल्ती संभालकर, इस साहित्य के ज़रिये खुद को शर्म की भावना से देखो। मैं कह रहा हूँ कि इस साहित्य के वारे में जल्लोश होना चाहिए, आनंद होना चाहिए कि इतना वैभव हमारे पास है। देखिए, हमने तो उनकी ज़वान काट ली है क्योंकि उनकी भाषा है यह भी मान्य नहीं करते, उसको अस्तित्व नहीं देते किसी भी public या private sphere में। हमने जो उनको दिया है, उसे अंग्रजी में मैं कहूँगा "aphasia a forced silence, a loss of speech" उन्होंने हमें दिया है aesthetic terms में euphoria एक जल्लोश, एक जीवन के वारे में नयी चेतना।

अव उनको मान्य करें या न करें यहा अपना एक ethical सवाल है। यह choice आपको खुद करना है। मैंने खुद choice किया है, मैंने तय किया है कि इनका जो विपुल साहित्य है, जो विविध धारा में सहित्य है, विविध प्रकार में जो मौजूद है, उसकी सम्पन्नता के वारे में सीखूँ। दरअसल विविध "प्रकार" याने prose और poetry उनके पास ऐसे फालतू भेद नहीं हैं। हमने ऐसी दीवारें खड़ी की हैं। Printing आने के पहले prose और poetry ऐसा कुछ नहीं था, सव versatile था, हमने versatile medium को rigid वना दिया। उनके लिए यह medium versatile ही है। जैसे- जैसे मैं आदिवासियों की तरफ देखता हूँ, वैसे मुझे पता चलता हैकि हम, कम से कम मैं, कितना uncivilized हूँ कितना "barbaric" हूँ, क्योंकि मेरे समाज मे Cast System है लेकिन उनके समाज में Cast System नहीं है। मेरे समाज में rape है, उनके समाज में rape नहीं है। एक भी rape case आदिवासी पुरूष से हुआ हो, भारत के पुलिस इतिहास में रिकॉर्ड नहीं है। मेरे समाज में माता पिता वच्चों को मारते हैं, पीटते हैं, वह चाहे जिस class के हों। ऐसा कहा जाता है कि अलग अलग class का वर्ताव अलग अलग होता है, आदिवासी वच्चों को पीटते हुए माता-पिता मैंने देखे नहीं हैं और मैं खूब घूमा हूँ। 7000 Km वस में घूमा हूँ और 20,000 Km महाश्वेता देवी के साथ घूमा हूँ।

कूछ एक- दो example देकर जो कुछ मुझे कहना था वह पूरा करूँगा।

एक example है, कुछ साल पहले में Yale University गया था। उस जमाने में मैं अंग्रेजी पढ़ता था, वहुत मज़ा आता था। और तव Yale में Harold Bloom, Paul De Mann, Geoffrey Hartmann और ऐसे कुछ लगभग dozen लोग वहुत heavyweight theorists थे। उस जमाने में ऐसे theorists की किताबें पढ़ने में वहुत वड़ा interest जाग उठा था। अपने यहाँ एक जंगल था कुछ दो सौ साल पहले, जिसमें आदिवासी लोग रहते थे। इस जंगल को काटने के लिए एक Scotland से आदमी भेजा गया था। उसने वहुत जंगल काटा और उसकी लकड़ी वेची। उससे पैसा कमाया, वहुत कंजूस था वह आदमी। अव America में college खोली थी किसी ने, और college के पास पैसे नहीं थे, इस लिए church ने एक circular भेजा था। वह circular भारत भी पहुँच गया और य जे Scottish आदमी था, जो आदिवासी की लकडी काटके पैसे वना रहा था उसने अपने सव पैसे उस college को भेज- दिए, और आज उसका नाम Yale University है। तो Yale University भी अपनी आदिवासी लकड़ी से ही वनी है इसलिए do not underrate the aadivasi contribution to international education!

दूसरा example Howrah-Surat railway line बनानी थी ओर railway के नीचे sleepers डालने होते हैं लकड़ी के timber. उसके लिए British लोगों ने पसंद किया एक जंगल जो महाराष्ट्र में Amravati district में हैं। वहाँ रहते थे कोरकू लोग, जो आज मध्य प्रदेश में और थोड़े महाराष्ट्र में हैं। इन लोगों को वहाँ से हटाया गया बदले में उनको दी गई जमीन, लेकिन यह अच्छी ज़मीन नहीं थी। Railway line तो आ गई Howrah-Surat British Police और British सैनिक आने-जाने लगे, बहुत बार जब गांधी Champaran गये तो उसी railway line से गये। लेकिन ये जो कोरकू थे ये hunter-gatherers थे। इन लोगों को जो खराब ज़मीन दी गई थी उसमें उनको खेती करनी आयी नहीं इस लिए उनका yield कम होता गया। वहाँ जिसे महाराष्ट्र सरकार ने certify किया है "कुपोषण", मतलब 'malnutrition', वहाँ 'malnutrition' होने लगा। आज वहाँ का हर बच्चा 15 साल की उम्र में मरता है। सरकार ने एक डॉक्टर की टीम भेजी वहाँ। Doctor की टीम ने कहा कि इन्हें एक genetic disease है जिसको "sickle cell disease" बोलतें हैं । अब यह sickle cell कोई Genetic Disease है, यह कोई German Doctor जो Africa गया था, उसने तय किया है।

महाश्वेता देवी ने एक कथा लिखी है, यह कोरकू प्रश्न पे है। एक कोरकू लड़का है जो last surviving कोरकू बच्चा है और वहाँ कोई डॉक्टर research करने जाता है और उसे पता चलता है कि America में ऐसी एक दवाई है कि अगर बहुत छोटी कद वाले आदमी को भी दे दें तो वह बड़ा हो सकता है, उसे सही ढंग से अन्न मिले, खुराक मिले तो वह बड़ा हो सकता है। यह डॉक्टर कुछ experiment करते हैं और जो last surviving कारकू बच्चा है वह बड़ा होता है, महाकाय होता है और फिर उसे एक दिन दिखती है railway line. वह ट्रेन में बैठ जाता है और ट्रेन बॉम्बे आ जाती है। वह हमेशा कहता रहता है कि "मला भूख लगली आहे, मला खायला दया।" - महाश्वेता देवी की बंगाली story में यह मराठी sentence है।

बॉम्बे में जब वह आता है, तो वह खाता है 'उषा किरण' नाम की एक building फिर खाता है 'बूट हाऊस', फिर खाता है 'Centaur Hotal', फिर खाता है Mittal Towers और अन्त में खाता है YB Chavan Center। वहाँ महाश्वेता देवी की story पूरी होती है।

Rimli Bhattacharya

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Autobiographies, Atmacharits and Other Selves

My presentation will focus on looking at the concept of self that seems so central not only to the mode of autobiography the *atmacharit*, the *atmakatha* and other first person forms but also to forms as diverse as advertisements and websites. My ambition is to straddle the two worlds, the world of everyday life and the world of specialised, laborious, painstaking, burdensome, tedious scholarship.

Firstly, what really is the ground beneath our feet? From where do we start approaching the subject? What is the criterion by which one would say this is a narrative and this is not? Then, coming to the question of representation, how is one to say, "I have very good control over language and I know everything there is to be known about x, y and z or about myself, now I am going to sit down and write an autobiography, the true and complete life of such and such?" The moment you say such a thing, you are lying. Language is constant game playing you play with words and ideas, events, and people. What is fiction but some kind of a construction? Until a few years ago we had strict divisions: this is history, this is fiction; this is fact, this is not. Those divisions have themselves been challenged. Many of the narratives, methodologies, and the way we organise material to tell a story have also been challenged.

Whether it is history or fiction, there are many similar narrative modes of capturing an event, a person, a life, or a country's or nation's or region's story. It is not as though we can say that there is more of a subject in fiction and less so in history.

Coming back to language and the fact that we are speaking in English. This was a problem faced by many nineteenth century writers in India, one of them being Krupabai Sattianadhan, a young woman who died very early. She wrote two autobiographical novels that were published later. Does one simply have to say that one wants to bring back those authentic voices from the past, and then republish them? I am suggesting it is not as easy as that; there are politics of re-publishing and of anthologising. For example, we have no

writings by people who come from a Dalit background. If we have no writings from a background where there was no history of publication, or if these writings were suppressed for political reasons, the project becomes that of recovering the authentic voice that will then become not only the voice of the individual, but also the voice of the collective.

What I am doing is to put question marks against certain words which we have so far taken as given. With narrative, there is the whole question of time and space. Have any of you heard of Mikhail Bakhtin? He wrote a book called *Dialogic Imagination*. He wrote in the previous century, and at that time he was highly censored and suppressed. Later he gained a sort of cult following in the West; therefore one has to deal with Bakhtin in a sort of careful way. I think one of his important contributions to the study of narrative is what he called the "chronotope", which has to do with the linking of narrative or plotting it in space, time and place. One way of describing a text is to plot it in time, that so and so lived in such and such age. The space would refer not only to physical space, the locales or the topos in which it is set, but even the emotional space that is covered.

Another book explores very similar questions in narrative, but this time through the grid of *Mimesis,* the name of a book by Erich Auerbach. Auerbach looks at what he thinks are the seminal works of western literature. He is talking about a canon; he may start off with Homer and then he ends with Virginia Woolf, so he traverses that whole stretch. In a project like this there is a kind of reclaiming of a tradition: the self then is not only the individual self at a particular point in history; the self is situated along a line in a kind of continuum. What I am trying to say is that the self has to not only express or manifest itself at the particular point in which it is living but also in terms of what has gone before.

If you had to write an autobiography today, it would be impossible to write it only in relation to yourself at this living moment. You may want to reclaim something of the past, as constructing something of this self that is in the present. Given these parameters of time, space, place, parameters of situating oneself within some kind of a tradition it could be something called western civilisation or some other monolithic form we wish to identify ourselves with for convenience the question is, where do I begin? How do I begin to talk about myself?

To answer this I will refer to certain texts such as *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* by Laurence Stern. This seems at first an impossible book. One wonders how anyone can read it. It goes on and on about Uncle Toby's wound. You never know where the wound is and how it has affected him. All you know is that he sustained it in a sort of battle. Critics have had a field day, Freudian analysis and all sorts of analysis, speculating about the wound. What could the wound be? Where could it be?

Stern very delicately avoids the issue. He plays a game with the reader through the form of the narrative. He tells you that he is going to do something impossible; he is going to write about his history. He then shows how he cannot give you his history from birth to now, because he will always be behind schedule. Thus he raises the whole problem of writing literally against time, the whole problem of constructing the self in time. If the "self" is something that exists only at this moment, then how are you going to put together this so-called character that exists at different times? However, if a writer starts by saying that all he can do is show you many selves, or selves at various stages, it is left up to the reader to make sense of it.

Charles Dickens uses the same technique in *David Copperfield*. He admits that he will just have to go right back to the time of his birth and then come back to the present. The writing of the self involves this constant going back and forth. It is not that the writer is playing a game with the reader but that he is struggling with a language that also fixes events in time.

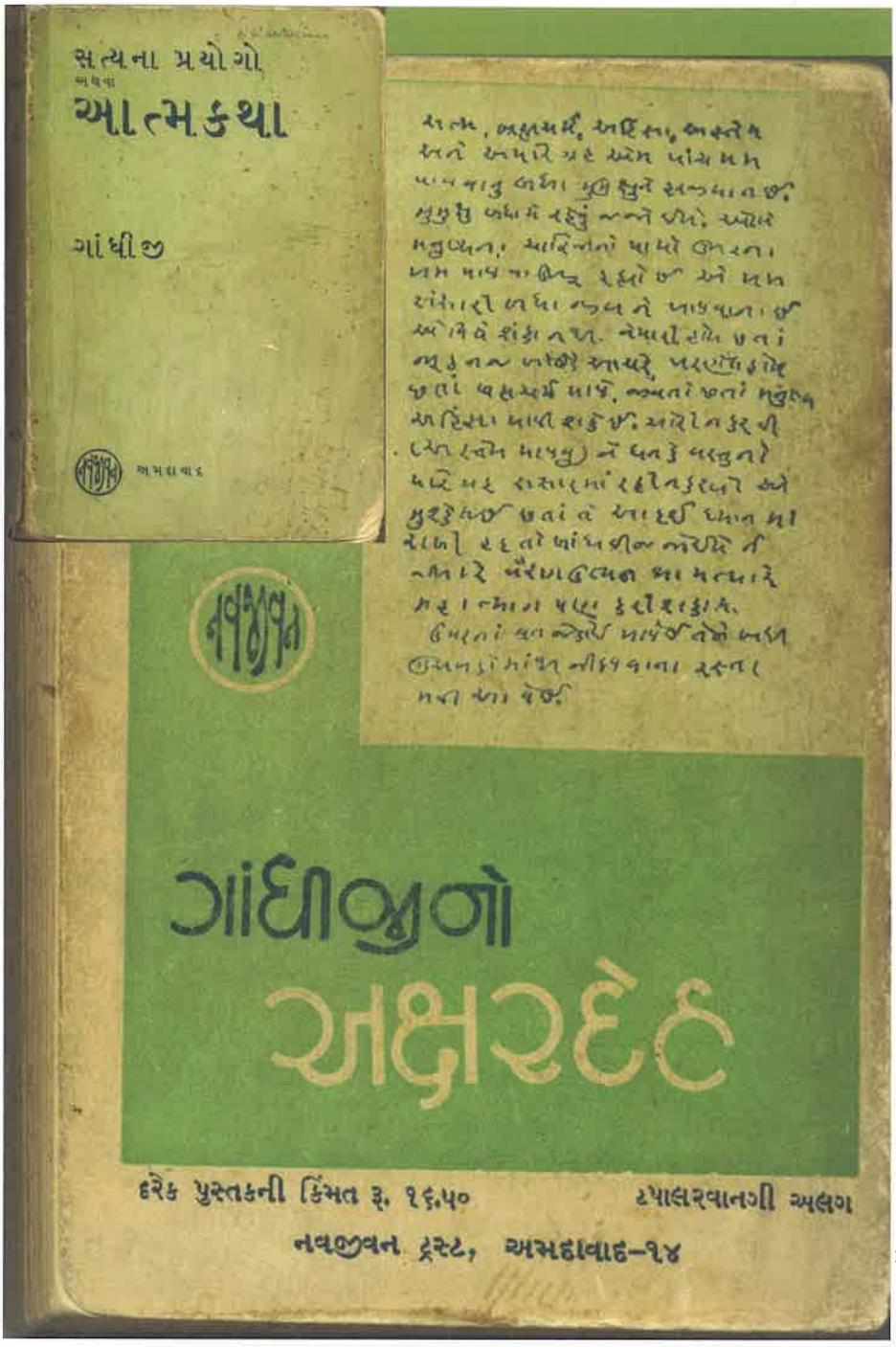
How do you think language fixes things, thoughts, and emotions in time? How do you know something is happening now and not later? Tense is certainly one, and then there are words such as then, here, there, before, and so on. There is both a tremendous potential in language to encompass time, but there is also a tremendous sense of despair because even at the moment you are writing "now", it is not "now" anymore, and when your readers read it, it is an even later "now" than when you wrote it.

These are the problems that we have when trying to represent the self. Of course there is a self; all of us have selves, some have multiple selves, and all of us have spilt selves to some extent. If the split becomes extreme, then a problem arises.

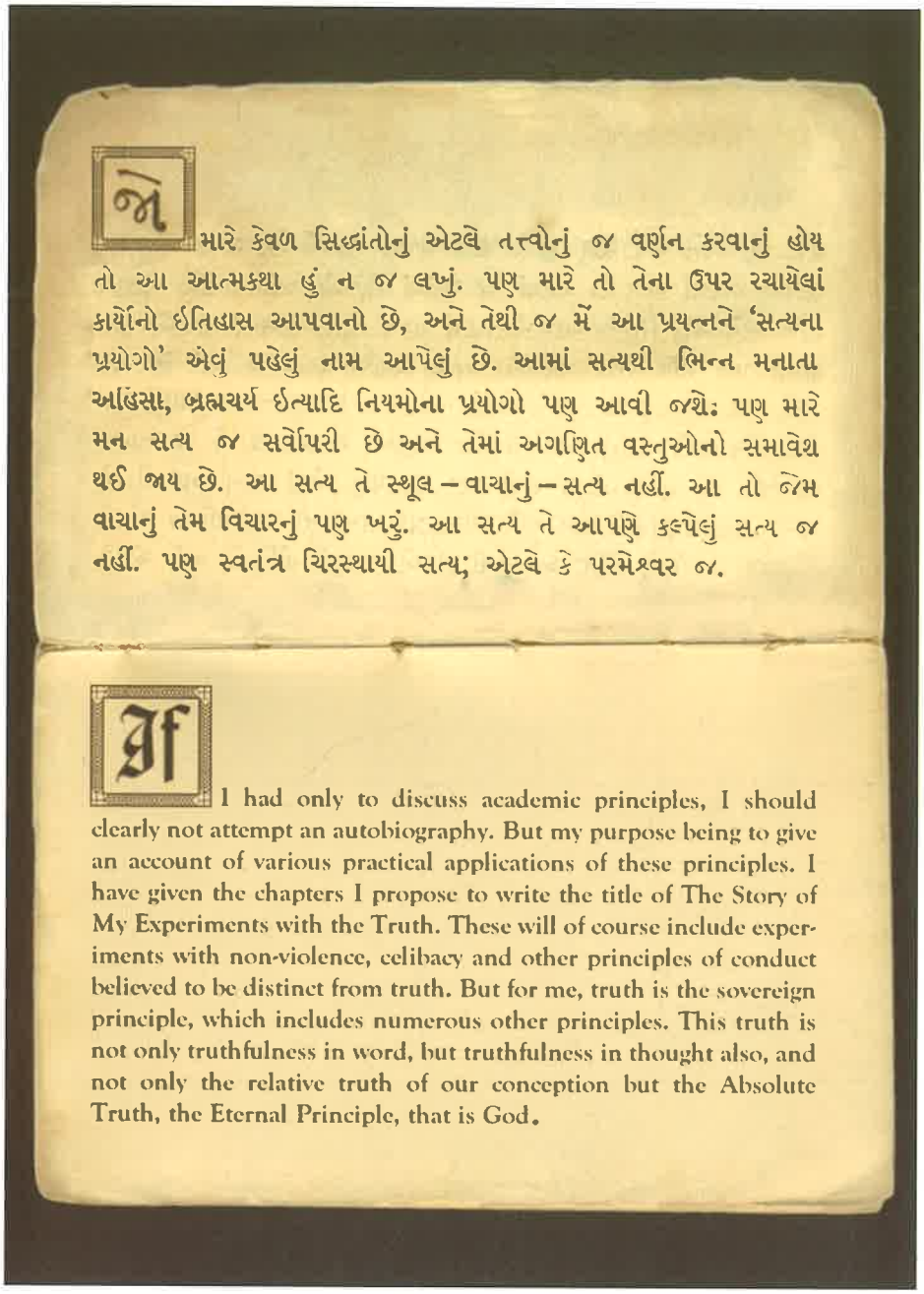
Now let us talk of autobiography and *atmachariti*s. I have purposely used these contrasting words coming from different traditions to raise different questions of approach and to look at how the self or many selves are understood in different cultures.

A kind of binary defines our lives in every kind of debate, whether it is politics, religion, or secularism. How can you say this part of the self is private, that part is personal, that part is public? So you see how much is at stake in even beginning to define these terms, and with the form of the autobiography you can see how this question begins to be crucial.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's autobiography is one text we will look at. The thing that is fascinating about Gandhi is his slipperiness. It is difficult to grab hold of what exactly he is saying. He tells you he is going to tell you the truth, the complete truth, about his public life, his private life. Then he says at the very next moment, "...but don't expect this truth to be fixed." He admits that his self is constantly changing; his relationship to everything is



Front and back cover of Mahatma Gandhi's Autobiography, Published by Navjeevan Trust, 1927



જો મારે કેવળ સિદ્ધાંતોનું એટલે તત્ત્વોનું જ વર્ણન કરવાનું હોય તો આ આત્મકથા હું ન જ લખું. પણ મારે તો તેના ઉપર રચાયેલાં કાર્યોનો ઇતિહાસ આપવાનો છે, અને તેથી જ મેં આ પ્રયત્નને 'સત્યના પ્રયોગો' એવું પહેલું નામ આપેલું છે. આમાં સત્યથી ભિન્ન મનાતા અહિંસા, બ્રહ્મચર્ય ઇત્યાદિ નિયમોના પ્રયોગો પણ આવી જશે: પણ મારે મન સત્ય જ સર્વોપરી છે અને તેમાં અગણિત વસ્તુઓનો સમાવેશ થઈ જાય છે. આ સત્ય તે સ્થૂલ – વાચાનું – સત્ય નહીં. આ તો જેમ વાચાનું તેમ વિચારનું પણ ખરું. આ સત્ય તે આપણે કલ્પેલું સત્ય જ નહીં. પણ સ્વતંત્ર ચિરસ્થાયી સત્ય; એટલે કે પરમેશ્વર જ.

If I had only to discuss academic principles, I should clearly not attempt an autobiography. But my purpose being to give an account of various practical applications of these principles. I have given the chapters I propose to write the title of The Story of My Experiments with the Truth. These will of course include experiments with non-violence, celibacy and other principles of conduct believed to be distinct from truth. But for me, truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. This truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conception but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is God.

M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth*
Translated from Gujarati by Mahadev Desai
Publisher: Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad-380014

changing. So it is not that he would want to disown this autobiography, but it is just that he may want to think of truth itself in a different way.

So you can see how two people who are completely different are both writing about the same kinds of problems of the self. Stern is not writing an autobiography but using a first person narrative. Gandhi is very clearly writing an autobiography, but as though he is writing a manifesto.

A very important aspect is the contextualising of it all, and this contextualising takes place at various levels by the writer, by the manner in which it is marketed; it goes through many *avatars*. Today we read the work in a very different context of representation, presentation and reception from that of the time in which it was written. That is why it is very important to constantly interrogate the norm by which something is going to be judged:

In its wider public context, Gandhi's autobiography becomes almost like the document of a nation. Very often such texts are read as nationalist texts; it is as though the individual becomes the icon of the nation. If Nelson Mandela wrote an autobiography, anyone who wanted to look at the history of apartheid would have to refer to it. Thus the self becomes the voice not only for the collective, but also for a certain kind of history.

Finally I come to fact and fiction and the much-discussed word "perspective". That is something you will find in all these instances of narrative, whether as documentation of nationalist history or as the struggle of a private life. For instance, Gandhi speaks of his life as consisting entirely of experiments with truth. He says, "My political struggle is a spiritual one." The separation may be very essential for us, but Gandhi creates a problem by stating from the very beginning that whatever he has done in his political life and all that has happened in his personal life, in his relationship with Kasturba, is all a part of his spiritual life, and therefore his autobiography is about his spiritual life. Are you going to read his book as some kind of a religious book or as a moral lesson? One might question, "Why are you writing it? Is it an urge to express the self, or the urge to list one's accomplishments, or one's failures, with pride?"

Gandhi writes his autobiography at a point when he feels it is necessary for him to write it. There is a coinciding of the inner and the outer forces. He feels that the autobiography cannot simply be a documentation of actions; it has to, in fact, talk about the struggle underlying the actions. The moment he talks about this struggle, he feels as though he actually has to "confess" and he uses this word. The confessional becomes a powerful mode because everyone likes to read about someone's evil self, and it is best when it is sort of vicariously accessed. This spawns the whole genre of the "kiss-and-tell" narratives with which we are obsessed. The outpouring of such narratives has become the backbone of the

publishing industry, besides generating a whole lot of media events such as interviews. We were talking about the self as not being this fixed, stable self, and you can see that this whole "kiss-and-tell" narrative in fact keeps spawning newer and newer selves. So is this a kind of liberation that has been achieved, this constant invention of the self, or is this a total erasure of the self?

The way narrative works is to plot these selves at different points in time, in space, in place. There is a constant need to go back to traditions. Literary forms are also traditions; you will realise that there are ways of telling stories that are peculiar to cultures. Only if there is a kind of living matrix of images, metaphors, incidents, people, do I have recourse to ways in which to contribute to the richness of the narrative form and the way in which the self can emerge in that narrative form. But if I did not have recourse to those things then no matter how educated I was, I would not be able to articulate myself.

Let us take the example of a 1916 novel by Rabindranath Tagore called *Ghare Bhaire*, translated as *The Home and the World*. In the way he conceptualises this novel, he calls it *atmakatha*. There are three main characters, Bimala, her husband Nikhilesh, and Sandeep. Western critics have objected to this text being called a novel because it does not follow the Western rules of a novel. Anyway, in this work he has different sections, which are called Sandeep's *atmakatha*, Bimala's *atmakatha*, and Nikhilesh's *atmakatha*, each written in the first person narrative.

Many of the issues that I have raised - the impossibility of plotting the self in time; the difficult question of authenticity; whether I, the person who lived through this experience, am the same as the person who is writing about it; whether it is even possible for me to represent what happened at such and such point - all these very fundamental questions are negotiated through language. What access does language give me to truth and understanding of the self?

Now the selfhood of Bimala in *Ghare Bhaire* is expressed through language; it is expressed through the ways in which she imagines herself and this imagining is slightly different from that of Madame Bovary, if any of you have read Gustave Flaubert's novel. In *Madame Bovary*, the problem is that Emma identifies so much with the heroine of a novel that she wants to live her life like that, and then it ends in suicide. The point Tagore makes is very different, as this is at a very crucial juncture for women in India. What is this new woman going to be like? Is she going to be a fit companion for her husband, is she going to have a life of her own? To what extent is she going to be involved in the nationalist movement? What is going to be her ideal, the *Sati Savitri* or the Western emancipated woman; if neither, then what? So these are almost very polemical questions... How does the work of fiction

that is working through the form of *atmakatha* work through this?

One of the ways in which Tagore does this is through the powerful tradition of the *abhisarika nayika*, as described in Sanskrit poetics. *Abhisara* roughly means "tryst". The *abhisarika nayika* is an active *nayika* or heroine; she will not just say, "When will he come?" but will say, "When will I see him?" She is depicted not only through her clothing, her gestures, her body language, but also through the environment: there might be snakes on the way, stormy clouds, waters in flood; no matter what, she will go like an arrow to meet her beloved. The *abhisarika nayika* captures the notion of the daring, active woman. In most romances, it is the man who searches for the beloved; in the case of the *abhisarika nayika*, it is the woman who braves all these dangers and goes to meet her beloved.

You may wonder, what does this have to do with *Ghare Bhaire*, which is about nationalist politics? One of the ways that Bimala imagines herself entering the public space of participatory politics that she will become involved in the whole Swadeshi movement, that she will come out of purdah is through seeing herself as an *abhisarika nayika*. I give this to you as an illustration of how a creative writer deals with the questions I have been raising. It is a novel not just about the interior self, but also about the whole political movement and along with that is the whole question of women. What is the role of the new woman in India at the turn of the century? Is the *abhisarika nayika* opposed to the *Sati Savitri?* These are the questions being raised in the novel and these are the questions that define the self, the *atmakatha*, of Bimala.

Another text we can look at is St Augustine's Confessions. St Augustine was seminal in writing on the self in relation to a faith. I talked earlier of frames of representation; one of the ways representation takes place is in terms of the self as believer, the self as a devotee. In Indian terminology, it would be the self as a bhakta.

What do you think would make for more interesting reading? Someone who, from the time he was born, was destined to be a saint, or somebody who was "wicked and immoral" and then suddenly became a saint? The second one, obviously! There is this whole conversion involved, and there is a vicarious enjoyment in the turning, at some point, of all that is negative into something that is positive. There is a kind of justification of writing an autobiography in that you are not just going to express yourself, but also that you are going to set up a relationship with the reader through this model of a life.

Now I will come to nineteenth century Bengal and look at popular pulp confessionals, sort of fictive confessionals where the whole story is of woman who has had a turbid life. These stories were serialised in popular theatre magazines, but almost always written by men. They are supposedly confessional, first person narratives about these women who have had very

unfortunate lives. The stories always end with some kind of repentance. So the moment of writing is a moment of repentance. Sometimes this repentance comes at the moment of death, hence you seem to have been suitably punished. Thus, popular fiction becomes one of the most powerful ways of discussing areas that are otherwise censored from public discussion, because in popular fiction you can always justify it all by saying that such and such met with a bad end because of all the bad things she did.

One of the last examples I have is an autobiographical novel written by Hasan Shah, called *Nashtar*, which apparently means the surgeon's knife. I will read a bit from the preface written by the translator of the novel, Qurratulain Hyder, who was a very important writer herself. By doing this I am hoping, excuse the gory metaphor, to kill two birds with one stone. One, to come back to our question about the politics of representation: what is the aim of republishing this book in another language for another set of readers? Secondly, to ask: what is the autobiographical novel doing in this case? Can we call it a novel? So I am also coming back to the question of form and narrative.

In the foreword, Hyder writes: "It is generally believed that novel writing began in Victorian India and this genre was imported from England. However, Nashtar was written by Hasan Shah, a young man of Kanpur, as far back as 1790, making it the first known modern Indian novel. Many historians of Urdu fiction are familiar with the Urdu version but the present translators reveal an astounding fact Hasan Shah wrote this original story uninfluenced by English novels." Clearly her point is to suggest some kind of a first in Indian writing and also to set it up against western forms.

Nashtar, or the "surgeon's knife", signified the excruciating pain of separation from one's beloved. It is the story of a dancing girl, Khanum Jaan, who has to entertain the English officers of East India Company. The narrator falls in love with her and marries her. The novel ends in tragedy. This book was written in Hindi-ised Persian, at a time when Persian was the court language, and was then translated to Urdu. So it has gone through many translations and much metamorphosis.

This is Hyder's point about her translation: "Because the heroine is a dancer, I have taken the liberty of changing the title from Nashtar to The Nautch Girl…I have been strictly faithful to the text and have not anywhere modernised either the narrative or the dialogue. It is amazing that Hasan Shah wrote the dialogue in the modern form and not as drama, which was to become the style of 19th century Urdu fiction." So here comes the whole question of whether the autobiographical can also be in forms other than the narrative. We tend to think of the autobiographical almost inevitably as narrative.

She further says, "I have only cut down the ornate passages and have also omitted most of

the ghazals of Hafiz quoted in the narrative which describe the emotions of the author when he first meets Khanum Jaan. I have also shortened the lengthy love letters exchanged between the hero and heroine. Hasan Shah was about 20 when he wrote Nashtar; he had no models of novel writing before him except the lengthy cycles of medieval romances, epics and allegories. He does revert from time to time to conventional forms but he comes back to his spontaneous prose. His inclusion of ghazals and Hindi songs is a kind of reportage of the concerts in which Khanum Jaan sang and danced. The abundance of poetry also indicates that Indo-Mughal society was basically poetry-oriented."

If this is truly an autobiographical narrative and if it is about the pain of separation from the beloved and if the beloved in this case dies, so that there is no way of reunion on this earth, then are not the ghazals an important part of the narrative, in exploring and expressing the self of both the narrator-writer as well as the beloved?

Very much depends on how we start defining the self in relation to all these binaries, such as novel versus poetry. You can see here that a distinction has been made between the spontaneous naturalistic prose form and between a ghazal which is a very sophisticated and refined form that has gone through many different traditions, so that the voice of the speaking self and the writing self is actually being mediated. There is a whole level of mediation, just as there was in Bimala's taking up the abhisarika nayika. Similarly in Nashtar when he describes through ghazals his first meeting with Khanum Jaan, are we going to say that he has no originality? Is the self being represented at all? Or it is possible, and this is what I am suggesting, that in fact these forms that seek to represent the self are very layered, and their richness is possible only if there is access to many different ways of imaging and imagining.

For us today it is a critical question: how are we going to imagine the self? Due to websites and the possibility of instant creation and instant demolition, you have the possibility of having as many selves as you like. I can talk about a hundred things in my life, but what is going to be significant is what I pick out. This kind of narrative will now seek to make the most insignificant thing significant simply by saying it is significant. It is not only the invention of the self but also the marketing of the self that is most powerful now.

Gandhi was not a literary critic but he was clearly aware of the kind of issues that we are raising today. He first speaks of how he was persuaded to write his autobiography and then of the incidents that prevented him. He writes, "A god-fearing friend had his doubts which he shared with me. 'What has set you on this adventure? Writing an autobiography is a practice peculiar to the West. I know of nobody in the East having written one, except amongst those who have come under Western influence. What will you write, supposing

you reject tomorrow the things you hold as principles today, or supposing you revise in the future your plans of today? Is it not likely that the men who shape their conduct on the authority of your word, spoken or written, may be misled? Don't you think it would be better not to write anything like an autobiography? ' This argument had some effect on me but it is not to my purpose to write a real' autobiography. I simply want to tell the story of numerous experiments with truth... It is true that the story will take the shape of an autobiography, but I shall not mind if every page of it speaks only of my experiments."

The choice of the word "experiments" is doing two things. One, it is establishing the scientificity of whatever he is doing. Two, it suggests that as it is an experiment, there is no assurance of a conclusion. He even talks about the mode; that it is not just a question of "what I will say but how I will say it".

All of these books are in some way privileging experience over fiction. They are saying that this is more attractive, more readable, more true, because it actually happened. Gandhiji is saying that it is not enough to narrate all his experience, but he has to narrate it in a dispassionate and humble spirit. Finally he says (and I find this wonderful), "Yet I am far from claiming any finality or infallibility about my conclusions. One claim I do make is that they appear to be absolutely correct and seem for the time being to be final."

I would like to conclude by saying that my attempt was to suggest that in autobiography, and with the word atma in atmakatha, you are not talking only about your own self, but you are talking about all the selves. When you take these two terms as a starting point and then go through a range of forms, a range of discourses; political, personal, conversion texts, popular literature, other forms such as the ghazal, you will find that there are no simple criteria or measures, or one perspective with which to either read that text or represent that text. It is important to contextualise the text but not enough to contextualise that text only in its own culture. As you can see, the connections I was drawing were from completely different texts, from different centuries and countries. So even if someone says that Gandhiji was Indian through and through, that does not make any sense. What is the definition of "Indian"? Why is it that Gandhiji is speaking so much like St Augustine? But Gandhiji is not Christian, so could it be that his Hinduism is a very Christianised Hinduism? These are all difficult questions, but these are also questions that we cannot avoid.

Radhika Menon

Radhika Menon is publisher and managing editor at Tulika Publishers in Chennai. She is also the Founder Trustee of The Goodbooks Trust that is engaged in the dissemination of good books and innovative teaching-learning materials and methodologies.

Not *Once Upon a Time:* Narratives for Children

Narratives encompass a whole range of genres. Narratives for children is present in fable, myth, songs, poems, dance, drama, illustrations, comics, television and the world wide web, to name some. The topic is too vast if we were to to tackle each of these forms. So I would like to focus on narratives in children's books for our discussion today.

Children's literature is part of a wider literature, just as children are an intrinsic part of the whole population. The history of Indian literature is 5,000 years old, we are told, and it is a history shaped by strong democratic, oral traditions which is reflected in our epics, in the ancient Tamil *sangam* literature, in Jain and Buddhist literature, in the anticolonial, social reformist literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and in other progressive literature. All these have been responsive to political and cultural changes at every point in our history, and have allowed for explorations of form and style, throwing up new shoots at every stage, both in the regional languages and in English. However, the history of children's literature shows none of this vibrancy or responsiveness to the cultural milieu; in fact, it is not even seen as existing in a continuum with Indian literature, instead it is relegated to an isolated corner.

Children's literature, particularly in the western world, seems to have some puritanical beginnings. Literature was seen as a means to teach children moral lessons, so that they were transformed into as good and ideal children. Children were seen as belonging outside the adult world and were brought up protected from its harsh realities. Indian children, as children from other oral cultures, by contrast, grew up in joint families, very much part of the adult world with all its complexities. Stories were tools to help children deal with the adult world. The very purpose of moral tales was to assist in the eventual production of an adult and not a perfect child.

To quote the wonderfully inspirational poet, translator and folklorist AK Ramanujan, "Even in the most urbane and westernised Indian households there exists, behind the prim exterior, another India. It lives in tales of passion and trouble told to children by their grandmothers and servants as the dusk descends." Thus, to tell children tales of passion and

trouble was seen as the most natural thing to do. The world of Indian folklore, like most oral storytelling cultures, is fascinating and complex. There are no taboos and stories were ways of expressing feelings and realities that cannot usually be spoken about. Suppressed desires and feelings like love, betrayal, jealousy, sexuality, cruelty, etc are all freely expressed through stories. To quote Ramanujan again, "As these tales are usually told in the context of family, they are part of the child's psychological education in facing forbidden feelings and finding narratives that will contain if not resolve them, for the tellers as well as their young listeners."

Children's literature in India, like the rest of our literature, had its beginnings in our oral traditions but while children's literature in other countries progressed from being didactic and straitjacketed to becoming extraordinarily creative, in India the reverse seems to have happened. What began as richly imaginative and multilayered narratives for children have deteriorated into stories that neither captivate nor inspire. While we can reason that our colonial past has created a decontextualised education system that is largely responsible for this state of affairs, how do we explain in today's context the complete lack of awareness among parents, teachers and policy makers?

What we are discussing are the books that fill the shelves in most bookshops because they are the top-selling ones. They are cheap, some are not even that, and they are usually retellings of our fables, mythological stories and folk tales. These labels seem enough to make the books sell. "Keep the child supplied with these, and the child's education in Indian culture and tradition is taken care of," is the attitude of parents and teachers. That they are badly written and badly illustrated never matters.

I would like to read you some gems collected from a range of published titles for children.

> *In a retelling of the Ramayana for children, Shri Rama is on his way to Sita's swayamvara with Sage Vishwamitra and brother Lakshman:*
> *On the way they saw a beautiful deserted hermitage where Sage Gautama used to live with his wife Ahilya in peace and in Holy meditation. One day Indra disguised as Gautama entered the hut of the Sage in his absence, to have sexual union with the beautiful Ahilya who was vain of her beauty.*

In another part of the same book:

> *All the queens were glad at heart since they became pregnant. They were all very happy. From the time Lord Vishnu found his way into the womb, joy and prosperity reigned. Time rolled on happily till the moment arrived for the Lord to be revealed. A cool, soft breeze was blowing, the Gods were feeling exhilarated and the saints were bubbling with enthusiasm.*

The last paragraph in a chapter gorily titled *Manthara Kicked Hard by Shatrughan* goes:

> *The moment Shatrughan saw the wicked hearted Manthara clad in her best, he kicked her so hard that her hunch and head were broke.*

In another book, the gods are discussing Harishchandra, doubting if he really always spoke the truth:

> *The talk reached the pinnacle when Vasishtha vouchsafed the quality of speaking truth always of Harishchandra who had ennobled himself among Gods and even leading an austere life and that his fame has pervaded the whole globe.*

Did that make any sense? One sentence, no punctuations!

In one version of the story of Krishna and Sudama:

> *Years past, Krishna and Sudama never met. Krishna was now the king of the country. He had had various adventures, and had fought many battles, he had settled many disputes between kings and between various peoples.*

That is the whole of the Mahabharata!

An Akbar-Birbal classic, teaching that all mothers think their own children are the most beautiful, has a picture of a dark, thick-lipped, unkempt baby to show how poor and ugly 'lower caste' babies actually look.

Over the years, Amar Chitra Katha has become synonymous with Indian culture, history, mythology, and religion at least to a vast majority, and there lies the danger. If anyone were to look at them critically, the huge problems with the narratives in these comics would become obvious. The text comprises banal writing, poor and often wrong use of language, unedited use of dated and inappropriate vocabulary and ideas, plainly chauvinist and insensitive dialogue, blandly rendered narrative, decontextualised perspective. Why then is the series so popular with children?

One powerful incentive is the comic format, which is visually appealing to the reader. Children tune into comics very quickly and become active readers. Series like ACK or Tinkle (a better series than ACK, I think) and many similar ones that have followed are extremely market-friendly. They are cheap, packaged uniformly, and the comic series format ensures a devoted readership. Amar Chitra Katha's USP is, of course, the teaching of Indian culture in neat packages. To the Indian parent or teacher, a comic that does that is beyond reproach. Many teachers and parents who are aware of the poor quality still buy these comics because there are no other comics that serve this all-important purpose.

I am not dismissing the comic genre or the series reader. When authors, illustrators and publishers create books about myths, legends and folk stories with a narrow understanding of the power of those narratives, we get moral lessons or meaningless glorifications of a past with no relevance to the present. Myth and legend appeal to children because they are so rich in metaphor and imagery. Their retelling should open up to children whole new possibilities of using the language, both in terms of ideas and words.

To my mind the biggest problem with the ACK series are the pictures. By using the comic format, much of the narrative is conveyed through the visuals. The world that emerges through these pictures is a world of tall, strapping gods, kings and princes, and coy, curvaceous, half-clad goddesses, queens and princesses. That they are fair and beautiful naturally follow. The baddies are by contrast short, stocky, dark-skinned and thick-lipped. The inferences are clear: fair is beautiful and good; dark is ugly and bad. The caste and gender biases in these books are obvious.

A narrative that is retold is as much a cultural experience as the original story, but the kind of retelling our writers indulge in is often vacuous and banal, adapted as it is from the western style of oversimplification of narrative, while eliminating the felicity of language used by very many western writers. But despite the limitations dictated by the standardisation of format, authors can rise to these challenges with tales that are masterpieces of economy, invention and even poetry.

As I mentioned earlier, we have unquestioningly adopted this dumbing down of style, which we find particularly in American books. Significantly, in the west, there is a critical backlash against such books from teachers, writers and academicians. One of them, educationist Julia Eccleshare, deplores the style of writing that "...reads as if a series of shots is being fired from a gun. Short sentences are easier to read, once hooked you might go on, especially if the children have short silly names and do short silly things".

Here is an example of what she is talking about from an American book, *Jenny is My Big Sister*.

Jenny says I am too little to ride my bike with her.
Jenny says I am too little to skate with her.
Jenny says I am too little to play with her friends.
Jenny says, "Get lost, Becka!"
Someday I will not be too little.
Someday Jenny will want to play with me but I will not play with her.
I will say, "Get lost, Jenny!"
Jenny will be sad.
I will say, "Don't cry, Jenny."
Jenny and I will play together.
See how much fun we have together.

Here is an Indian example of such writing:

> *Once upon a time there was a man called Day, he had a beautiful wife called Night, they had a bright little daughter called Moon and a brilliant son called Sun. They all lived happily. One day the children went out for a long walk. They saw beautiful flowers and butterflies, chirpy birds and happy animals. They walked and walked. Suddenly they found themselves in the middle of a huge forest. They had lost their way…*

Why, when we know that our children can and do engage with the complexities of our oral narratives, do we offer them trivialised texts in our books for them? Fundamental questions that any debate on reading must address are, "What kind of books?" "What kind of reading?" "What kind of readers?"

I would now like to read from a well-loved and extremely popular book published by Tulika, *Ekki Dokki*. The author, Sandhya Rao, retells a story capturing the spirit of the original that she heard her grandmother tell again and again. Simple, never simplistic, using the device of the storyteller by slipping in a couple of asides, sprinkling the story with a couple of Marathi words offering multi-lingual text to the reader, which actually enriches the language in which the story is written it is not difficult to see why young readers go back to the book again and again:

> *Ekkesvali and Donkesvali lived in a little house with their mother and father. Ekkesvali had one hair on her head, she was called Ekki; and Donkesvali had two hairs, she was very proud, she was called Dokki. Their mother thought there was no one quite as lovely as Dokki. Their father was very busy; he had no time to think. Dokki was always bullying Ekki. One day Ekki ran away. Into the jungle she ran, and the jungle got deeper and very quiet. Suddenly she heard a voice, "Water! Somebody give me water." Ekki stopped in her tracks and turned around. There was nobody there. Then she spotted a mangy bush all withered and brown, its leaves rustling. Cupping her hands together, Ekki collected water from a small stream nearby and sprinkled it on the bush, once, twice, several times. "Thank you," the mangy bush said. Ekki walked on. Suddenly in the silence she heard another voice, "Hungry, I am hungry, please feed me," the voice said.*

And the story goes on in this manner.

A K Ramunajan makes a simple point: "Many south Indian stories were mealtime rather than bedtime stories. They were associated with relaxed, loving figures, with sleep and food. The tales were formative influences and hypnotic. We were trying hard to keep our eyes open by the time we came to the end of the story and the meal, which were aimed to coincide." This is an experience many of us as listeners and tellers share. I think I was at my inventive best when I managed to make the vegetables or the last mouthfuls into my son's

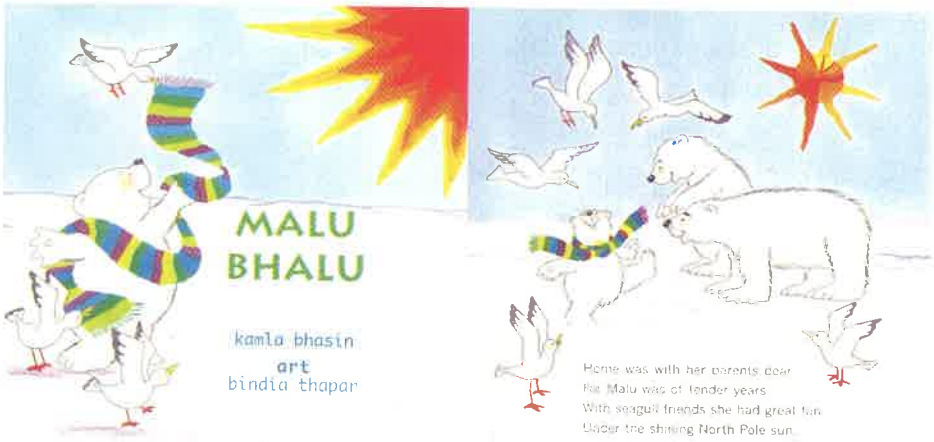
mouth, so engrossed would he be in my story.

When retelling these stories, we often change qualities intrinsic to them the sense of fantasy, of improbability, of fun, even of the wicked and wickedly funny. I am not questioning the writer's freedom to adapt and change, but this has to be done with an understanding of the original. When writers let the original guide and inspire them, as in *Ekki Dokki*, they truly carry forward the ancient story.

India, unlike the western nation states, and like Africa or Latin America, is multicultural and multilingual. Its diversity is reflected in 1,652 mother tongues (according to the 1961 census) belonging to four language families and written in 10 major scripts and a host of minor ones; 4,600 castes and communities; 4000 faiths and beliefs. Western monolingualism regards one language as the norm and many languages as absurd; the multilingual attitude is the reverse of this many languages are the norm and one language is absurd. Paradoxically, we have an education system that compartmentalises language learning in terms of "first", "second", "third" and "fourth" languages. Books for children are seen as being primarily for improving reading and writing skills. They are therefore in the dominant language, usually English, and offer dull, featureless, homogenised text.

Books can bring us closest to a multicultural experience, through translations across our many languages. "Multicultural" is the buzz word in children's publishing now. The perception of multiculturalism itself is very cultural. This has been our experience, for instance if you show publishers an Indian book which has stylised illustrations, they might complain and say that the book does not have enough "kings" and "queens". So they have already decided what an Indian book for children should be like; it should have miniature-style paintings, flowing skirts and long hair. Only then is it an Indian book. If it is different from their conception of an Indian book, then it is not accepted. Then what is multiculturalism about?

Children's literature in the regional languages reveals phases of vibrancy that are missing in English language publishing. For one, the former has a much longer history; like with all literatures in the regional language, there is an integrity and rootedness in the text that is natural. Writer C S Lewis says, "Writing a children's story is the best art form for something that you have to say." Many well known writers explored this art form in our Indian languages Amir Khusrau, Mirza Ghalib, Mohammed Iqbal, Dr Zakir Husain, Premchand in Hindi; Rabindranath Tagore, Satyajit Ray, Sukumar Ray, Mahasweta Devi. Another striking feature is that poetry, drama, travelogue, nonfiction were all explored. It is only through translations that we can reach this rich and diverse genre to all children. Sharing stories across cultures and languages breaks down barriers. Today, more than ever before,



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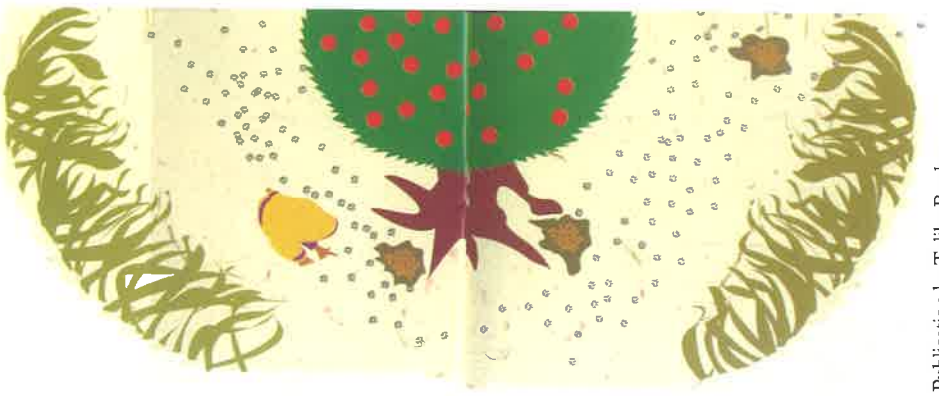
the time is right; a new generation is emerging, a generation that is growing up digital, creating a culture of interaction.

What happens to narratives in translation? Translation is a complex creative process, an area where there is a lot of academic discussion. When it comes to translating books for children, the task is all the more complex as we are also dealing with a young reader's developing literacy. The challenge for translators and editors of children's books is that first you have to throw off the baggage that comes with writing for children. Unless we do this and free both language and thought, how can we capture the music of the Indian languages that are enriched by rhymes, rhythms, alliteration and metaphor, particularly in writing for children? Isn't it this delight that we seek to convey to the English-knowing readers? To go back to the master, Ramanujan: "Translation must not only represent but re-present the original." To all of us who have been involved in translating for children, this makes



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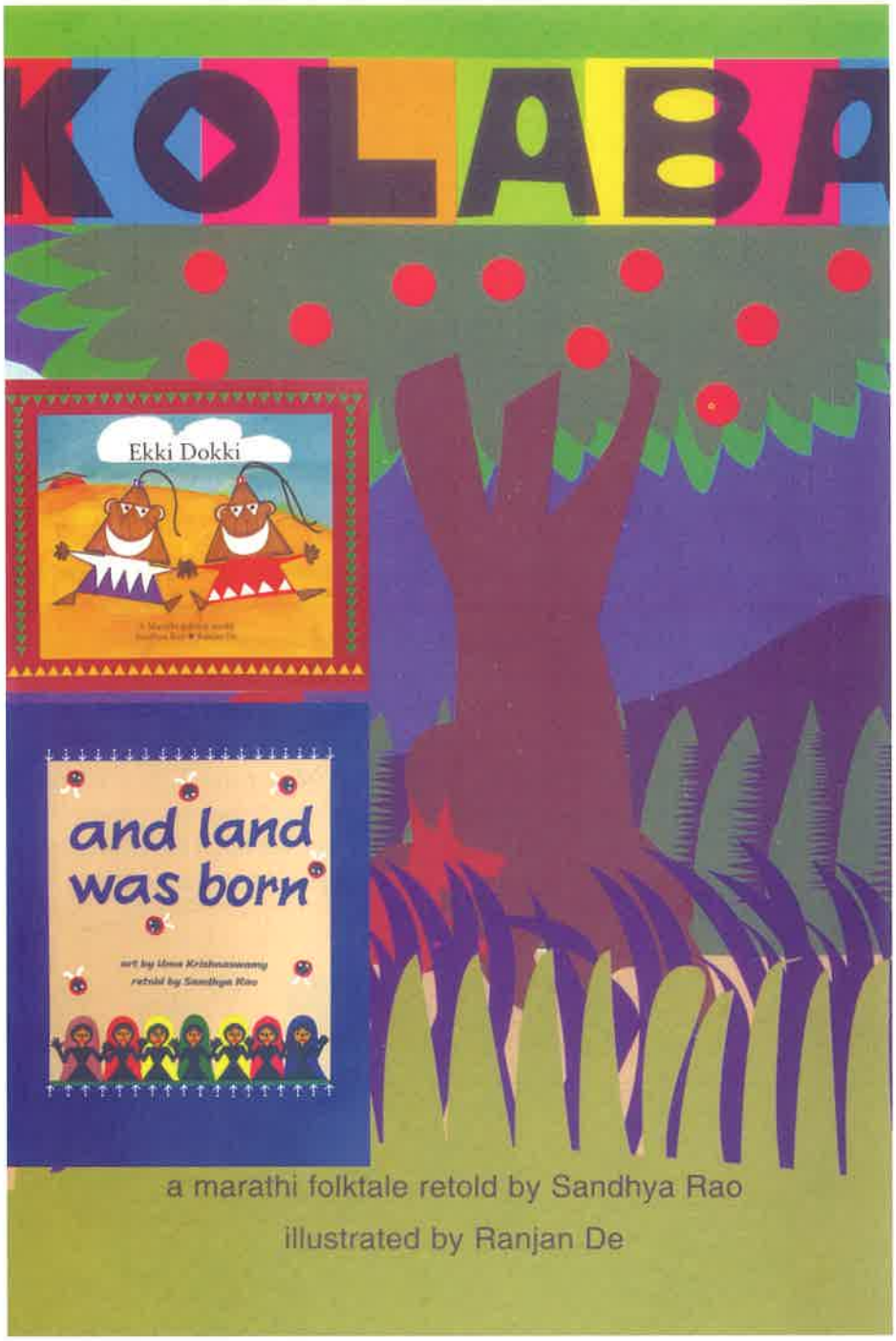

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immense sense, for there are times we feel as though we have only managed to "re-present" something and not quite represent it closely.

We draw comfort from this parable that Ramanujan quotes:

"A Chinese emperor ordered a tunnel to be bored through a great mountain. The engineer decided that the best and quickest way to do it was to begin work on both sides of the mountain, after precise measurements. If the measurements were precise enough then the two tunnels would meet in the centre, making a single bar. "But what if they don't meet?" asked the Emperor. The councillors in their wisdom answered, "If they don't meet, we will have two tunnels instead of one. So too, if the representation in another language is not close enough, but still succeeds in carrying the poem in some sense, we will have two poems instead of one."

This is echoed in Sukanta Chaudhuri's translations of Sukumar Ray's *Nonsense Poems*.

"Why are they always white children?" asked a five-year-old black girl who was looking at a picture book at the Manhattan nursery school in New York. If you only cared to listen, there are many children's voices in India that ask similar questions. How many of these children find themselves in the books they read? Some books that do make self-conscious attempts end up reflecting the distorted notions of urban middle class people about rural life. Textbook writers, who are unfortunately the only writers who write for the readership outside the urban sections, are seriously hampered by their limited view of the power of narrative for children.

Why primary education has performed so poorly is a question that is debated all the time among educators and policy makers. As our involvement with children's books and their reading grows, we are increasingly convinced that the quality of the reading that the majority of children experience is directly related to poor literacy levels, to a large extent. If we can give all children stories in which they can find themselves, stories in which cultural settings are familiar and relevant, children will find reading interesting and meaningful. There is then a chance of retaining these children long enough to make them literate. The high dropout rate is the usual explanation for poor literacy levels. Books, as much as anything else for children in this country, have to take in the reality of all children's lives in the present as well as in the past, crossing barriers of class, caste, religion and language; only then can we dare to hope that our future generations will build a borderless world.

Mitra Mukherjee Parikh

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Note on practical exercises:

Breaking off the Frame: Women & Literature

As the idea of the workshop was to focus on literary issues in their immediate locations along with larger global concerns, a considerable amount of time and thought was given to elaborating various aspects of Indian literatures and translation studies. It was thought to be important to point out to the participants that it is only in the last two decades of the twentieth century that several relevant and serious debates centered on the area of Indian literature studies have emerged. Earlier most questions on the subject were either subsumed under the large umbrella of postcolonial studies or was paid lip service in most academic and university circles in the form of a course paper or two or at the most a chair in the English department.

However two institutions need special mention for foregrounding Indian literature studies issues as subject of special attention, study and research. The first of the two is the Sahitya Akademi, founded immediately after independence and involved in translations to and from Indian language literatures and English and publishing "Indian literatures", a variety of writings on the subject. The second is the Department of Comparative Literature at Jadavpur University, Kolkata the first of its kind in Asia. Apart from these two institutions, there is very little information or understanding on this area in the universities or in public spaces. This has led to ignorance as well as distortion in understanding the scope and significance of contemporary Indian literary discourses and its relevance to larger cultural debates. It was therefore felt necessary to not only inform participants about this rich body of knowledge, but to sensitise them to the history and politics of the neglect and to alert them to the consequences of such erasures.

Indian literature studies has been largely studied and analysed by historiographers through the aggregate method or the nationalist model. The aggregate method, as Sisir Kumar Das describes it, presents Indian literature as a

sum total of all literatures produced in Indian languages. It makes Indian literature an aggregate of literatures: Asssamese + Bengali + Gujarati + Hindi... "This I should call without any derogatory connotation an arithmetical approach." (Das, 1991) This approach was able to list the similarities and differences of single literatures, but unable to cohesively show the continuous interaction between languages, the similarity in the responses to socio-political changes, and the pattern of literary innovations all over the country.

The nationalistic model of studying Indian literatures tried to capture the sense of unity of the Indian people and hence the Indian culture, derived from a wide range of factors geographical, historical, ritualistic and behavioural. However, implicit in this model is the danger of perceiving existing geographical, linguistic and religious fluidities in politically homogenous moulds. Both perspectives to Indian literatures, their achievements as well as their drawbacks, were brought to the attention of participants at the workshop I conducted with Amiya Dev on translation by using English translation from Indian literature. Thus, participants arrived at the theoretical conclusions described above from their own readings and analyses of translated texts and commentaries. This hands-on method of understanding issues in literature was a unique part of the workshop.

The next step in the workshop was to suggest ways of studying the vast body of Indian literature, oral as well as written, that is spread across an immense stretch of time. The multilingual and multicultural nature of Indian literature studies demanded a comparative approach and required a large amount of translated texts as material of study. In spite of the fact the intra-lingual translation between Indian languages within the country has been and continues to be a practice even today, colonial and post- independence education policy and commercial motives of private publication houses have privileged English as the main language of translation. The participants of the workshop, though from a wide range of linguistic background, were most comfortable with English as the target language. So the focus of study and discussion on Indian literature studies were English translations of other Indian language literary texts.

As translations were to be the entry points to issues on Indian literature, it was important to draw attention of the participants to questions of translation as process, the language of translation and the context of the translation along with other literary issues and concerns. Several pedagogical exercises were used to illustrate the nuances of translated Indian literary discourse in the contemporary period.

In order to disrupt the notion of translation as a mechanical activity of transference of meaning from the source language to a target language, we provided participants with an exercise of comparing several translations of the same text. The questions that got raised by this exercise related to meaning and interpretation of meaning by different readers/translators, privileging one translated text over another in choosing a translation as "authentic" or "valid"; considering the criterions for evaluation as reflection of one's own literary, aesthetic and political preferences and the reception of translations.

In the Indian context a comparative analysis of an earlier translation of canonical texts like Sanskrit classics or Rabindranath Tagore with contemporary translation of the same text revealed a sea change in the attitude of the translator and therefore of the literary culture. This change reflected the change not just towards English language but a shift in the privileged locations of the language in social and cultural hierarchy. Earlier, all Indian local terms required English (read British) equivalence in the translated text as the norm was western and even the target audience was foreign. But in the later translations, cultural and ethnic terms were retained in the translations without an attempt at explanation or a glossary. Thus idli was not to be rice cake and abhisarika remained abhisarika without being absurdly transformed into "a languishing woman awaiting her beloved".

These changes, identified by the participants through the exercises, indicated to them several changes in the contents, dissemination and receptions of Indian literature and translations. Firstly, it clearly showed a change in the profile of the readers of translated literature. They now comprised as much Indian English educated readers as well as foreign readers. This readership did not require to be reacquainted to their own cultural world and those foreigners who found Indian terms unfamiliar were required to educate themselves to the Indian cultural world as many readers from across the third word had done with unfamiliar Western or European texts in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Apart from establishing the newfound cultural confidence that the texts demonstrated, they also signalled changes in our perception of caste, class and gender articulations in the cultural context. Adivasi and Dalit oratures and literatures required translation of Indian language dialects into equivalent dialects and registers in English to indicate "difference" of the marginal from the mainstream. Different translations expressed the varying degrees of the effort made to articulate this "difference" without silencing or smoothening out

the difference as some earlier translations had done. Women's writing requires contextualising and sensitive translation if the nuances of the inscribed subversion were to be foregrounded. The examples provided to the participants of translations by Gayatri Chakravarthy Spivak, Susie Tharu and others showed how critical and alert translations are able to achieve this and uncover a host of such writings from the repertoire of Indian literatures. Besides all these concerns, several aesthetic and value-related debates which are an integral part of Indian literatures got foregrounded, reminding our participants that such issues are not the lone privilege of only Western literatures.

In our discussion on the translatibility of poetry, another important aspect of translation studies that invariably raises critical questions on both the communicative and the aesthetic nature of literary language got prominence in the workshop. Many critics and poets believe that because of the condensed and inter-textual nature of poetry, it is untranslatable. But several others hold contrary opinions and some even suggest that translating poetry invariably brings out a host of other questions related as much to aesthetics as to the politics of language and literature. In order to address these questions, participants were asked to translate short lyrics or poetic passages from a familiar Indian language literature into English.

The results were extraordinary. It showed the participants' heightened awareness of the possibilities as well as cultural limitations of English as the target language, and the extraordinary adventure of the creative mind to transgress the boundaries set by syntax and grammar. Above all, it showed the complex and dynamic ways in which a language expands and enriches itself and the culture. These ideas were further strengthened by the presence of several poets and writers in the workshop who added their own understanding and perceptions to the debates and discussions. If the purpose of the workshop was to enrich and sensitise the participants to the poetics and politics of literature study, then it's evident that the translation workshop achieved immensely in unsettling several complacencies and implanting a desire to probe further in the area of translation and Indian literature studies.

Schedule

18th October
Registration Introduction by **Mitra Mukherjee Parikh**
Inaugural Lecture: When Was Literature, **Susie Tharu**
Reversing the Tale: Workshop with Short Stories
Telling Tales: The evolving of Oral Literature, **Dilip Chitre**
Performance of Varkari

19th October
Language, Culture and Representation, **Tejaswini Niranjana**
Breaking off the Frame: Women & Literature, **Mitra Mukherjee Parikh**
Speaking of Margins: Literature of the Notified Tribes, **Ganesh Devy**
Culture and Literature of American Blacks and Indian Dalits, **Janardan Waghmare**
Reading Session, **Kiran Nagarkar**

20th October
Literary Narratives and Making of The Nation:
A Study on Rabindranath Tagore, Bankimchandra and Govardhanram, **Tripathi Prabodh Parikh & Tridip Sruhid**
The Act of Writing for Cinema **Javed Akhtar**

Public screening of films:
Throne of Blood by **Akira Kurosawa**
Kummatty by **G. Aravindan**

21st October
Why Comparative Literature **Dr. Amiya Dev**
Narratives in Painting **Girish Sahane**
Not *Once Upon a Time*: Narratives for Children **Radhika Menon**
Workshop on Translation **Dr. Amiya Dev** and **Mitra Mukherjee Parikh**

22nd October
Autobiographies, Atmacharits and Other Selves **Rimli Bhattacharya**
Literature in Theatre **Mahesh Elkunchwar**
Scribbles on Akka: a film on Bhakti Poet Mahadevi Akka by **Madhusree Dutta**
Open Session

Workshop on Science as a Site of Culture

in Collaboration with the Jindal Arts Creative Interaction Centre (JACIC)

Oct 30-Nov 4, 2001
National Center for Preforming Arts

Introduction by Madhusree Dutta

One of our main activities at Majlis is to organise pedagogical programmes for students. We have been doing these annual workshops on art practices for the last five years. Students as a community are very dear to us - most of our energies are directed towards you.

But I should tell you something about us first. People often wonder, "Why the name Majlis? It is odd, it is alien." Majlis means "association" according to the dictionary and "cultural association" through its connotation, by usage. In our context, it is an Urdu word this word is also used in Persian, in Punjabi, in Bengali, in Arabic, and many other Central Asian languages. The connotation changes a little bit depending on the context in which it is used. In Bengali, it means a musical programme, in Dubai it is used to mark the living place in the house, in Iran it is the Parliament. For the Bohri Muslim community in India, it means "women's informal gathering". So it has many meanings, but all around it means many people getting together.

We started Majlis rather ambitiously in 1991, and we chose this name because we thought we would be able to incorporate the spirit associated with all these meanings. We are still struggling with that. Majlis has a legal resource centre and a cultural centre. The cultural centre produces plays and films, and conducts pedagogical workshops. We also provide short-term support to young artists. From the legal centre we work on campaigning for and protecting various rights women's rights, human rights, children's rights, and so on.

While showing our films or plays or taking workshops on human rights, we often come across people like you. Often college authorities allot us one period of 45 minutes or two periods of one and a half hours, and we are supposed to talk about things as broad as human rights and culture. It's always very frustrating, so we thought of making another space, and that is why we have these workshops. The aim is to have enough space and time jointly to explore our ideas and perceptions, our confusions, our resentments.

Often we also hear that art practices or science practices are very "high funda", that they have nothing to do with people, and the artists or the scientists or the intellectuals or the activists have no concern for common people's desires. They are "inaccessible", in one word, and that is why they are highly avoidable. Now this is the beginning of our whole questioning. Is it really so? Is it that someone is inaccessible because of some whims and fancies? Because he or she does not want to be accessible? Or is it that we don't get to know about some events because the people involved in those events decide not to communicate to us? Do we know more about the United States and less about Afghanistan because the

Afghans have decided that it be so? Is accessibility so simple, so neutral? Is accessibility really in control of you and me and those practitioners of arts and science and activism and theories?

Looking at it from another side, there are some idols, some icons, who are accessible through the *Bombay Times*. Every day we read what colour shirt they wore last evening. But are they really available? Is this the lifestyle we can fashion ourselves after? Is that accessibility? So what is accessibility, and what is inaccessibility? Dr Vandana Shiva's concept is not accessible to me, but is Shah Rukh Khan's lifestyle accessible? So we thought of this exercise where those so-called inaccessible people, the artists, the scientists, the intellectuals, will come to you. You can ask them, why are they inaccessible? Do they enjoy their exclusivity? Why can't they reach out to you? Do they want to reach out to you? If they do, then what stops these interactions, what stands between you and them?

This workshop is a campaign for more aware consumption. We are consuming all the time we are consuming the newspaper, we are consuming what television reporters are saying, we are consuming fashion, we are consuming McDonalds. Why can't we have a little informed approach towards this consumption? Why can't you ask about your choices and lack of choices? Even if you are a student of commerce, why don't you need to know what is happening in Afghanistan?

What's happening in Afghanistan, is it science, is it art, is it history? Why are some kind of illnesses only a "third world" phenomenon? Why did the Babri Masjid have to get demolished? Is it only history? Do you have nothing to do with it? Why is it that the defence budget is far greater than the health budget? Do the changing sex ratios not affect us? Is it science, is it history, or is it our life?

These questions have been around for decades. People have been dealing with them through their art, through their science practices, through activism, through their writings, through their academics, but all these do not reach us. Something else reaches us. Thus the barriers have been broken a long time ago, but some of us do not know, were not allowed to know. This is a small attempt to bring that to you. If you ask some of these questions, if you at least recognise these questions as an integral part of your life and work, then they become cultural issues, which in turn become political and social questions, which involve art and science practices.

Vandana Shiva

Vandana Shiva is an environmental theorist and activist. She is the director of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, an independent institute that researches ecological and social issues in partnership with local communities. She has also launched a global movement called Diverse Women for Diversity for the defense of biological and cultural diversity and, in India, Navdanya, a movement for biodiversity conservation and farmers' rights. Her publications include Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival; Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge and Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply; Patents: Myths and Reality and Monoculture of the Mind.

Science and Nature

Thirty years ago, when I was your age, I used to come to this city to train to join the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre. I was training to be an atomic energy scientist. It was the big science establishment if you were smart enough that is where you wanted to be. I was having a lunchtime discussion during the holidays with my sister, who was training then to be a doctor. She started to tell me about everything that could go wrong with me biologically because I was spending time in the first fast breeder test reactor that was being built in Trombay at that time. I am not the kind to get scared about stuff, but I do get outraged about deceit. I was very, very unhappy about my training in nuclear physics, which had brought me all the way to Honours at the Masters level and had not given me even one lesson on the biology of radiation. That is what was an absolute eye-opener for me, to recognise that you could be trained to be the ultimate expert in working out energy level transitions, get your calculations absolutely accurate, and not have an idea about what the release of that radiation does to the life around us.

That is when I decided that was not what I was going to do with my life live with one-sided expertise. I started to move into theoretical physics, partly to get a broader understanding of the discipline I had chosen to study and also to not be so directly involved in what I knew was becoming a manipulated science because of the whole issue of the environmental risks and health risks of nuclear systems. For me, science was my search for truth, and I could not search for it in the context of deep manipulation. So I became a theoretical physicist. I did my Ph D in the foundations of quantum theory. I loved every moment of it, I still dream of it. But along the way, a few trees in the Himalayas, the Chipko[1] women, and all sorts of distractions have landed me where I am.

1 Chipko is a movement in which a large number of women participated to prevent deforestation around the foothills of Himalayas. The women would surround trees to prevent the contractors from felling them, and hence the term, 'Chipko'

I want to share with you the issues concerning science in the political, ecological and cultural context. Looking back at these 30 years of total deviation from my chosen path, the one thing that I have understood is that there is no science; there are sciences. Very often, the sciences are not visible to us because they are kept subjugated. The only thing that comes up with a capital S and a capital T in the name is the Science and Technology of privilege. This has increasingly, in the last century, got linked to economic power, and is therefore an instrument of capital accumulation and you can't really accumulate capital without the appropriation and exploitation of natural wealth on the one hand, and of people's work on the other.

I will use the terms technology and science interchangeably, as they have become interchangeable in the last 50 years. The model used to be that the scientist searches for neutral knowledge, finds out the laws of nature; then someone brilliant applies those laws of nature and you get technology. It works the other way around now: someone finds out there is money to be made with the evolution of a certain tool; they hustle enough knowledge to make that tool work. Agriculture and genetic engineering are the ultimate examples of this.

About 10,000 acres of a particular cotton called BT cotton found to have been planted in Gujarat. Crops are always planted, so why did this crop become a scandal? It is a fascinating story and it tells you something about the politics of science and the economics of science, as well as the ecological risks. BT cotton is genetically engineered cotton that contains genes from a soil bacterium that makes a toxin. That gene is put into the plant to produce a toxin, and the plant then starts to make that toxin all the time. The reason this is being done is to say that you have pest-resistant plants. No, you do not have pest-resistant plants, you have pesticide-producing plants. The plant is producing this toxin that did not belong to the plant, in every cell, every leaf, every grain of pollen. I am not a biologist, but I have had to learn enough biology to be able to deal with some of these subjects. I remember writing this monograph once. University professors were saying that I was not a biologist; I did not have anything to do with genetic engineering. That is when I wrote this booklet about why it is everybody's business, because it does not matter what you are studying, it somehow or the other impinges on you.

Now BT cotton, being a pesticide-producing plant, will do a lot of things. One, unlike the claim; it will not just kill the American bollworm that it is designed to kill, but it will kill many other things that eat at the plant. "Non-target species" as they are called butterflies, bees, pollinators. There have been studies, such as the Monarch butterfly study at Cornell, which really shook the world. When Monarch butterflies ate the pollen from BT corn, they died in very high numbers. The ladybird beetle, a very important pest control agent it eats up

larvae, it eats up pests and diseases before they can spread these beetles were dying as well. Research has shown that when the leaves of these plants fall into the soil, the soil's microorganisms also start dying. The worst part is that even the pest for which it is designed, which is the American bollworm, for a year you can control it but then the next year it becomes a super pest because, as we have seen in malaria and in other things, species have intelligence.

The construction that we are the only species with brains and the other species just sit there that is just not true. There is constant evolution. When a particular species feels the bombardment of a particular chemical, what it does is that it mutates and evolves resistance. Within a generation or two, you can start having resistant pests. A study done in Australia shows that they will require, within two years, 2,000 times the dose to kill that pest, because the pest will have evolved that much resistance. So you are basically releasing self-multiplying pesticide factors into the fields. By the time you figure out that something went wrong, there is no recall. You can ban DDT but you can't ban the plant. Try and ban the parthenium that came with the PL440 shipments. Try and ban the lantana, try and ban the mosquitoes that are spreading malaria. That is the thing about life forms.

This BT Cotton was not supposed to come into the Indian market. Monsanto, a very big company, known before the 1990s only as the company that sprayed Agent Orange on Vietnam (it had made Agent Orange), suddenly started to buy up seed companies in the 1990s. Before you knew it, it had become the biggest genetic engineering agricultural company. They bought up Kargill, which was a very big company itself. It owns 27 per cent of the share in MAHYCO (Maharashtra Hybrid). In 1998, Monsanto said it was bringing BT Cotton into India, Monsanto started the trials. We immediately went to the Supreme Court and used environmental laws that are used to regulate the release of genetically modified organisms. GMOs refer to genetically engineered organisms in which genes have been brought in from an unrelated organism. Before this technology, wheat was bred with wheat, corn was bred with corn, and humans were bred with humans. But now you can take human genes and put them into plants, animals, and fish.

Remember the story of Dolly the cloned sheep? So far, we have had synthetic molecules. Now they want to use particular animals, including humans. They have it in the pipeline why shouldn't poor women be used as factories to produce chemicals for the pharmaceutical industry? The impact of something like this can be extremely far-reaching, and that is why there have been laws to regulate this process. Well, Monsanto and MAHYCO had not gone through these laws. That is why we started the case against them. Then they hustled a clearance, but because they deal with the Biotechnology Ministry, they went to the biotechnology ministry. We still sued them because they should have gone to the environment ministry.

The point about genetic engineering is that it changes the scale at which we are intervening in nature. Just like the first generation of pollution was air pollution, and the second generation was chemical pollution, the third generation is genetic pollution. And genetic pollution, basically, is the release into the environment of genes that start behaving in unpredictable ways, with consequences that we have not taken stock of yet.

One of the consequences is that most virulent vectors are being used to introduce genes from one organism into another. How are genes introduced? You have to create an infection in the other plant or animal. What you do is use a vector that is a very infective agent, a bacteria or a virus, and ride the gene on it, the gene that you want to introduce. Till date there is no full-fledged knowledge about what do these vectors do once they sit where they don't belong. A friend of mine, a top molecular biologist, was working on genetic engineering for the treatment of cancer. He was working on what were called inert cancer viruses. Suddenly the rabbits that he was working with were all infected with cancer. These were merely supposed to be vectors to carry the genes, yet the vector had become active. He stopped the research at that time. He then got the Norwegian government to fund an entire programme on gene ecology to understand how the genes behave.

So we have got biological warfare out there, much worse than anthrax in the very tools that are being used. This was known to the scientists who shaped these tools. In 1972 they had a self-imposed moratorium, called the Asilomar Declaration. The companies then realised that money can be made on this, so they left the moratorium aside and started to raise money on Wall Street. I have sometimes said that from 1992 onwards, genetic engineering stopped being a science, and started to be a Wall Street return-on-investment. When something is being driven purely by Wall Street, obviously you are going to start suppressing certain knowledge. You will say, "Don't talk about the risks!"

In 1992, there was a convention on biological diversity, and I pushed some of these issues in, through third world negotiators. The original treaty was very different from what it turned out to be. The original treaty was talking about how do industrialised countries get access to our amazing biodiversity, the genetic wealth we have all our medicinal plants, the crops, the basmati, the neems. The treaty was what they called an access treaty; that they would have free access to come and collect anything they want to, from any country, for the good of humanity and universal science and everything else.

Something very different happened, because the Ministry of Environment called me in 1990 and mentioned that they were going for the negotiations, and asked me if I had any inputs. I asked, "Who are you sending to head the negotiations?" They said, "The head of Project Tiger." When I asked why, they said because it was about parks, wilderness zones

and all that sort of biodiversity management. For them, biodiversity was about elephants and tigers. This is the biggest natural resource conflict of the coming time. This is the green oil of the future. Biodiversity is every gene that has any kind of value and the point is there are no genes that don't. So the negotiations started to move. Mr George Bush Sr [the then American President] came to Rio, and even though the Americans had drafted the first version of the access laws, by then it included regulation of the biotech industry; he said he would not sign this because it would destroy a 50-billion dollar industry that was at the heart of America's future growth. So they did not sign the treaty; they have always been outcasts in that, like in Kyoto. Yet, the international treaty kept evolving.

You know the story I told you about leaving nuclear physics because of the one-sided nature of the discipline? Genetic engineering, or any manipulation in the living world, is ending up being an area where a certain story is being told, and that story is the story of progress: More, Better and No Costs. That is the part where the fibbing starts. For me, fibbing in science is as outrageous as fibbing in any sphere, in fact it is worse. This is really because science is supposed to look for the truth, the laws of nature; but here they are not looking for the laws of nature, they are looking for the laws of the market, and they are manipulating the market. The story of this manipulation does not begin with genetic engineering. It actually begins with the Green Revolution.

Every one of your textbooks will tell you that India was having famines until the Green Revolution. Not true. We had famines in 1942-'43 and we were importing some amount of grain; we needed to import a little more in 1965 because we had a bad drought here. Just like when Maharashtra had a bad drought in 1974, the government went to borrow from the World Bank, and the World Bank said they would not give money for digging wells deeper. Instead, they would give money for tubewells, so that we could stop cultivating jowar and bajra and start cultivating sugarcane instead. You know the story of sugarcane in this state and how it has created water scarcity. In the same way, when Lyndon B Johnson was President and the US was asked to send a bigger shipment because there was a drought here, they refused, saying we had to change our agriculture and adopt chemical agriculture and new seeds. Lal Bahadur Shastri was our Prime Minister, between his saying no, somewhere along the way, he died in Tashkent, and Indira Gandhi tried to negotiate. The World Bank moved in with structural adjustment and new conditionalities, devaluation; USAID said they would not send their ships unless India changed its agricultural practices. Every agency of the government wondered how it could possibly change overnight and questioned why it should, without assessing the risks?

We were all told that we'd had a fourfold increase in food, but we had actually had a fourfold increase in rice and wheat. Just like you have a tenfold increase in sugarcane in this state.

But growing more sugarcane does not mean growing more food. As a result of the shift to a monoculture of rice and wheat, largely to drive a technology of dwarfing to make shorter plants so that they could take more chemicals it was all made to look like higher productivity. Across the world, farms of less than two acres are producing more food. Even in India, smaller farms have higher productivity using internal inputs.

Now how is it that the 100 units of output with 300 units of input are projected as being more? When you do ecological production, you use internal inputs, such as the compost of the farm, family labour, and you produce many things fruits, oilseeds etc, and each output is very small. When you move into an industrial system, the output is a single output just rice, just wheat, and you say you are producing more. It looks like more because it is what I call the monoculture of the mind assessed on a single dimension, as a result of which we are getting scarcities in the other dimensions. Our import bill has not gone down, it has only increased hugely, except that we are not importing rice and wheat, we are importing daals from Australia and Canada. They even have patents on some of these daals, which they have taken from here. Australia had a patent on chana, which we fought. We are importing oils! India was the biggest producer of oilseeds. Groundnut oil is used a lot in India, and now that oil has become so expensive compared to the stuff that is being dumped on us.

In 1998, a strange law banned the open production of mustard oil. All this in the name of health and what they called sanitary measures. The fact was that it was basically to capture the market completely. Our edible oil imports have shot up by 300 per cent, we used to import 10-20 per cent three years ago, today we are importing 70 per cent of our needs. Our farmers don't have a market.

If the market collapses when you are not producing more then the farmers will protest. In the 1970s and '80s, when I worked with farmers' groups, the government used to respond. Today the laws on how agriculture will be handled, the laws on science and technology, what will be considered safe and considered unsafe, are not being written within the country, they are being written within the World Trade Organisation. Given that there is no pressure that can be brought on governments as long as the international law to which they are obliged stays, the only thing they can do is shoot you dead when you protest.

That brings me to another dimension of the distortion of contemporary science and technology, especially in the areas of food and agriculture. If you look at military technology, it will be the same, if you go into health, it won't be very different. One of the other issues that goes hand in hand with these changes is the fact that if I am a farmer and I am saving my seeds, then the company can't really make big money out of that. So even if they invest a lot in doing genetic engineering, if tomorrow I have access to the seed and save

it, it is not worth it for them. To have it as a market, to convert seed from a sustenance base into a market investment site, demands a very major cultural shift in our understanding of what is biodiversity, what is living resources, what are seeds. From a basis of life to a commodity on the market a commodity that you now need to make sure is sold every year.

You can do this by two means: either by biological means, which is where technologies like hybridisation come in; or through technologies like the terminator technology, where the plant itself releases a lethal toxin at the time of the maturing of the seed, and so it releases sterile seeds. However, you can't do this with all crops because it takes time to figure out how different crops behave, and most research in the world is about four or five crops. They know little about ragi and jowar and they know next to nothing about niger seeds, and so on these were plants that they ignored but they want to have monopoly markets. So, besides the tools of science and technology, you get legal rules to back you up. Those legal rules are the new rules of property, the intellectual property rights; before that, they had what were called industrial property rights. Industrial property would refer to a mike design or maybe the design of this chair, the design of that projector. Now for the first time, in the 1980s, life started to get owned as private property. Life has a habit of multiplying and reproducing, so turning it into "property" has certain intentions and implications. The intention is for people to not let it reproduce.

I got involved in biodiversity issues because of the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPS) agreement. The TRIPS agreement forces every country to introduce new laws for patenting living resources, and also takes away the powers of countries to ensure that cheaply available medicines are produced. We have very strong laws for generic drugs, which is why Cipla, a Bombay-based company, can offer low-cost AIDS drugs to South Africa. What Cipla can produce for $200 as AIDS therapy for a year costs $20,000 under patents. That is what South Africa and Brazil were fighting against, saying that their people were dying of an AIDS epidemic and they needed to have access to this drug. This built into a huge movement, and the big struggle is over a clause, according to which the third world countries are saying that nothing in this treaty shall prevent countries from making medicines accessible to their people. America, Europe and Switzerland insist on the removal of the word "shall," which makes it "nothing in this treaty prevents..." So it is an issue of interpretation that nothing prevents, but the fact is that it does. It is an absolute coercion, which implies that a farmer saving seed on his or her own farm is becoming a thief.

When I figured this out in 1987 and came back and started to save seeds, I thought there must be free seeds available for our farmers. That is why I started Navdanya, the movement for seed saving. But just last year we had a case in Canada where a 700-acre farmer, Percy

Schmeiser was growing Canola, which is a kind of mustard. Monsanto's genetically engineered Canola was being sold around his area. Through cross-pollination, the genetically engineering Canola crossed with his crop. Just like they have taken samples secretly from farms in Gujarat and said, "This has BT genes," and reported it to the regulatory agency, in the same way they did tests on that Canadian farmer's fields and they said that it had their genes.

The farmer said that if their genes had entered his field, then they had polluted his crop and hence they should compensate him for pollution, because there is an environmental law that says, "The polluter pays." This is where the neutrality of science comes in. If it was a genuine scientific discussion about genetic engineering then yes, he should have been paid. But Percy is a farmer and Monsanto is a giant corporation, so guess whom the courts speak for! The federal courts in Canada ruled that "It does not matter how the genes that are owned as a property arrive in a farmer's field, they could come by wind, by pollination; their existence is theft".

This is why the basmati and neem cases were very important; they were about someone claiming our indigenous knowledge as their invention. In the case of neem, WR Grace was the big company and the US Department of Agriculture had a joint patent with them; in the case of rice it was Ricetech. We started the challenge against the neem patent in '93-'94, when I first came across the patent, and against the Ricetech patent in '98. It took us from 1994 to 2000 to challenge the neem patent. The interesting thing was that we won the case but, all the way to the top brass, the Indian scientific establishment repeatedly talked about the neem patent having been challenged and the move having been defeated. So all these people believed that we had been defeated in our attempt to challenge the neem patent. How much of that comes from a colonial spirit and how much comes from collusion, I don't know, because I am not inside the minds of these people. But the same thing happened with the Ricetech patent; we challenged it, we built a huge movement, and most of their claims were struck down. Yet the news items was "Ricetech Wins". Ricetech lost 90 per cent of the original claim, if it had that claim and if WR Grace had continued to have their claim, or if hundreds of other patents on the tulsi, turmeric etc had continued to have their claims!

In every one of these cases, there is a claim to inventing what is already known in our everyday lives. It ends up creating a right, which, if not challenged, results in a Grace coming along and stopping a farmer from producing a pesticide on his farm. Ā Ricetech on the patent it obtained would have the power to start using that claim to prevent traditional farmers from growing basmati, because the original claim covered all that. Patents are instruments of monopoly to control the market. They are intimately linked to science and

technology; they are intimately linked with what will be counted as scientific invention. They are intimately linked to who is producing the creative leap in knowledge.

If you really get into this thing that I call bio-piracy the patenting of indigenous knowledge and patenting of our biodiversity it could make for some very interesting reading. Penguin, the publishers, wanted information about this in their *Intelligent Person's Guide to Non-Accessible Subjects*. In writing about bio-piracy I have tracked that the word patent comes from the word for "open letter". These were letters that the kings and queens gave to the Columbuses and Vasco da Gamas. They were open letters that empowered these guys to set sail and find a territory not ruled by them, and to own it on their behalf, because the Pope gave them the right and God gave them the right. So those pieces of paper that they used to set sail with were called patents. So I just think they have gotten so much into the habit of stealing and owning that they can't stop themselves anymore, 500 years later.

Now because of the racist bias that claims that science emerged in the West, they went on to say that intellectual property could also only belong to Western corporations and Western scientists; after all if we don't have intellects how can we have creativity and how can we then have intellectual property! So one of the big debates in this issue is that when a basmati or a neem patent is taken, how do we respond to it? The establishment's response is to get Indian scientists into patenting as well. The National Chemical Lab in Pune has just taken a patent on the use of tamarind in food just like there is a patent on the use of haldi in healing wounds. When an NCL scientist takes a patent, what does it mean? It means that our scientists will never work that patent because they will never have the capital; they will instead sell it to someone and make money, they will license the patent. Only a company can really work a patent.

Filing a patent implies a denial of the knowledge having existed before that patent was filed. You can file a patent only for a new invention. There are three criteria for a patent it must be novel, novel in a non-obvious way (you can't just make trivial changes in it), and it must have utility. The very claim to novelty in existing knowledge is one violation, the second violation comes from the fact that once you have applied for that patent and got it, you can prevent anyone else from having the use of that knowledge. I believe very deeply and very firmly that knowledge is common. The day we start treating knowledge as private property and only available through buying and selling and royalty payments, it is all finished.

The only reason they are getting patents now is that they are harvesting other people's open access knowledge. The companies can come in and harvest, but they can't create. They are basically harvesting a creativity that can only have a social base. Just like in seeds, you can only have useful seeds through cross-pollination; that is what creates the resilience, the

transfer of traits and the evolutionary adaptive characteristics. The day you start saying, "I am going to make that perfect seed for this particular trait," you are asking for trouble. For example, if you create a drought-resistant seed and you have a flood, that seed is going to be wiped out.

So that kind of engineering, on the assumption of perfect control and perfect determination, is not working. It is creating a huge vulnerable system, and in any case it is unethical, as at some point or another it based on piracy. It is based on three forms of piracy. Piracy of the creativity of nature: when you start patenting life, you are talking about the creativity of nature. The second is piracy of knowledge from women. Why do we have knowledge about medicinal plants? Because that is how women continue to heal. How do we have seeds that are not genetically engineered and still have their diversity and variation? Because women continue to save up and plant seeds of diverse crops. The third form is economic piracy, because eventually these are things with which we meet our health and food needs and, if everything is patented, then we pay for what was free.

Farmers end up paying Rs 25,000 for seeds every year, which is why they ended up being in the situation that we covered in this report called *Seeds of Suicide.* 20,000 farmers in India have committed suicide related to changes in the seed supply alone. Seeds have changed, become hybrids, required pesticides and cost Rs 100,000 a year. Landless peasants who have taken the land on lease do not have that money; they have been told they will be *lakhpatis;* that next year they will make the money, but they don't; they just keep getting deeper into debt. Within a few years, they are either committing suicide or, as in the case of these farmers from Andhra who came to our public hearings on seeds, they end up selling their kidneys to pay back their debts. It is an amazingly violent system that has been created; a kind of violence that goes deep and causes a whole reorientation of the cultural matrix of our daily lives.

From 1982 to 1987 I was directing a programme for the United Nations University on conflicts over resources. That is the time we were playing out the whole issue of conflicts over river water. I had a thick file on the conflicts over Punjab rivers and suddenly, come June 1984, my file on Punjab conflicts stopped being around natural resources, it suddenly became Khalistan, Sikhism, Sikh separatism. It was absolute shock therapy. So I wrote to the United Nations University and told them that though it was not a part of the planned agenda, I would like to do a particular study on what is happening in Punjab. Why has a conflict over resources, over development models, mutated into a communal conflict?

I spent a year going back and forth to Punjab. Half the trips had to be cancelled because the bus or train I had to take got bombed and so on. However, I did complete the study, and the

study was published as *The Violence of the Green Revolution*. I called it that, partly because it was about the violence that the state was going through and partly because it was about the violence done to the environment that was not being talked about. How the Green Revolution was only about more food; how ten percent of the land today was total wasteland; how the farmers today are all in debt. Half the farmers in that suicide study were in Punjab. How the biodiversity had been totally wiped out.

Last year, when I went on a field trip, I talked about alternatives to chemicals and pesticides, because these farmers were spraying away to control the bollworms (they call it the *sundi)*; this is a generation of farmers that has absolutely forgotten that agriculture is possible without chemicals. We bring them to our organic farm in Dehradun, and you should see these fifty-year-old farmers they're like little children who can't recognise the crops, and they are so fascinated by all the crops they see. "Oh, so this is what sesame looks like! It used to grow in Punjab, but not now." They don't know how to recognise chana anymore because they only grow wheat and rice and, in certain areas like Bhatinda, they even grow cotton.

When I was visiting Punjab last year and talking about the impact of pesticides, this particular farmer said, "Now we understand why even our fruits are not giving fruits." It is because they have killed off all the pollinators with the spraying of pesticides, and your pollinators are required not only for the crops you grow but also the crops you don't grow the wild varieties, the fruits. It is an ecological disaster that no one is even noticing. We talk a little bit about vultures, but have you ever talked about the disappearance of the birds and the butterflies and bees in our agriculture systems? The extinction of species under the soil, above the ground, is huge, and on such a large scale.

I wanted to refer you to the connection between the dominant culture of science today and the culture of violence. It is not just about the culture of violence as violence to nature, about farmers who are forced to commit suicide, but actually about science as a breeding ground for the issue that is now a global obsession terrorism. I want to read out to you from a Gurmata declaration.[2] This is a Gurmata declaration passed in 1986 by the Sarbat Khalsa: "If the hard-earned income of the people or the natural resources of any nation or region are forcibly plundered, the goods produced by them are paid arbitrarily determined prices, while the goods bought by them are sold to them at high prices, and in order to carry this process of economic exploitation to its logical conclusion the human rights of a people or a nation are crushed, then these are indices of the slavery of that nation, region or people."

That is how they were experiencing this technology, and yet the propaganda was all about the "prosperity of Punjab". In the 15 years since I did that book, there has been this sudden

2 Gurmata is a resolution adopted by all those gathered in the presence of the sacred Sikh scripture, Guru Granth Sahib.

upsurge of extremism, fundamentalism, and terrorism. It is all linked to technologies that must appropriate power; centralised control over resources on the one hand and decision making about the technology itself. In fact, the technologies are deployed as control mechanisms. Genetic engineering patents (I call them the total control mechanism over life on earth) put together these two controls. You don't need to be empowered in direct political ways once you have these tools in your hand; you anyway control everything.

I was working on Chipko and I was thinking the Chipko women were able to say "No" to logging, to monocultures, and they were able to create an alternative which was forests under their control, forests for their use. In Punjab they could not think of an alternative, so they took to the gun. Terrorism, extremism, fundamentalism comes out of centralising systems in which technology is a very important means, and the brilliance of science is being applied to see how you can take control away from people in their everyday life, and the absence of thinking about how things could be done differently and organising to make that change. It is not just terrorism that is the ultimate expression of this death of democracy, but also fundamentalism.

The culture of fundamentalism is intimately linked to a series of shifts that take place. Systems of productions and consumption move out of your hands, move somewhere far away. Decisions about the laws you live under are not made in the country. Our politicians still have to come to us for votes, so what do they come for? They come for Hindu votes, Muslim votes, Dalit votes. So, they come on the basis of religions and caste, not class. So all that continues to feed newer cycles of violence in society.

I want to just read out something, partly because they have gone so far overboard in saying that terrorism is equal to Islam and vice versa. There is an amazing book which is a bit like the twin to the Green Revolution book but written in the context of the farm crisis in America. It tracks the farm crisis in America and connects it all the way to the Oklahoma bombing. The book is *The Harvest Of Rage: Why Oklahoma City is Only the Beginning* by Joel Dyer. This is about the growth of Christian right-wing militias in the farm belt after the farmers were not heard regarding their indebtedness and their displacement. Nothing made a difference, because agriculture kept getting handed over to corporations. At the end of this they started to organise themselves as Christian militias. This journalist tracked the Oklahoma bombing to those militias. Dyer says: "America's innocence lay in the rubble of the building as surely as the crumpled bodies of the victims. The deadly Oklahoma City bomb was just the first shot in the collective suicide of the nation. Some Americans, some of them our neighbours, have declared war on the powers that be, and those of us who stand unknowingly in between these warring factions are paying the price and we will continue to pay the price one building, one pipe bomb, one burnt down church at a time,

until we come to understand first, that the nation is holding a loaded gun to its head, and second, why so many among us are struggling to pull the trigger."

Discussion

Student: Why are chemical pesticides considered harmful whereas natural pesticides are okay?

Shiva: Chemical pesticides are chemicals that we use to kill pests. Bio-pesticides could refer to many things. Neem is also called a bio-pesticide. The naturally occurring soil organism called bacillus thuringiensis (BT) has been used as a biological pesticide. It is being used as an organic spray, but when that organism's toxin producing gene is taken out of the organism and put into a plant, I personally feel it is no longer a bio-pesticide because it is no more functioning as an ecological controller of pests. Why isn't it functioning that way?

Bio-pesticides are a group of pest control mechanisms that are ecological and therefore environmentally sound. BT toxin implants are not environmentally sound. First, because in the soil, the protein exists in a crystalline form and there is a very narrow group of species it can impact in a negative way, it is safe to most others. In the plant, it starts to take liquid form because it has to move as sap, and that liquid form has a much broader range of target species.

Student: What are your views on M S Swaminathan's interviews, where he says India can attain food security by selective use of biotechnology?

Shiva: The reason we have a challenge in the Supreme Court on the first set of trials and releases of genetically engineered crops is precisely because you can't be selective about them until you know about the full impact; the spread is the big thing. Like I said, the Monsanto trials were started without any test. When we forced them, they put up a test in a two metres' isolation zone, which means pollination won't happen beyond two metres. In seed breeding, 30 metres is what they keep so that hybrids don't cross, 30 metres is the isolation distance. In the United States, Monsanto uses one mile for its genetically engineered crops not to get contaminated with other cotton. When you are working with two metres, you anyway do not have a selected and controlled introduction; you are just spreading those greens in the open environment.

Why is that more dangerous for us? Firstly because we have more biodiversity and that is why we have many more relatives of the crops, therefore we have many more compatible species to which the pollen could move. Herbicide resistance is another trait that they are engineering. When an herbicide-resistant trait moves into weeds, what are you creating?

Super weeds! These weeds will never be able to get wiped out now. They will end up there through pollination, and there are already indications that this is starting to happen. Within no time you can wipe out your agriculture, because your agriculture is taking place only because your weeds and pests are under some kind of control due to the ecological balance.

Dr Swaminathan is the father of the Green Revolution and we all love our fathers! He has grown more cautious about the environmental impact. He is very good on the bio-safety side. He does keep repeating that these things must be tested and regulated but, if you notice, he always uses the term "biotechnology" and I always use the term "genetic engineering". They use the term biotechnology because it includes idli making, dahi making and so on. So you know, *nani ka aur Monsanto ka technique ek hi hai*! If we have eaten *nani ka khana* then how come Monsanto's seeds pose a problem? I know that in the case of Dr Swaminathan, even when he is talking about seed conservation, he calls it biotechnology.

Student: About the issue of traditional knowledge, the kind of practices that traditional farmers use to protect seeds, to increase diversity and so on have you looked at the model of freeware licensing in the software world, where something which is the product of the creativity of a software engineer cannot be used for commercial purposes by someone else? So this knowledge which is generated through creative thinking, through social practices over a long period of time if someone appropriates that, there must be some protection there. It seems that the freeware licensing system offers a model.

Shiva: When the GATT was finalised and the Uruguay round was completed and the WTO came into being, and I first read the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreement, I wondered what the alternative could be. What we designed was what we call "common property laws" in the domain of biodiversity and intellectual innovation, which is also traditional but some of it could be contemporary. We called it "common intellectual rights" rather than "private intellectual rights", different from the private both in the sense that you cannot use these to exclude others, but you could use these to prevent their appropriation for private gain. This reflected cumulative innovation, and the collective nature of that innovation, because in the standard model of intellectual property, innovation is private - a single brilliant mind has an instant invention. In fact, in the basmati patent by Ricetech it says, "instant invention of a novel rice line". Instant invention! When all they did was take our basmati. Just piracy of old and ancient rice lines. The African Union has actually adopted this as a model law. In India, there has been a systematic subversion even though we have the best public interest legal systems in this country.

From the beginning, when we started these campaigns in '91, we were saying we would never accept the appropriation of our resources and knowledge. Three quarters of us are

still farmers, and that is why I started Navdanya. We have done basically what we always say we are going to do, announce the Beej Satyagraha or non-cooperation with those particular laws to keep defending biodiversity, seeds, and knowledge as common. We really believe that it is up to the people. A society of a billion cannot be bulldozed.

Dhruv Raina

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Towards a Global History of Science: The Relationship between Science, its History and Theory of History

I see this as an opportunity to share some of the crazy things we work on, with all of you. What I am going to talk about is a preoccupation of mine for the last four or five years. About 16 years ago a colleague of mine at my institute, Irfan Habib, and I started a collaborative work in the history of science. At that time something we were concerned about was, how does one write a history of science which is not Euro-centric, where everything didn't started in Greece, but where one takes into account in a just way the contributions of all civilisations and all cultures?

In the last few years, we have become acutely aware of another problem. The problem is that if Euro-centrism is being thrown out, then are we giving way to another kind of centrism Indo-centrism, Hindu-centrism, Arab-centrism, Sino-Centrism? Is that good for science, and is that good for us on a global scale? So that is going to be the subject of my talk today: not so much the history of science as how the historians of science over the last years have painted pictures about the growth of science; and how these pictures have to be revised today as the frontiers of knowledge have advanced.

The pictures we make about science don't have only to do with how science grows; they also have to do with how a society changes, because society also gives shape to these pictures. They also have to do with how a political power reconfigures itself globally, so there is interplay between scientific knowledge, society and politics. This concern is particularly important at this moment in history: when the canvas of techno-scientific knowledge is near-global there is no part of the world that has escaped science; and when there are pressures internationally by certain interests to claim knowledge that belongs to the global commons like the World Trade Organisation trying to claim such scientific and technological knowledge for their own.

One of the first histories of science was written by Al Beruni in the tenth century AD in a book called *Tarikh-e-Hind*, in which he talked about the knowledge of astronomy and mathematics and medicine of the Indians. History of science as a discipline was first conceived of in the eighteenth century. Today, the history of science is a museumised object it is about the past, something dead and forgotten. It is not a part of the practice of science, but in the eighteenth century, the history of science was considered a branch of science itself. The people, who founded the discipline professed that it was a history of human intelligence.

This was different from other histories. If you look at the writings of Voltaire and Condorcet, most of them talk about how history used to be about warfare, about carnage, about atrocities, about political machinations. But since we had come out of the Middle Ages, history must be about something else. We had had enough about massacres, enough about which king defeated which king. History had to be about progress, about how human intelligence, human minds and human techniques have evolved. And the history of science was about all this. In our own times, this role of the history of science has been supplemented by another one, namely that of exploring the relationship between society and science; of the social, cultural and political factors that either impede or catalyse the growth of scientific knowledge.

If such were the avowed aims of the discipline, if the goals of history of science were so noble, it becomes increasingly important to understand how a certain genre of the history of science became preoccupied with questions of who did what first. How does science end up talking of national pride?

The discipline of history of science emerged more or less at the same time as modern science came to be institutionalised, in the eighteenth century. This discipline played a very important role in conferring an identity upon modern science. Other specialist histories such as the history of mathematics and the history of chemistry played the same role, namely that of conferring disciplinary identities on the specialties that were emerging, saying, "This is biology," "This is geology," and so on. An important landmark in the history of scientific and political thought is the period referred to as the Enlightenment in eighteenth century Europe. It was during this period that the first encyclopaedia of science and techniques was published.

An important feature worth noting here is that towards the end of the eighteenth century, celestial mechanics was the exemplar, the model, of the most developed science. Hence the preponderance of histories of astronomies and mathematics. The break between astronomy, mathematics and history had still to take place. Secondly, till the end of the

eighteenth century, so intimate was the relationship between the history of astronomy and the practice of astronomy that the Chinese historian of science Han Qi alludes to it as the "Age of Historical Astronomy". Historical astronomy was different from the history of astronomy. It was the enterprise that involved probing other astronomical traditions such as the Chinese, the Indian, and the Arabic, for current and historical observations of celestial events that could later be employed to fine-tune the astronomical theories then evolving in Europe. So, in the eighteenth century, Jesuit astronomers set out from France to India, China, and other parts of the world, and began studying these other astronomical traditions, looking for observations of events from 1066 AD, 1432 AD etc. They were also looking at the rapid computational procedures available with Indian astronomers.

So what were the features of this history of science?

The exemplar of science that was used to distinguish what was considered science from what was considered non-science was the principle of inductivism. Was this science an inductivist science, how did it proceed to arrive at a conclusion, did it proceed inductively? Any knowledge form that conformed to the ideal of inductivist science was granted entry into the world of science. Those that did not were subjected to greater scrutiny, and sometimes excluded.

In this approach to the history of science, there was a sense of victory as they looked back on the knowledge that had preceded them. They felt they had arrived at the most reliable form of knowledge when compared to earlier kinds of knowledge. Since the time of Francis Bacon, the Savants had become acutely sensitive to the methods adopted for the study of nature. For the first time you see a great deal of discussion on methodology, on what method you were using to study which objects. The idea that this method had reached its highest stage of development in the science of their own times led to a self-congratulatory gaze that was evident in their investigations of ancient science, not just non-western but also western.

There was a battle between the ancients and the moderns those who stood by classical learning, and those who stood by modern science. The battle in a way was one of disciplines, ideologies, worldviews, and about different conceptions of Utopia. The spokespersons for the Modern claimed that the discourse of the Ancients, or the Classicists, was limited to the past. If you were discussing Aristotle's theory of motion you would keep on going back to Aristotle's book; you would not do experiments, you would not go out and seek knowledge elsewhere. The pursuit of the science that the Moderns represented broke with this scholasticism. For the Classicists the Golden Age was in the past, and from the past we were hurtling towards an abyss of darkness. For the Moderns the

Golden Age was in the future, so the past was discounted with respect to the future. This legitimised their belief in progress and endowed history with a direction. This ideology of unending improvement was to inspire both the Savants and the political revolutionaries of the eighteenth century. It also provided the history of science with a frame.

As you know, the eighteenth century was the age of political revolutions. The two most renowned are the American War of Independence of 1776 and the French Revolution of 1785, when new political ideals of republicanism and democracy were proposed. As the Savants succeeded in installing themselves in state-supported institutions, the battle between the Ancients and the Moderns had subsided, but by the early decades of the nineteenth century the battle lines were redrawn. This was when the sciences of the non-west came to be characterised in the very terms that the west, four decades ago, had conceptualised its own past. In other words, this battle between the Ancients and the Moderns was rewritten now: once the battle had subsided within Europe, it was now the non-west that was the traditional-cum-ancient, and the west began presenting itself as modern.

The nineteenth century, historians of science inform us, is the century of the theoretical consolidation of the physical sciences. The extensive data gathering and model building that had marked the pursuit of the physical sciences was now subject to the process of theorising. The idea of a theoretical physics emerges, geology begins to acquire a theory, botany begins to be put along new lines, Darwin is proposing evolution, with mechanics and astronomy emerging as the models for the other disciplines. By the third decade of the nineteenth century, a new science called thermodynamics was emerging that was to change the face of science, technology and society.

These developments occurred within a social context that shaped the writing of history and even the history of science. The second half of the eighteenth century is when modern nation states begin to emerge, the nation state as we recognise it today; and this process accelerates in the early nineteenth century. Edward Said, in a book that was a classic in the 1970s called *Orientalism*, Martin Bernal, who has produced two volumes so far called *Black Athena: The Afro-Asiatic roots of Western Civilisation*, and numerous other social scientists have all suggested that the rise of these modern nation states, the expansion of European economic and political interests in the new worlds (by new worlds we mean Latin America and Australia, they were not new in themselves but they were new to the western world) and the ancient worlds, resonated with the emergence of Euro-centrism in history and social theory. The standard myth that was projected was that science originated in the west and that Greece was the fount of this deductive science, which was exemplified in the works of Euclid, Pythagoras and others. My colleague Irfan [Habib] and I have written a paper on an

Indian traveller to France in the eighteenth century called Abu Talib. Abu Talib is shocked when he sees that European scholars consider Greece as European. Greece was not Europe.[3]

In the history of science another development, which has stayed with us until today, was manifest. This was the priority dispute. "We did it first... We did it before them." How did this happen? I am suggesting that two factors shaped the emergence of the priority dispute as a concern for the historians of science. The first is internal to science and the second is what happened with the state. With the institutionalisation of science, new norms for assessing the work of scientists were emerging. One of these was the norm of originality. Before 1750 there is little discussion on what is original; when somebody did something, he never strived to prove it was original. However, from the mid-eighteenth century onwards there is a great deal of discussion on originality. The first priority dispute we see in the world of science is that between Newton and Leibniz concerning the invention of calculus. Similarly it was asked whether credit be assigned to Fermat who had stated a number of theorems without offering any proof, or to Leonhard Euler who had proved some of the theorems stated by Fermat. As yet, there were few priority disputes in terms of civilisations.

The nineteenth century was witness to the proliferation of such priority disputes. Did Indians invent algebra? Or did the Greeks invent it, or was it the Arabs? Who invented the place value number system? La Place and others said it was the Indians, but there were innumerable others who said you can discover it in the work of the Greek mathematician Boethius. Did Indians invent trigonometry, or was it Hipparchus? Suddenly priority became very important for the historians of science. Something appeared to have changed.

Michael Adas in the marvellous book *Machines as the Measure of Man* has persuasively demonstrated that in the European imagination, scientific and technological development came to be seen as the measure of the advance of a nation. In the process, when scientists of the early nineteenth century wrote the history of science, we witness a retreat, a step backwards from the universal ideals of the Enlightenment. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the topos of the history of science begins to change again.

This was occasioned by a number of developments in other disciplines. The first had to do with the emergence of comparative philology after the European discovery of Sanskrit, and a new model of acquiring an apprenticeship in the classical languages was proposed by the German Indologist Franz Bopp. This template of oriental learning was subsequently transmitted to other parts of Europe. By 1860, the history of science in the non-west gradually passed out of the hands of practising scientists into those of professional Orientalists. Scientists continued to write the history of the science of the west, but if you

3 Dhruv Raina and S.Irfan Habib, "The Voyages of Abu Talib Khan and Le Gentil: A Preliminary Comparative Study of the Scientific Imagination in Eighteenth Century Indian and French Travelogues", appearing in Epistemologie, 2002.

had to write about the history of science of the non-west, then there were other people who were going to do it.

These histories of science were gradually inscribed within pedagogy in schools, in colleges, in textbooks. They disseminated an image of science and its origins as if science began in the west. This image was not revised for another 50 years. The feminist philosopher of science Sandra Harding refers to this process as the "institutionalisation of Euro-centrism" there is Euro-centrism but you are not even aware of it because you think it is "science". As if science was some sort of transcendental activity; science had a method, which was not contaminated by societal prejudice, by culture; science was disembodied knowledge; the pursuit of science was a pursuit of truth, goodness and beauty. When these historical spectacles were used to look at the science of the past, only those streams of knowledge showed themselves, which were connected with the growth of modern science. When you looked at the past of science through these spectacles, you may have seen Bramhagupta but you may not have seen another astronomical tradition, or you may not have seen Siddha medicine. You would have seen Bramhagupta because his work informs the tradition of Arab astronomy, and via Arab astronomy it informs the growth of western astronomy. But what about all those other streams of knowledge that do not connect to the growth of modern science?

While this was the dominant vision, the work of Orientalists, as well as practising scientists from the non-west such as Prafulla Chandra Ray, were bringing a fresh perspective into the history of science. In this perspective was embedded the international ethos of science. In the early twentieth century, George Sarton migrated from Belgium to Harvard University, where he was to play an important role of not just conferring on the history of science a professional identity, but with a complete identity as well. This meant not merely setting up a research program and an orientation for the discipline, but developing regular courses and establishing research and teaching positions, and setting up a research journal that almost 90 years later continues to be as prestigious as it used to be, namely the journal *Isis*, a journal of the History of Science.

In a way, Sarton's theory of the history of science bears a great deal of similarity to that of the Enlightenment philosophers. This is because Sarton conceived the history of science as the history of the development of human intelligence. It was only in the sciences, Sarton claimed, that progress had any meaning. Progress had no meaning in any of the other disciplines in the arts, in the social sciences or in any other types of human activity. In the sphere of politics and culture, you could not talk of progress.

A great deal of Sarton's thinking emerges between the two world wars, and at this time he

projected the idea that the history of science would play a very important role in creating a new spirit of universal brotherhood because he felt that science was something universal. He felt that histories of nations would be unable to contribute to this spirit, because he saw nations as divisive. There was also in his work a commitment to the idea of going beyond Euro-centrism in the history of science, by postulating science as a cultural universal that all cultures in the world had some kind of science. What he did not recognise was that in the history of science that historians did, the model of what constituted science was informed by what modern science was. If any earlier science had commonalities with the philosophy of modern science, then it was "science", otherwise it was outside.

The period between the two world wars was very important for unravelling the big picture of the history of science, as contributions from other civilisations began to fill up large missing spaces in this canvas. This is a very paradoxical period: on the one hand this is the period when the public reaffirms great faith in science, but it is also the period when the destructive potential of technology gives cause for an important critique of science and of capitalism. In much broader terms, the war had created a crisis, for it had shattered Europe's belief that it was the exemplar for all civilisations. The revision of this Euro-centric picture of the world during and after the World War II years was also linked to the freedom struggles that were raging in the colonies. The political challenge to colonialism saw its repercussions in historical writings, as former colonies now began to look at their past through a renewed gaze, possibly divested of colonial prejudice. This was their claim.

This was also the period of the rise of socialism, which had provided a way of re-examining the history of science in terms of broader societal developments. For most of you, in the way history of science continues to be taught in school, it is seen as the work of these heroic scientists endowed with genius and rationality. The new historians of science, on the other hand, began to look at science as a social product, because the argument was: without a society that can understand the contribution of science, how will the genius of its scientists be recognised? The efforts of the members of what came to be called the Cambridge Left the renowned physicist JD Bernal, the biochemist Joseph Needham, the biologist JBS Haldane who migrated to India and the mathematicians H Levy and Lancelot Hogben, all deserve special mention. In addition, the social history of science was given a fillip by the Soviet physicist and historian of science, Borris Hessen. The central idea that Hessen introduced was that a society conditions the production of scientific knowledge; however, he maintained a distinction between the internal core that was driven by the logic of science and an external context that shaped what the priorities of science were.

The second important idea that came out of this social theory of science was an attempt to understand why civilisations such as China and India that were scientifically as, or probably

more, advanced than the west did not witness the sort of scientific revolution that Europe did a revolution that transformed the institutions, the dimensions and the coordinates of science. The biochemist Joseph Needham turned to the study of Chinese science and civilisations, and produced along with his collaborators eight marvellous volumes. The question that he posed has been called the Needham question: Why didn't China, which was till the seventeenth century scientifically and technologically more advanced than the west, witness a western-type scientific revolution?

The outcome of the Needham project was a new image of "modern science". Needham proposed what he called the "river metaphor". He said that it was true that modern science was born in the west, but modern history was born at a particular historical conjuncture in the history of European thought, and that conjuncture was when the knowledge of the ancient world, the astronomy of India, of China, and of the Arab world came in through the Arabs into Western Europe and was transformed. But for this input from the Arabs there would have been no modern science. So Needham transformed the discourse about science and its history. However, as with many scientific disciplines, theories never appear fully formed. They always have internal defects and inconsistencies, and this was true of Needham's project as well. He himself engaged with criticism of his work till the last days of his life, forever rephrasing the Needham question.

For one, it was felt that Needham projected categories of western science onto the face of Chinese science, say "field theory" or "modern atomic theory". This acted as a sort of filter to what was to be considered science and what was not. Secondly, when social historians study the phenomena of the non-emergence of science in the non-west, the method appears to be a sort of comparative one where you identify the factors that shaped the emergence of science in the west, and you identify these as factors that were absent in the non-west. The factors that were absent at similar junctures in the history of the non-west are then held responsible. If factors A, B, C, D, and E were present at the time of the scientific revolution in the west, A, B and C were present in the non-west but D and E were not present, then D and E carry the burden for the non-emergence of science in the non-west.

The underlying assumption is that different civilisations and cultures pass through similar stages and phases, and if some of these phases are interrupted, it is because of the prevalence or absence of certain given factors. In the case of the non-emergence of modernity or modern science, the cross was borne by the lack of what were called pre-modern factors.

Despite these criticisms, Needham inspired many scholars in the third world who were

embarking on a re-examination of their respective histories of science. In India the names of SM Sen, Abdur Rehman and Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya must be mentioned.

What Needham did was that in his attempt to contest the Euro-centric history of science, he transferred to China a number of discoveries that the west claimed. He then said that the burden of disproving him now rested with the western scholars. This was a device for breaking the stranglehold of the Euro-centric history of science; in the hands of several ultra-nationalist historians of science, this sort of activity became a full-time preoccupation. Historians, rather than looking at the dynamics of the growth of scientific knowledge, began indulging in these priority disputes. I am not saying these disputes were not important, what I am saying is that they were important in the 1950s and '60s when you began to shake up the Euro-centric history of science, but if you are still participating in priority disputes in the '90s as a professional historian of science, well, then there is something wrong.

In the '70s the topos of science and history began to change again. One of the most significant texts produced during the post World War II years was a report called *Science, the Endless Frontier*. This book was suffused with a techno-optimism that fuelled increased spending on science and technology as a way out of the world's development crisis. The funding of Apollo was also probably legitimised through this document. This was the Bible of science policy for governments during the '50s and '60s. However, by the '70s, when development programmes did not deliver on their promises, the failure of the trickle-down hypothesis became evident. The period was marked by the rise of what are called the critical and anti-science movements. I differentiate between them: the anti-science movements reject science; the critical movements wish to critique science so that it can be brought into a more democratic and equitable realisation of societal goals. At the global level, ecology for the first time began to provide a critique of mechanistic science.

This is what was happening at a societal level. What was happening within disciplines? Developments within the sociology of science altered the concept of the relationship between science and society, and the image of science was turned on its head. It became increasingly evident that science encodes social and cultural values; that scientific knowledge is socially embedded and not disembodied. The sociologist of science, Michael Mulkay, had first proposed that a society conditions the knowledge it produces, though he stated that this does not apply to science and mathematics. Towards the end of his life he said that it was possible that society also conditions science, but not mathematics. However in the '50s the work of Wittgenstein, and of sociologists of science such as David Bloor, extended this axiom even into the domain of mathematics. Therefore, a society did not merely provide an external backdrop for the performance of science, but society shaped the institutions and contents of science as well.

Gradually, one of the many origin myths of modern science came into question the myth that there was a revolution just in the domain of science in the seventeenth century that transformed the entire social and political sphere of Europe and pushed it into the era of modernity. Sociologists of science now began to ask, was this so-called revolution just a revolution in physics? There were no revolutions in geology, chemistry, and biological science until much later. There were a number of other revolutions within the social domain that had little to do with science. So science was just one marker in what we call the revolutionary period within Europe; there were large numbers of other social changes taking place.

There is simultaneously an attempt to replace one centrism by another. The legitimate responses to Euro-centrism were Indo-centrism, Arab-centrism, Sino-centrism or other regional or continental versions of centrism. Some of these responses demonised western science as patriarchal, exploitative of nature and incommensurate with the indigenous ethos. So while modern science was reframed as western and accordingly demonised, the new centrisms reconstructed their own systems of studying natural knowledge in the same image. The new regional and continental essentialisms were just mirror images of Euro-centrism, and not responses that transcended the dichotomies of Euro-centrism.

What were the dichotomies of Euro-centrism? Western science is geometric, non-western science is algebraic and algorithmic. Western science is theoretic, formal, deductive, and non-western science is experiential, it is a lower kind of science. They went on to reproduce the same dichotomies but they had changed the hierarchy. In the western hierarchy, the western model was above and the non-western was below, so now you just switched it all around.

The question of developing an adequate response to regional centrism brings us to the core of how to produce a global history of science that is cognitively just and premised on the idea of an egalitarianism of knowledge. One of the ways out is to use the developments and resources of several disciplines, not just the history of science. Sandra Harding, for one, has suggested that social studies of science have been fortunate enough to benefit from the intersection of three disciplines the sociology of scientific knowledge, the feminist philosophy of science and postcolonial theory.

At this junction we have a new theory of science, its history and transmission. From the point of view of the theory of science, the old notion of science as something transcendental was to be replaced by science that was context-bound. As far as history is concerned, Euro-centrism was to be replaced by multi-centrism. So if you look at a map of knowledge, how will it be transformed? From arrows, which point inexorably in one

direction to arrows that point in multiple directions, constituting a network of knowledge producers. This is what may be considered a good heuristic, a path along which to think about a frame for the global history of science.

At the ground level, other kind of changes are taking place that offer other kinds of opportunities or challenges for rethinking science and society, science and history. The west, for one, has been reckoning with the pressures of multi-culturalism; a pressure that is reflected in the revisions of pedagogy for schools and college. How does one devise a pedagogy that would fruitfully draw upon the cultural resources of the various communities that constitute the citizenry of contemporary nation states? A society such as ours, that had traditionally reckoned with its multicultural character, is moving the other way, seeking to collapse this cultural diversity in favour of some imagined cultural homogeneity.

On the other hand, science is a globalising force: institutions, norms and procedures for the evaluation of scientific results are acquiring a degree of uniformity across the world. This is possible as several local knowledges are enlisted in the project of universal science. The universality of science is not something given, it is not something fixed forever. In fact it is something that keeps evolving as more cultures are drawn towards its core. In that sense, as Susantha Goonatilake has argued in a book called *Towards Global Science*, local knowledge contains the possibility of enriching contemporary science by providing metaphors that can budge scientists out of their standardised grooves of thinking. There is a nice section in the book on the mathematics of artisans in Chennai; about developments in economic history along the lines of world systems theory; about a sociologist working with theories of multiple modernities suggesting that there is no one modernity, there are many modernities. Consequently, the myth of the purity of an Indian science or a Greek science makes little sense.

The evolution of the history of science has taught us a number of lessons that should guide us as we move towards global history. We should be careful not to substitute one regional or continental centrism for another. The socially embedded nature of scientific knowledge indicates to us that knowledge is produced by and within the knowledge of communities, and not merely by heroic scientists. Thus far the history of science has been deeply influenced and shaped by the trajectory of the physical sciences, but today the biological and the information sciences are in the ascendant and we may possibly have other kinds of stories appearing.

The medieval Arab philosopher Al Karaji provided both history and history of science with an important guideline. I quote: "I am happy for those for whom the lightning strikes in the east and those for whom the lightning strikes in the west. The important thing is not where the lightning strikes, but that the lightning does strike."

Balachandra Rao

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Science, Astrology and National Identity

This question of astrology and national identity is of immediate topical interest to all of us in India. You know of the controversial directive from the Central government[4] and the University Grants Commission (UGC) to introduce so-called Vedic astrology, and other things of a similar nature, in our universities. Some of you may be aware that people have been propagating Vedic mathematics; you may even have been students of it, or you must be curious about it.

"Vedic astrology" is not a term used by astrologers themselves they are not that fussy about what they are doing. It is the politicians who are calling it that, and are almost forcing it as a subject into our universities. Astrologers simply call it *jyotisha vidya*. "Vedic astrology" is a phrase coined by the Central government, which is propagating the subject. Actually there is nothing Vedic about it. None of the Vedas has anything to do with planetary astrology at all. They don't give any details about astrology, or predictions of how planets influence human lives. Not that they were not aware of planets; in fact there are mantras in the Rig Veda which refer to Jupiter and Venus. Jupiter is referred to as Brahaspati; it is also called Guru because of its weight and size.

One of the mantras in the Rig Veda says that when Guru or Brahaspati occupies the *tishya nakshatra*, that is an auspicious day for performing rites and rituals. As you know, the Vedic people were essentially preoccupied with the performance of *yajnas* for material and spiritual gain. Also in the Rig Veda is another mantra, which says that a particular day is an auspicious one for a young girl to be given away in marriage. However, such references are very few in number, and they concentrate exclusively on the position of the moon in certain *nakshatras*.

The belief that the planets exercise an influence on us is not of Indian origin, that is what I want to stress, and hence it is not Vedic; none of the Vedas speaks about these things. The earliest astronomical text that we have in India is called the *Vedanga Jyotisha*, which is supposed to have been composed about fifteen centuries before Christ. We know this from

4 In 2001, at the time of this workshop, the Bharatiya Janata Party was in power and pushing its Hindutva ideology in education Editor.

internal evidence: a text might contain references to a star occupying a certain position, and so on, based on which it is possible to date it. The *Vedanga Jyotisha* belongs to around 1500 BC, and it is purely an astronomical text. It contains no reference whatever to the influence of heavenly bodies on human life. There is no mention of any planets besides the sun and the moon, although they could see Jupiter and Venus. Nor is there any mention of *varas* or days (*somvara, mangalvara).* Those are of much later origin.

If it were a theoretical discussion, of academic interest only, one could afford to be indifferent. However, when such beliefs are very much there in the minds of people, in our households and in our social set-up, then you know how much havoc they can cause. Especially in the southern states like Tamil Nadu, such beliefs go deep and they seriously affect the lives of young people. There is a peculiar belief about *Rahu* and *Ketu*. Now *Rahu* and *Ketu* by themselves are not physical bodies, they are not planets. They are points of intersection of two orbits, the ecliptic (i.e. the apparent path of the sun around the earth in the course of the year) and the lunar orbit. These two points of intersection are called *Rahu* and *Ketu* in Indian astronomy. In modern astronomy, they are referred to On each weekday, for an hour and a half, this *Rahu kala* will be there. A weekday is itself an artificial concept; it is not based on natural phenomena. A lunar month is based on a natural phenomenon from full moon day to full moon day is a lunar month. A year is also a natural phenomenon. The week, on the other hand, is arbitrary and manmade for convenience, like our watches, which do not show us natural time. For the sake of convenience and to avoid any confusion, all of us have adopted Indian Standard Time, but to ascribe any divine or ghostly characteristics to our watches would be rather foolish. Yet that is exactly what is done with regard to weekdays that such and such day is unlucky, and so on.

This astrology is not Vedic at all. Then what is the origin of this *jyotisha*? This is of interest to all of us. Even if you are not a believer, they might introduce this subject in your universities tomorrow and, who knows, if the same government continues, they might make it compulsory. *Jyotisha* is a word that in India is used to mean astrology. This word exclusively used to mean astronomy. From the first astronomical text, the *Vedanga Jyotisha,* till several centuries later, it meant only that. After about the fifth century, something went wrong. Our people imported many ideas that were not conducive to our development, philosophical, social or scientific. This was 200-300 years before Aryabhatta, who was one of our top astronomers and mathematicians. In fact, Aryabhatta made the study of astronomy systematic around the beginning of the sixth century. During that period, he composed a text called *Aryabhattam.* In it, he does not say anything about astrology either; it is exclusively a mathematical and astronomical text. An edition was published by INSA, the Indian National Science Academy, to celebrate the fifth centenary of Aryabhatta's birth. It is a beautiful text, with English translations and mathematical explanations.

For some time after Alexander's invasion of India there were Greek influences. Local chieftains of Greek origin were still around, ruling petty regions near the entrance to India by road. During that period, there was an exchange of ideas between ancient India and ancient Greece. Many Greek scholars did visit India; they brought in Greek ideas of philosophy and science. Indian thought, too, seems to have travelled. So the first and second centuries AD was a fertile period when a lot of unnecessary things were imported to India, and one such was astrology, which took root in our soil and permeated into the social life of our people.

The very first text of predictive astrology is called *Yavana Jatakam*. *Yavana* is a word usually used to mean Greeks, or people of foreign origin. This text, of Greek origin but written in Sanskrit, deals with the usual topics dealt with in astrology: what happens when a planet occupies a house; what happens when Saturn is in the eighth house, and so on.

Later, virtually exact copies of this text began to appear under different names. One of the earliest contributors to this field was Varahamihira. He was a junior contemporary of Aryabhatta in the beginning of the sixth century. Varahamihira was a great scholar, and historians tell us that he was the court astronomer and scientist in the court of King Vikramaditya. Varahamihira is respected; I too am an admirer of his. Unfortunately, he propagated and developed a subject that does not deserve as much respect from us in the modern context. He composed three important texts. One is purely astronomical, the *Pancha Siddhantika*, which refers to the five systems of astronomy that were being practised in India during this time mainly for religious purposes. He acknowledges that two of these systems are of foreign origin, the *Romaka Siddhanta* and the *Paulish Siddhanta*. The remaining three are of Indian origin, or so he says. Among these, the *Surya Siddhanta* is the best, most scientific one. Even today, as some of you might know, the *Surya Siddhanta* is a very popular astronomical text and is used to make the *panchanga* which lists the *nakshatras*, planetary positions, eclipses, and so on.

Another, unfortunate text he wrote, is the purely astrological *Brihad Jatakam*. *Jatakam* in the Hindu context means horoscope, where planetary positions are given at the time of one's birth. *Jata* means "to be born". Whatever planetary configuration is there at the time of birth is displayed in the horoscope, and 95 per cent or more Hindus believe very strongly that the horoscope decides one's life. I am here to counter that belief. I am a staunch disbeliever, and we don't have any scientific evidence to accept it.

First of all, the subject itself is not of Indian origin. We might say that it is all right; there are many subjects in the modern science we study today that are not of Indian origin. However, historically speaking, due to cultural values, science developed differently in different areas.

Here we had an essentially religion-oriented society, and for that purpose they did develop certain things. The development of European astronomy was more out of curiosity, and also for the sake of utility. For example, knowing the beginning of seasons was necessary for agriculturalists, and direction was necessary for navigators. In India, too, there were agriculturalists, there were navigators, there were traders; they too wanted to know about directions and times, and for that purpose they did develop astronomy, but the stress was still on the religious utility of astronomy. Even geometry, for that matter, developed for the purpose of creating the *yajna bhoomikas* or sacrificial altars.

Until recently in our universities, we had astronomy as one of the papers in the mathematics syllabus. Now, unfortunately, most universities have driven away astronomy, though it is a very interesting subject. The physics people were sensible in grabbing a part of astronomy, and they have been teaching it under astrophysics. In the Indian tradition, astronomy was the major subject and mathematics was considered a part of it; it was treated as a handmaiden of astrology because, for astronomical calculations, you need mathematics, algebra, trigonometry etc. Four or five chapters in each of the Indian astronomical texts are devoted to mathematics.

This had many advantages and disadvantages. The advantage was that any branch of mathematics that was useful to astronomy was developed, but they ignored those branches that were not of immediate utility either for astronomy or for religious purposes. Thus mathematics in this country received a severe blow. For example, a subject like number theory was ignored except by a few freaks here and there; the "Ramanujan type" of mathematics did not develop here for a long time. The abstract branches of mathematics did not develop here, though the Indian brain is generally noted for abstract things otherwise our people could not have produced such wonderful philosophies as *Advaita*. Here is a country where our people were capable of producing very abstract things, yet when it came to a subject like mathematics, which called for good logic and good abstraction, they did not do it. They made it purely utilitarian, and circumscribed it to kill its further development. On the other hand, when it came to borrowing knowledge from other civilisations, Indians were quick to borrow astrology from the ancient Greeks and Babylonians and adopt it as their own.

Our Indian culture is pluralistic. When Jainism and Buddhism developed, they were accommodated and respected. Many ideas from other civilisations were absorbed into our system. One of the postulates of Hindu religion and of Indian civilisation has been to absorb all the good things from other systems and to make them ours. And today there are fanatical people who are trying to impose on everybody the idea that what "we", that is, Hindus, have done is the best, and what "we" are propagating is the best, and everybody has

to adopt that. This is not a healthy trend at all; it is not our nature at all. By nature, Hindu religion is very understanding and elastic. Not just religious beliefs, the ancient Indians made even scientific ideas and other kinds of ideas from elsewhere their own; Sanskrit texts were written about these.

You are welcome to read astrology for fun, but if the predictions affect you in some way, it might be better not to read them at all. The predictions in Indian language dailies are based on *rashi*, and in the English dailies they use "sun signs" like Gemini, Sagittarius etc. Again, *rashi* as a concept is not of Indian origin. In none of our earlier texts is it mentioned; only the *nakshatra* system is mentioned. Varahamihira is honest in acknowledging that this is of foreign origin.

The *Brihad Samhita* is a bulky, encyclopaedic text, and many modern scientists in India respect it and obtain information from it on meteorology, gemmology, zoology etc. There are also many foolish beliefs in the text. Being a Brahmin, the author says that when a *dvija* (twice-born) practices astrology, it is a matter of even greater respect. Now I am also a Brahmin by birth and so I think I have the right to criticise our practices! Anyway, this was an unfortunate thing, that the *dvijas* spent all their lives studying a subject like astrology. However, the priestly classes were clever; it was a livelihood for them. They could read your horoscope and tell you that if you didn't perform this rite or ritual then something would go wrong.

The ancient Indians made some remarkable contributions to astronomy and mathematics. But in the process, a section of them developed this predictive astrology, much to the detriment of intellectual life in this country. I harbour annoyance towards our ancients in one respect: when they borrowed from the Greeks and others, did they not have better things to borrow than astrology? As a mathematician, I somehow cannot excuse the fact that they did not borrow Euclid's geometry, which was developed as early as the third century BC, when Alexander invaded this country. Instead they embraced this rubbish called astrology because it satisfied their curiosity and granted livelihoods to a certain section of the society.

What is the argument given by the government for introducing this subject in the universities? The newspapers said the reason was that there was a demand from NRIs for people who could prepare horoscopes, and they also needed priests in temples and for carrying out various religious rituals. So now this country is trying to export *purohits* and astrologers. This is why the Central Government chose to take on the task of training people in astrology in universities. As a person associated with universities, and being a teacher myself, what irritates me is that it is our lives that get affected immediately. In the

budget re-allotment and the UGC grants, there have been heavy cuts in funding for higher education, which refers to college and university level education.

Vedanga Jyotisha is a branch of study in Sanskrit colleges. We are agnostic; let the priests study this if they want to, it is one of the *shastras*. Unfortunately, what has happened is that numbers are dwindling in the Sanskrit colleges. Earlier, the children of priests went to Sanskrit schools; today they are not interested. They want to be modern and want to earn a respectable livelihood, so they go for modern education. So who is going to these Sanskrit *pathshalas?* In Tirupati there is a Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth established by the Central government. I am supposed to be a member of the Board of Studies there. The complaint of the teachers is that the better students don't come. Those who do are not at all motivated. Hence teachers also lose interest, and make no contribution to their branch of knowledge.

Now the government wants to start all these subjects in universities. To be a mathematician or physicist, you need to study those subjects for many years. You need to be associated with research projects and research organisations, and whatever salary a Central government employee draws, the same salary is given to a university or college professor. However, here is a new subject that you can just obtain training in for a month or two, and then you can practise it and earn a lot of money. You just need to be able to play on a person's psychology. The danger is that if universities introduce such courses then anybody, with no discipline of learning, will be a potential astrologer.

You might think that there must be some scientific basis for the influence of planets on human life. The usual argument given is gravitation. Tides are caused in the sea and the ocean by gravitation. On a new moon day, the sun and the moon are in the same direction with respect to the earth, so they pull at the waters on its surface. On the full moon day, the sun and moon are on opposite sides with respect to the earth, and again a similar phenomenon takes place. Thus, the sun and moon cause a great deal of physical activity on our planet, so how could they not be causing similar upheavals in our lives? In fact, why only the sun and then moon? Gravitation is caused by other planets also. In calculating planetary positions, we account for what are called "perturbations", or the influence of heavenly bodies on each other due to gravitation. These are all taken into consideration in astronomy. But what makes you think that this gravitation may cause a person's getting educated or not, living for long or not? The proponents of astrology are incapable of giving any explanation of how gravitation influences our day-to-day affairs in any way, besides affecting the physical environment.

Secondly, these proponents of astrology have been telling us that the planets exert other types of influences as well. They talk about infrared rays and other such rays. All that is

bunkum, any physicist can tell you that light is not emitted by any of these planets, which only reflect the sun's light. Even if there were such rays and we have instruments to measure them what influence could they possibly have on us?

Traditionally, people have always been saying that you can't apply the methods of science to a branch like astrology, because astrology was developed by our *rishis,* our ancient seers, who saw all this in their visions. I am not discrediting the spiritual experience of these seers. However, like I said earlier, you don't come across such things in Vedic literature. If they were truly discovered by Vedic *rishis*, they would have recorded such things.

Student: This is what I have heard, but I am not sure whether it is true. They say that Brahma had given a curse to Bhrigu Rishi and that is why no astrologer has 100 per cent correct predictions, five or ten per cent goes wrong. Whatever goes right is because of the astrologer; whatever goes wrong is because of the curse.

Rao: Not just 5 per cent or 10 per cent, but more than 50 per cent! This myth is a very clever device that our people have made. Whenever anything goes wrong, blame it on the curse, and when something goes right, talk about the greatness of astrology. In modern statistics you know anything will anyway have a 50 per cent probability. Like they say, "*Pancha bhavati, pancha na bhavati*" ("Five will happen, five will not happen").

Coming back to examining the scientific basis of astrology, one might say, could it not have developed as a statistical science? In many disciplines, like demography, one cannot make any predictions based on biological or physical parameters. However, it is possible that over a century or so, the human population has grown in a certain way in a certain society, and this can be expressed in a mathematical equation. This makes it possible to make approximate guesses to predict the human population in India, for example, by 2050. Planning is done based on those predictions. So why can't it be that astrology has also developed through statistical data? But even here we do no find any evidence for the validity of astrology. The author of an astrological work here does not say that he himself has done something. Instead, he tends to say his predecessors did it and he is only propagating it. So in a subject where scientific investigation is necessary and one's own experience is also necessary, they attribute most phenomena to the fact that their predecessors also said so. Just because somebody said something a 1,000 or 2,000 years ago, should I accept it?

Now remember that in ancient times, it was mostly the Brahmins who were using horoscopes for fixing marriages etc. Later, other castes started using them. In the days of Varahamihira, this was confined to the priestly class most of whom lived in villages. In a small village there would be very few Brahmins, and they did not have the kind of communication with other places that we have today. So the Brahmins could only have

studied the people close to their own homes, and from a mere two or three instances, they would arrive at what combination of stars and planets lay behind a particular phenomenon. Some combinations given in the texts happen very rarely, and some are, in fact, astronomically impossible.

In astronomy, you know that Mercury and Venus (the so-called inferior planets) can't go beyond a particular angular distance from the sun. However, Varahamihira has given a couple of combinations where the angles of Mercury and Venus to the sun are more than the scientifically allowable distance. How could an astronomer like him make this mistake? As I said, the astrologers generally gave combinations like those given by their predecessors. Even Rama's horoscope is mentioned in the first chapter, the *Balakanda*: here it says that four planets were in exalted positions at Rama's birth. The general belief is that if a large number of planets are in exalted positions, the person will be rather great. It is interesting to date an event based on the horoscope, to go back and check when that combination could have happened. So is it possible to go back and check when Rama was born? This is a challenge to Murli Manohar Joshi and his tribe. Even dating Rama's birth is not possible, and that combination is not astronomically possible. Just because astrology says that when planets are in exalted positions then the person born at that time is great, some astrologer must have thought it worthwhile to make it appear as though many planets were in exalted positions, so that Rama could be wonderful. So it is obviously a concocted horoscope.

Today even events in the *Mahabharata* are being dated on the basis of astronomical references. Let me tell you (and traditional scholars agree with this), the *Mahabharata* that is available to us is not the original text at all. Originally, this text was called the *Jai Samhita*, which was about the feud between two groups of cousins; this was made into a wonderful *kavya* by Vyasa or whoever. Vyasa is a possible pseudonym, because in tradition all the Puranas are supposed to be composed by Vyasa; he is possibly just an editor, and he goes on changing. Over the years, the *Jai Samhita* became larger as more and more *shlokas* were added, and it was called *Bharata*. Finally it became the *Mahabharata*. Maybe a student of astronomy will think of studying the planetary combinations in the *Mahabharata* and attempt to date the events. But this is an impossible task, because those references were incorporated later on; it is all spurious inclusion.

Discussion

Student: Is it true that all astrologers, including the priests and pundits, are only trying to cheat people? I think there must be some genuine persons among them.

Rao: I m not saying everything they do is to cheat people; they might be staunch believers. As a well wisher, the family astrologer might ask that you give the horoscope of the boy or

girl, he does it all in good faith perhaps, and not with the intention of cheating you. But the more relevant question is, should this be done? I will say, kindly do not allow this to happen. Unfortunately, in our Hindu society, too many alliances are marred on the basis of this horoscope business.

Student: There is a sudden boost in books by Nostradamus in the wake of the recent attacks of America, and everybody wants to know whether this is a sign of the next world war. What do you have to say about that?

Rao: Nostradamus lived in the seventeenth century. He was a French medical practitioner and he was known to have made predictions. He wrote a book called *Centuries*, which was full of four-liners or something like that and was written in old French. So a modern French reader may not understand the old text. What is done is that those four-liners are translated into various languages, including English. The funny thing about Nostradamus's prophecies is that different people interpret them differently. We don't know what Nostradamus really meant, whether he was really prophetic or otherwise. The statements are vague, and somebody interprets them to suit a current event. Invariably, they give these interpretations after the event is over. Why don't they predict exactly what will happen next year in November, December, and so on?

Astrologers are also like that. If you look at the issues of astrological magazines, they say things like, "Top politician in India will be in trouble." Who is "top politician" in India? Except you and me, everybody is a politician! In the eyes of the people of Bihar, Laloo Prasad Yadav is as great a politician as Atal Bihari Vajpayee. So somebody or the other could have some trouble or the other.

With regard to Nostradamus, there is another interesting thing. People give their own interpretations depending on their ideology. There is an interesting book written by a RSS man, and being an RSS man he has interpreted Nostradamus as predicting that all the Islamic countries will be destroyed. Now that writer might be giving himself a pat on his back, as some sort of aggression is going on against the Islamic countries. I am sure they will not get destroyed, but he uses Nostradamus to predict that the entire Islamic world will be destroyed because this is what he wants. In fact, he even says that Hinduism will be the ruler of the world.

Student: This workshop is about "science as a site of culture", so we are talking about how one needs to view science in the context of culture. So when we analyse the old texts, we need to place them in that cultural context. I don't think it is possible to apply contemporary beliefs to old texts. Are we liberal enough to acknowledge that context, and analyse those texts in those cultural contexts?

Rao: I am of your viewpoint. For example, take the Vedas. The Vedas were composed 4,000-5,000 years ago and they have recorded the feelings, experiences, hopes and beliefs of the time. We can't stand here in the twenty-first century and condemn those people because many of their beliefs are not ours, or because according to our modern beliefs their beliefs are not okay. Even today we have certain beliefs, certain ideologies, even in science, that are subject to correction. Whatever Galileo did was later improved upon by Newton, and whatever theory was put forth by Newton was corrected by Einstein. Einstein's theory is also subject to correction. In the nineteenth century, physicists arrogantly believed that everything could be and is determined by following the laws of physics. But now in the twentieth century, it is all more statistically oriented.

I would like to assure you that we are being broadminded, and who are we really to be broadminded? We must respect the cultural development of those times. However, if those things are influencing our lives adversely today, should we then still subject ourselves to those beliefs? There we have a reason to have our own opinion.

Student: As an extension to the previous question, in this workshop we are discussing the method of science and ways of looking at a subject. We have this modern scientific method, and the ancients must have had another perspective, a more holistic outlook. So wouldn't the knowledge of the old ways actually broaden our whole perspective of science?

Rao: Scientific compartmentalisation and thinking only from the modern viewpoint of physics are incorrect. In any context, a society's development is based on its essential values. The value system here in ancient India was different from the value system in ancient Greece. I have no right to condemn my ancients for not developing mathematics in the way the Greeks did. Rather, I am unhappy that they did not borrow some good geometry as well, while borrowing many other things. Here, in our texts, they have not given proofs for the results of every theorem. A proof is necessary for a theorem. If you go into Indian geometry, see the post-Vedic literature on geometry, you see beautiful geometrical results, but no proofs are given. Now I cannot stand here today, being educated in the English way, and have a judgement on the authors of those books. They had their system of thinking; if they did not, they could not have given us these results.

Student: What according to you is the threat to national identity? Subjects like astrology whose scientific basis is not established, if they are introduced in universities, in what way would this affect our national identity?

Rao: To identify India as Hindu India is very detrimental to our development. There are many faiths practised in this society; India is a pluralistic society. Not just now, it has been this way since ancient times. We had the homogenous society of the Vedic culture and we

had heterodox systems also, thanks to Jains, Buddhists, Tantriks, Lokayatas etc.

Sometimes one system would overpower the other systems, and there were many unfortunate historical events such as when the Brahmins destroyed Buddhist monasteries. A speaker I heard recently commented on how Adi Shankaracharya was responsible for destroying Buddhist literature, Buddhist monasteries etc. In Karnataka, the Jains destroyed Lingayat literature and vice versa. Unfortunately, this enmity and intolerance have also been there in history.

As far as national identity is concerned, it appears to be under threat right now. Though Hindus form the majority, you cannot deny the importance of minority rights as well. Our Indian Constitution declares that ours is a socialist, secular state; it is not a Hindu country. The Indian nation we have today is a pluralistic society, it is a secular society. To impose any majority opinion on others is unfair.

"Vedic astrology" is just a name; it is a fashion amongst the rulers at the centre to prefix everything with "Vedic" because it pleases the sentiments of a major section of society and impresses them. Why don't they instead respect the things that are actually there in the Vedas? The civilisation that developed in that period is historically and culturally of great value. However, it is unfair to impose this on a large section, on the entire nation.

Installation by Baiju Parthan and K Sridhar

Baiju Parthan is a visual artist. His art practice revolves around information technology and its impact on perception and meaning generation. Parthan's myriad academic inputs include a diploma in comparative mythology, computer programming, graphics and animation

K Sridhar is a faculty member of the Department of Theoretical Physics, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai. He is currently working on theoretical formulations about the structure and dynamics of the cosmos at very tiny length and time scales. Sridhar belongs to that race of scientists who believe in close interactions and overlaps between sciences and arts.

Note on practical exercises:

Leap Across and Into: Delving into the Limits of Art and Science

Art and Science. Traditionally compartmentalised. Conventionally separated. Historically kept apart. As expression and knowledge. Respectively.

Though each has its unique engagement with the elemental, the universal, the cosmological and each also has its own history with these engagements, it is becoming necessary for those engaged in one to engage with the other in order to gain further depth into the larger picture of human existence. Though practitioners in both fields maintain boundaries very carefully in order to survive in their accepted disciplinary grids, recent efforts are being made by scientists and artists to collaborate and produce spaces that do not fit either into accepted notions of art and would not conventionally classify as an expression of science. These spaces express the interstices between art and science.

Leap Across and Into is one such effort. What is interesting is that it does not seek mere intersections and interfaces, but strives for deeper connections that require delving into the limits of both art and science. Since Parthan combines elements of science in his art and Sridhar's road to physics has been through philosophy, a degree of metaphysical orientation holds their dialogues together. The fact that elemental, universal and cosmological questions deeply engage both of them has made it possible for them to connect with each other, leading to this experimental venture, probably the first of its kind in India.

Though their reading of things varies not only according to their chosen modes of expression but also due to their personal trajectories, it is the possibility of transcendence

Installation at Tata Theatre foyer

Installation Drawing

Installation at Tata Theatre foyer

Installation at the Tata Theatre foyer in the presence of the students

from the given that appeals to both in their own and the others' work. Sridhar thinks that science "like almost any other human activity, starts from the given and tries to understand that given in terms of an abstract realm of matter". Where science differs from many other human endeavours, he says, is "in the fact that it constructs several levels of abstraction in its efforts to understand the universe and some of these levels are, indeed, very far removed from the given". Broadly, he feels, "One could bring some structure into the amorphous reality that science is, by distinguishing two modes in which science (again, taken as a whole) operates. On the one hand, there are domains of science that are driven further and further away into the realm of the abstract (what may be called the movement inward) and, on the other, there are domains in which the attempt is to reconstruct the world of the *given* by starting from some, usually not so far-removed abstract level (the movement outward). Since neither of these domains are exclusive, very often in scientific activity the movement away from the *given* and towards the *given* both exist."

For Parthan, "art and art making is a point of departure from the continuum of activities that we recognise as everyday reality of life and living". Art, he says, "breaks this numbing continuum and introduces new meanings and perspectives that we may or may not eventually assimilate into our life, thus expanding our range of experiences. But when art stops happening to a culture or civilisation, we could rightfully say that there is stagnation. As an agent that ushers in new perspectives and meanings I do believe that art is a way of acquiring knowledge but not the empirical kind of verifiable knowledge".

Given these inclinations towards their pursuits, what they both naturally chose to express, amongst other things, through this installation is gravity, which is not only a phenomenon that grounds, locates and determines human existence but which is also probably one of the central concepts in science. As Parthan says, "Gravity is. It is an a priori knowledge. Gravity is practically woven into each and every fiber of our being. It shapes our decisions and choices without our knowing it. Something that is rarely acknowledged, but is always there. Skyscrapers are an expression of our defiance of gravity. And the country which houses the tallest building expresses its status quo by using it as an emblem of its might."

Further, everyday language itself is packed with references to gravity. We fall in love by succumbing to it; we rise in glory by going beyond that force which pins us down. We use expressions like gravity of a situation to denote its extreme importance. Let us also not forget, he says, that "airplanes, space travel, and most importantly bungee jumping, scaling vertical rock faces and mountains are expressions of our need to transcend a gravity-bound existence".

Sridhar says, "The reasons for converging on gravity as one of the themes of the installation are manifold and, at an apparent level, disjoint. Firstly, gravity is one of the most important concerns of physics. This is so because even though gravity was the first interaction to be understood, that understanding was limited to the macroscopic domain and we still do not have a proper understanding of gravity in the micro-world. Secondly, it is intimately tied to the issue of cosmology and is also responsible for exotic phenomena like black holes, whose appeal extends to non-scientists, as well. Thirdly, gravity is what imposes on us the notions of up and down and these have consequences which go far beyond the realms of physics into language, and at a larger level, into culture for example, notions such as up and down and rise and fall get culturally invested with new meanings which may well extend beyond the limited meaning that these concepts have in science."

Leaps Across and Into is an active collaboration between a professional artist and a professional scientist. Though critical of the gaze of science both aim at a larger empathetic synthesis that would provide fresher insights and richer windows into the multiplicity and complexity of things. One could say, as Parthan does, that "the gaze of science to me appears to go against the commonsense notions of the world, but seems to be edging closer to the world views of the shaman/poet/philosopher, a world that exists beyond and refuses to be contained within the syntax of language". Or as Sridhar puts it, "The particular gaze of science which reveals the world of scientific truths is not necessarily disjoint with others and ultimately there could be convergence of different world-views from science, art and literature. The attempt of this installation is to work towards such a convergence."

Chayanika Shah and Shalini Mahajan

Chayanika Shah is a physicist and teaches at G.D Somaiya College of Science and Commerce. She is an active member of the women's movement and health movement since '80s. She is the co-author of We and Our Fertility: the Politics of Technological Intervention.

Shalini Mahajan is a freelance writer and queer feminist activitist.

Note on practical exercises:

History Timeline

The popular understanding of science is that it is an objective study of nature and follows a set "scientific method". It is commonly portrayed as the discipline that tries to unravel the truth following a set pattern and building around some basic laws of nature. The progress of science is also seen as a result of the contribution from a series of extraordinary minds and geniuses who in turn are portrayed as "men" devoid of any social context. As a result important theories and discoveries in science are most often understood as "ideas whose people had come" rather than "ideas whose time had come".

In actuality the practice of science does not happen in a vacuum and in some sense it is also a cultural expression. It is as affected by other disciplines and the social situation and in that sense is as subjective as any other discipline of knowledge. At the same time it also has an influence on the happenings around us and the growth of other knowledges in multiple ways. This has been true all along and has been reflected in the kinds of people who have been practitioners of science in all societies and cultures men, very often upper class or those with the patronage of the powers to be. In recent histories the kind of money that is needed for major research projects, this has become more of a reality.

In some sense then a study of the social histories along with a study of science would help understand the process of "science" in more realistic and fulfilling ways. In most syllabi and teaching of sciences, however, the popular notions of science and the scientific method prevail. As a result of this while doing traditional science teaching, most often the social and cultural histories are not considered. At the same time while other disciplines do look at their socio-cultural contexts, and hence do look at the impact of science and technology, their impact on the growth of science is not really looked at very carefully.

Keeping this in mind, we felt that for the course it would be interesting to do an exercise through which the students at least get some sense of what kinds of events and ideas are contemporary in diverse fields and to also explore and try and find if there are any possible causalities to explain their growths. The idea was to start this as an exploration so that (a) some connections could be hypothesised and (b) more importantly the idea of the existence of these connections itself could be explored. We are aware that sometimes the connections thus made could imply a causality that never really worked but is being superimposed as a hindsight. In spite of this we believed that this would be an exercise worth doing if it as much as indicated that some things do happen together because they emanate from the same social, economic and cultural backdrop and this is as important a reason as the fact that at that time there was a person who was born with brilliant ideas.

The concept and the preparation

Three of us conceived of this exercise together and used our "expertise" in our different disciplines to build on the process. All of us had some experience of formal teaching at the level of undergraduate students and were also interested in pedagogy in our own ways. The three disciplines that we represented were English Literature, History and Physics. Over many discussions we figured the differences in the ways that we had been trained in our disciplines and also the way in which we could try and do this exercise.

We all felt that the first half of the twentieth century was a very crucial period for all of us and so we decided to look at this period which eventually expanded to the whole hundred years from the mid nineteenth to the mid twentieth century. Each of us made lists of events that we found were vital for the growth of the discipline and/or also had a significant impact on the world. We acknowledged our subjectivities and completely based ourselves in the progressive, feminist politics that we believed in and practised.

We sat with our lists and looked at some of the connections, some of which were obvious and others somewhat more obtuse. Some of these connections have been well explored and documented while others could be created given one's understanding and knowledge of the events and ideas in question. Literature, art history and social sciences have developed a wealth of material on looking at the connections between developments in various disciplines and the socio-political and cultural developments. Science history has not incorporated this method of understanding history and developments within a discipline to such an extent.

For example, the first two decades of the twentieth century saw several new ways ofunderstanding and representing the material world as well as humankind as such. While developments in quantum physics brought in notions of probability and uncertainty into the older Newtonian deterministic world and thus changed how we understood reality, developments in Jungian and Freudian psychology tried to unravel the inner workings of the human mind. These developments had parallel and sometimes directly causal impacts on art and literature, whether it be the "stream of consciousness" novel of which "Ulysses" is the most well-known work or whether it be the various movements in art from cubism to jazz. Students of twentieth century literature, in the course of their work, study these developments in science and psychology, but it is rare that students of science are exposed to these developments in art and literature. They also see it as impact of ideas of science on the arts and literature rather than independent and simultaneous events.

We looked at such other connections through the century and then selected some fifty odd such events. We made our own connected stories with them, some explored earlier and read by us and some that we were recognising as we were discussing. Through this exercise, we wanted to present to the students the possibility of having a multi-layered context to look into the developments in science. To see that it was possible to see strings of connections between political events, scientific inventions and the art forms. The purpose was not to provide a history lesson, as that would be a project that would require time and energy not possible in a short course. The purpose was to have fun while trying to seek what connections may have existed within seemingly disparate events/works.

To do this we decided that this could be done only as a group exercise. Brief write ups giving the basic idea of the event/its significance or a short excerpt or description, were printed on small separate cards (size 4" by 6") and sets of these cards were given to each group. We deliberately did not give the dates to the students. The groups had then to discuss the information given, create/understand/formulate connections based on this and their own knowledge, and present to the group the strings that they were able to create and the reasoning behind them. Finally the three of us would share some of our strings with them.

What happened at the workshop

The full exercise was given almost three hours of which the first hour and a half

was given to the groups for discussion and the rest of the time for sharing of their mappings and discussion. It took some time for the groups to figure out what was actually expected of them. After many discussions with the three of us who were moving around and many energetic discussions amongst them on various issues which ranged from clarifying what the card meant to sharing of their views and knowledge, they put up their cards on the boards given to them in some sort of a plan which indicated the connections they had formed.

Of the four groups that were formed, one did a literal word association exercise; that is, they started off with one central card and then went off from there connecting it in all directions to others that had words that literally meant the same/or set off some association in their head, without taking the whole event into account. The other groups tried to do a more chronological exercise and if while doing so they did not know the exact sequence, they actually used some of the connections to place events together assuming that these were related. This was in accordance with what we thought would happen and it was interesting to see how students from different disciplines gave information to each other to establish the connections.

At the end, however, there wasn't enough time for us to put forth the way in which we had grouped these cards in a chronological and yet bunched manner to show the events that happened simultaneously and seemed to impact each other. We hence decided to put our set of cards also on a display board and leave it for the students to read and explore through the next day after which we had a brief discussion on the various strings that we had woven together.

We pointed out the various connections that we thought existed and threads that we saw running through of the histories of the world moving from imperialism to nationalism, of various disciplines moving from the obvious and the macro to the not so visible and the micro, of the stories of wars moving from colonial wars to world wars and the role of technology within them and the growth of the story of the atom alongside them, of the acknowledgement in diverse disciplines of multiplicity of views, and such like.

The time for this discussion was, however, very short and we were not able to get enough feedback from the students on what they thought was different in the way this narrative was being built and how they had been listening to history of science in particular.

(This exercise was conceived, planned and conducted by Amrita Shodhan, Shalini Mahajan and Chayanika Shah and this write up has been prepared by Shalini and Chayanika.)

Schedule

30th October
Introduction by **Madhusree Dutta**
Inaugural Lecture: Nature and Science, **Dr. Vandana Shiva**
Slide Show and Talk on Powers of 10, **J.B. Mistry**
Questions of Philosophy: Scientific Answers? **K. Subrmaniam**
Visiting the Site of Installation: A Leap Into The Abyss Artist **Baiju Parthan** and Physicist **K. Sridhar**

31st October
Towards a Global History of Science: The Relationship Between Science,
its History and Theory of History , **Dhruv Raina**
Workshop on Mapping History and Science Tracing Evidence of Science and Technology
in India (with film clippings), **Chhandita Mukherjee**
Is There an Indian Scientist: Life of Ramanujan and Chandrasekhar: A Reading session

1st November
Science in the Coming Milliennium: A Sociological Reading, **J.P.S. Uberoi**
Colonial Science: Case of Epidemiology, **Mridula Ramanna**
Science, Popular Beliefs and Cinema, **Gayatri Chatterjee**
Feature Film Screening Structure of Crystal by **Krzysztof Zanussi**

2nd November
Panel Discussion Across Boundaries: Talking of Methods
Moderator: **Padma Prakash**, Discussants, **M.C. Arunan**, Biology Lecturer;
Bhargavi Davar, Mental Health Researcher; **Urjit Yagnik**, Physicist, **Amrita Shodhan**
Global Policies, Bodily Invasions: Technological Interventions in Reproduction,
Chayanika Shah
Modernism in Art, Scientific Patronage: an Analysis of Homi Bhabha's Art Collection: a Slide Show, **Vidya Kamat**
Revisiting the Installation / Open Session
Public Talk by **J.P.S. Uberoi** at the Godrej Dance Acadamy

3rd November

Science and Technology: The Connections and The Disconnections **Satyajit Rath**

Technology Development, Social Context and Ethics: The Case of The Nuclear Shadow, **Vineeta Bal**

Marxist Review of Science Practices, **Vivek Monteiro**

Documentary Film Screening: Asking Different Questions

Feminist Perspective on Science, **Chayanika Shah**

4th November

Science, Astrology and National Identity **S. Balachandra Rao**

Some Hoaxes, Some Wrong Theories: Stories from Science, **A. A. Rangwala**

Interactive Session: Lecture-Demonstration on Performance of Lilavati by **Jhelum Paranjape**

Students' Response

Mamta Murthy

Growing up, the Arts was about joining the Drama club or the Music club or the Literary club.. these were like separate planets, warring factions competing with each other. Hence when confronted with a content like that of Majlis student workshops one couldn't but marvel at its novelty and be appalled at how such an approach had never been a part of teaching at our schools and colleges. Here proponents of theatre, music and others spoke about the interdependence of their arts and outlined concerns in each which found echoes across disciplines. It is difficult to understand the implications of that today when even children go to M.A.D Music, Acting and Dance workshops but 10 years back this multi disciplinary approach was not articulated to us.

Another truly unique experience of being part of the workshops I remember was seeing obscure arts and artists becoming comprehensible, at least we began to understand that they employed languages which at first seem obscure but when you delve in, the effort in deciphering their codes were rewarded by sheer delight. The relationship between the artist and the audience could be a conversation, a hide and seek game, a discourse, and definitely not a mere transaction. Such works may not be easily digestible but it is this very quality that makes them so alluring and a life long engagement, not a passing fancy. It was as if layers of dust were wiped off an old wall to reveal an intricate mural, a true clearing of vision where all your battles with notions of tradition vs modernity, arts vs sciences, classical vs folk vs contemporary somehow seem to be worthwhile pursuits.

In a strange way, the workshops taught us more about politics than arts..how so much of our culture is affected by politics and culture is subliminally used or abused for political gains. Like women's bodies, so many political battles are fought in the realm of culture popular and otherwise. How the depictions of a benign god like Ram was modified to show him as a militant one to serve as combustible material for destruction of the Babri mosque. India was changing so quickly and rapidly in the 90s that I remember being terribly confused as to how identities, which we weren't too conscious of earlier, were beginning to define our relationships. Every year our colleges were shut down for religious riots or caste riots and even in our hitherto insulated urban existence, the cost we paid were in real terms of dead bodies, segregated townships and dying harmonious relationships. The enormity of this change; the various forces that had been at work for so many years in such insidious ways, in terrains that were cultural, sociological in nature became clear. To know was to be armed. These are tall claims but perhaps small efforts like these heralded the 21st century

and a refusal of communal claimants to our political space. Perhaps even led to the success of a forum like the World Social Forum here. Perhaps the use of culture in politics is a double edged sword and now its working to the disadvantage of divisive discourse. We live in hope.

Currently a filmmaker and Culture Activist

Gitika Talwar

The remarkable thing about attending a workshop like 'Science as a Site of Culture' is how everything that I had put past myself(considering it subjects out of my league), I now got a chance to hold again. As a student of psychology, I would often wonder whether there I had anything to say to 'exact science.' Psychology comes under the field of social science, and the nature of methods we use are difficult to make as rigorous as those used in exact sciences. Afterall, we deal with human beings who are somehow just not made of "exact stuff". This is exactly why, I realised later, that the science that humans produce is not always as exact as they might proclaim it to be. For example, the load of material we have on one topic in science(e.g. nuclear energy) and less on the other (e.g 'cure' for famines) could already point to the manner in which energies have been invested, which is in itself an indicator of how science is already biased by the time it reaches us.

At one point Chayanika Shah spoke about reproductive technologies and how we have more pills and less knowledge of something such as the rhythm method. There was a heated discussion that took place after the screening of "Feminist Perspectives on science" when people wondered whether asking women to give their perspectives on science with the expectation that they will have something different to say, was in a way reinforcing the divide that people have been saying does not exist. If the sexes are equal then why should one's views matter more than the others?, they wondered. I knew this argument was connected to science but it derived from what we had studied in Psychology and Sociology. It was coming from the dark archives of the questions hurled at feminists for years why do you want different treatment when you are saying you are the same as the men? I call myself a feminist and so my answer might already be evident. Yet, I quote that example not to talk about my 'leanings' but to talk about how I think the exciting thing about the arguing/discussing was that a debate of this nature was taking place at all! It somehow made science come alive in so many ways when we discussed the politics of what gets things to the research and publishing stage. Also, there was one detail in the same movie, which has

stuck in my mind ever since. There was a researcher who was trying to studying the evolution of locusts and she was talking about how she was determined that no locust should be allowed to get hurt in the process of research. As a result she hit on the novel idea of studying varieties of locusts through the sounds they made. Not a single locust was hurt in the course of her study. When asked about her work she spoke about she had grown up being told to value life and this was her way of doing it. There was something that came from being woman or being brought up in a family that respected life that made her consider that idea. Had she conformed to the existing research norms and not tried to transcend them, perhaps her research would have been no different from others. There were women in the documentary who spoke about feeling uncomfortable about making points contrary to those of their male colleagues because they were afraid that the point would get attributed to their gender, as though that was a thing to be ashamed of. Some women spoke about the necessity to have some awareness of feminist issues just so that they did not beat themselves up about being lone voices in male bastions.

Besides that movie, there were other moments when the politics of research came alive in so many ways. I have always known that what we studied in our textbooks was just a post-mortem of the 'real thing'; the workshop helped me reach the living version of the subjects we studied. I think hearing experts from the field talk about their work in a manner that cuts past the jargon, helps listeners to actually get the core of what they meant to say. Jargon has a way of obscuring meaning and making things difficult to make sense of. Also, no matter how rich one's course material or how vast our syllabus, as students we often know the limitations of the theories we study limitations we understand only after we start working. Then we need to renegotiate those theories and trim them to derive the reality and the richness of it all. Attending workshops of this nature helped us meet people who had already made these negotiations and now stood before us to tell us about it. I softens the blow I think, to have people from within the field tell you about what to expect. Also, I think, it is a very humbling experience to know that even "exact" science has its moments where it ceases to be as black or white as we thought it was. Many argued against the very notion of culture influencing science when we talk about things like Newton's law of gravity or Law of Conservation of Energy, but then as we discussed we realised that we cannot accept only theories as the core of science. Science is also whatever is being done to add to the level of knowledge we have on a subject. I think what I really took back from the workshop was the realisation of how organic, alive and breathing Science can be, as opposed to being a set of polarities black or white, this formula or that. And as we have come to realise in psychology, realisations are more enduring than fragments of information can ever be.

 Currently a Counsellor and Psychology professional

Puja Mehta

I attended the seminar organised by Majlis on Cinema, Painting and Architecture, some years ago but it had a very strong after effect that has remained with me for so long. I was a graduate student at that time and wondering whether art can be a way of living.

This workshop was spearheaded by an impressive group of artists well known in their fields of specialization. For me it was a beginning of sorts, as it made art practices look normal and accessible. Now as a design professional, when I look back to that experience I realize what actually that experience did to me. It broke my fear and inhibition to aspire to be an artist.

There were open discussions and debates on innumerable areas within these fields which allowed us to ponder over questions that often arise in our minds but have no definite answers. Chaitanya Sambhrani, an art critic ran us through some interesting exercises to study paintings, their structure and their intention. Through some screenings we were introduced to some core, classic and contemporary films. All the discussions provided us with some essential insights into the various fields, widening our perspectives. More importantly, this workshop gave us an extremely well rounded experience that was rare and much treasured.

Currently a design and animation artist

Shahin Kachwala

Recollections always arouse a multitude of emotions. Looking at past events with objectivity is again difficult. However, when I think about the student workshops organized by Majlis that I attended in my undergrad years, the predominant emotions are those of immense pleasure and a gratitude for having this chance. I must admit I first attended the workshop simply because my teachers in college recommended it. And I kept going back year after year, because I realized how much I needed this kind of exposure as a student. Education in India conforms to watertight compartmentalization, a colonial legacy. As a student I questioned this departmentalization and felt frustrated with the rigid boundaries.

With the Majlis workshops, I got exposed to interdisciplinary study, albeit on a small scale. And nowhere do I want to simplify interdisciplinarity as mere information about other issues. But rather I feel it's studying a subject in the multitude ways possible, across disciplines, which was far more challenging than the conventional education that I had been exposed to so far.

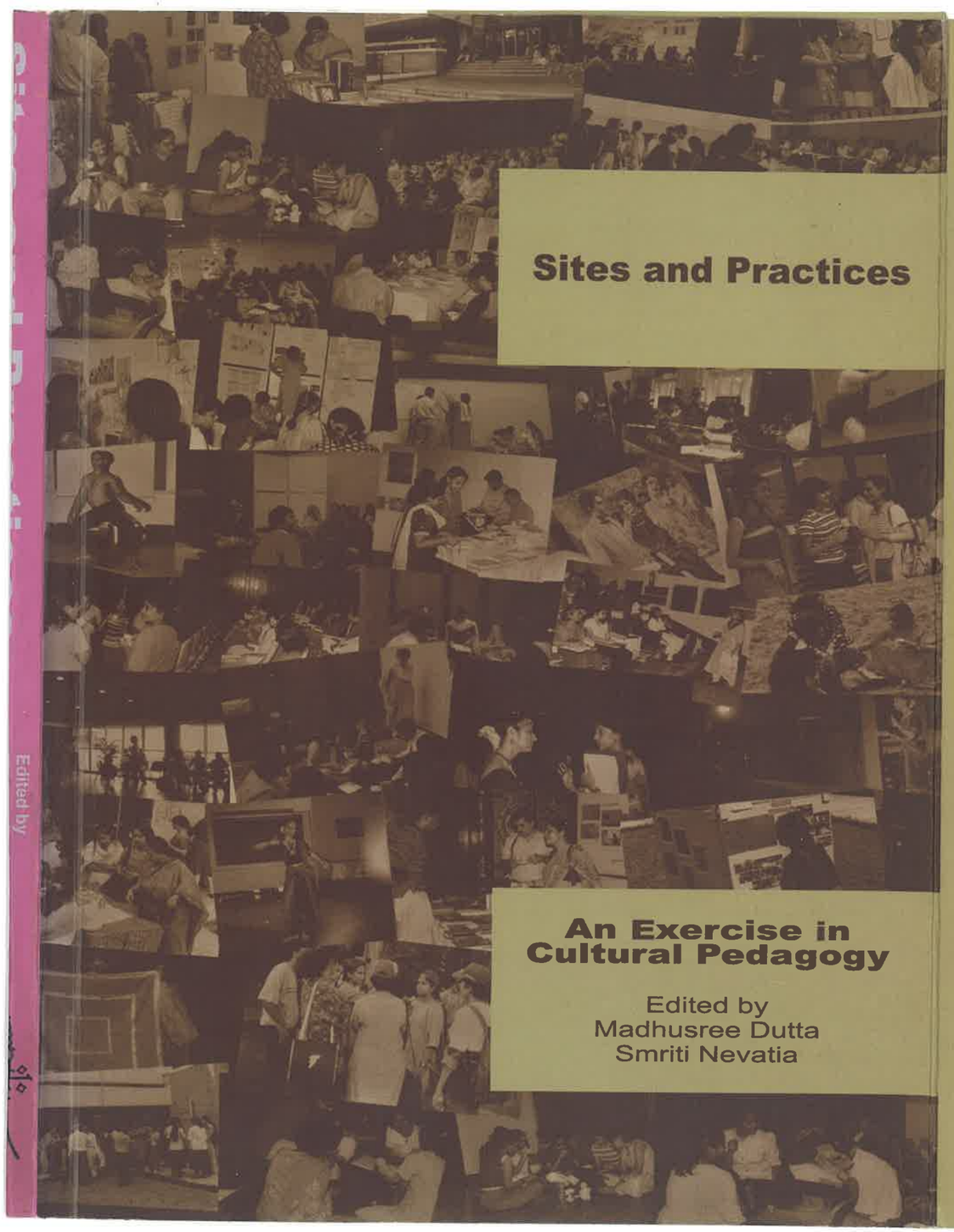
The Literature workshop was something I looked forward to, since I had been studying English Literature in college. Needless to say, the workshop was something I had never expected. It challenged me to think about so many other issues related to literary production, which unfortunately I had never done in my regular class. Topics of translation and gender were rarely dealt with in our curriculum, at least in the undergrad level. The interaction in these sessions threw up questions and stimulated me to think about the role of the media in the politics of gender, the relation of literature, nation and the formation of cultural identities. Both of which in my opinion hold the key to the understanding of the interconnectedness between gender, literature and culture and the profound political, social and cultural transformations that are taking place in postcolonial societies today. Obviously somewhere the sessions supplemented the inquiry that went on in "literature" lectures in college, but what I mean to stress is that the student's workshops were a huge stimuli for some of my friends and me. "Science as a site for culture" - was a distinctive workshop. Again it made us question our department system of education and threw up multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary aspects of learning. There were many sessions of note, but the one, which stands out in my memory, is the talk about "Feminist Perspective on Science". The reason I mention this, is because in post-graduate studies in chose to work in Women's Studies and currently am working with a professor on the topic of "Women, Health and Activism". We had heated debates and fired up participants in that session. I don't remember the exact particulars of that discussion but it came out of our personal beliefs with regard to feminism. And for me it etched out the "feminisms" and showed all of us that feminism is not a monolithic structure, and the multifaceted aspects and multifarious interests of feminisms are its core strength. It can be an exclusionary force, but is self questioning and vibrant and from this dynamic is where we all need to draw our lessons. We came to the oppressive patriarchal structure around us. And I saw that women's positions are located within the material conditions of day to day existence and that any understanding of their lives is incomplete without looking at their socio-economic position, their position within families and their relations with men.

Being 20 years old, we were still not jaded about meeting 'celebrities'. The reading by Kiran Nagarkar was a huge hit! Getting a chance to meet eminent theorist Ganesh Devy and listen to his ideas was another experience in itself. Jhelum Paranjpe's performance was unique and I wondered if I would have witnessed it in any other setting.

The level of participation in these sessions used to be tremendous and the talk would spill over in the break between sessions and sometimes go on to the next day as well. And most importantly these workshops gave us a chance to interact with other students in the city who belonged to various colleges. It's rare in a city like Bombay to get such a chance, except in inter-college festivals, but then these festivals have their selected set of student participants. So several friendships were forged (I formed my closest friendship at the Majlis workshop!) and renewed acquaintances from school days. At some level the workshops were a common thread in the lives of many students I met or still meet. It's the common experience, which will be with us for the rest of our lives.

My relationship with Majlis was renewed again, when after my postgraduate study I had a brief stint of working for them. It was brief but rich in the experiences I got in that short a while. My current area of interest in Women's Studies has a lot to do with my interaction with members of Majlis. I learnt to challenge several assumptions about my life after these talks.

Currently a PhD student of Literature and Women's study



Sites and Practices

An Exercise in Cultural Pedagogy

Edited by
Madhusree Dutta
Smriti Nevatia

Majlis started as a centre for multi-cultural initiatives and rights discourse in 1990. Though our work in the field of culture had always been oriented towards productions and its related issues, pedagogy soon became a serious concern. The story was a classical one: first it was the cultural productions as opposed to market and hegemonic trends, then the productions needed non-mainstream distribution, distribution needed a niche audience, a niche audience needed pedagogical inputs and so on. We conducted a series of annual workshops for college students on plurality in culture practices from 1996 to 2001.

It was mid 90s, we were still reeling under the impact of Babri Masjid demolition and the subsequent communal violence. The state of Maharashtra was being ruled by the extreme right wing parties and homogenisation was the predominant social ambience. In this context the programme was schemed at creating small windows of resistance. Plurality was explored in every formal way: each discipline of arts was placed back-to-back with another one; overlappings and joints were studied and practices and theories were woven together through hand on practicals. Overwhelming support was received from the practising artists and intellectuals. Some of the leading exponents of each discipline came forward to contribute to the workshops.

We could not continue with the activity after five years due to fatigue and paucity of fund. But after a decade the same concerns continue to haunt our social, political and art practising spheres. Hence we have decided to compile selected sections of the workshop proceedings in this anthology. We hope the publication will contribute, at its best, as a model for cultural pedagogy and at its least, will document some trends of thoughts and debates that were dominant in the last decade.

Though the workshops were extremely rich by contributions from . varied sections of academics and artists, many of the sessions were site specific and extensively visual. Much as we tried, those sessions could not be transcribed into written texts. Each workshop was also designed with adequate number of practical exercises. The exercises were participatory and three dimensional and hence not description friendly. Still we included brief descriptions of some of those exercises, with the hope of encouraging participatory activities within pedagogy. We have also tried our best to preserve the oral and fluid texture of the sessions, in order to communicate the interactive nature of the whole exercise. Thus the publication should work more as a pedagogical module than a purely academic text.

Acknowledgement

When we started in 1996 it looked ambitious and also somewhat top-heavy. Why only the best of the scholars and artists to be the resource persons for the participants who were mere under graduate students, was the question often asked. But our resource people did not think so. They shared our belief that pedagogy should be considered as one of the important aspects of intellectual and artistic discipline. This functioned as an encouraging example for our future activities too.

Students came in waves, always surpassing all our expectations, both in terms of numbers and quality of participation. We needed this exercise more than them, in order to restore our faith. We specially acknowledge the contribution of the student participants who also helped us in transcribing and editing this volume: Gitika Talwar and Renu Savant. Our young colleagues in Majlis, Mamta Murthy, Veena Gowda, Sonia Filinto and Savita Krishnan kept inducing the required youthful energy into the whole process. Anuradha Kapur, Mitra Mukherjee Parikh, Neera Adarkar, Gita Chadda, Chayanika Shah and Amrita Shodhan provided specialised guidance in their respective fields. Mohile Parikh centre for contemporary culture, The Jindal Arts Creative Interaction Centre (JACIC), SNDT Women's University and YB Chavan Pratisthan collaborated and shared the logistic responsibilities with Majlis. We also take this opportunity to thank our friends - Nandini Ramnath for painstakingly proof reading the drafts; Archana Hande for page designing; Amit Roy and Aroop Mukherjee of Touch Creative Media for designing the cover. And finally, Vibha Nijhawan, Abeer Gupta, Areeba Hamid, Sneha Dharamshi and Nupur Jain for tying up various loose ends till the very end and for believing in reviving this project after a decade.

Majlis Research and Publications:

Spice Adventures; 2005
an interactive computer game and animation CD produced to campaign for cultural plurality among children.

One Hundred Years, One Hundred Voices the Millworkers of Girangaon: An Oral History
By Meena Menon and Neera Adarkar
Published by Seagull Books; English; 2004
comprises a hundred testimonies by the inhabitants of Girangaon (the textile industry district), which are a window into the history, culture and political economy of a former colonial port city now recasting itself as a global metropolis. Nominated for Crossword book award 2005.

Of Lofty Claims and Muffled Voices
Edited by Flavia Agnes; 2002
addresses the communal carnage and sexual violence unleashed upon Muslim women in Gujarat and raises questions about state structures, Constitutional provisions and the role of the civil society at large.

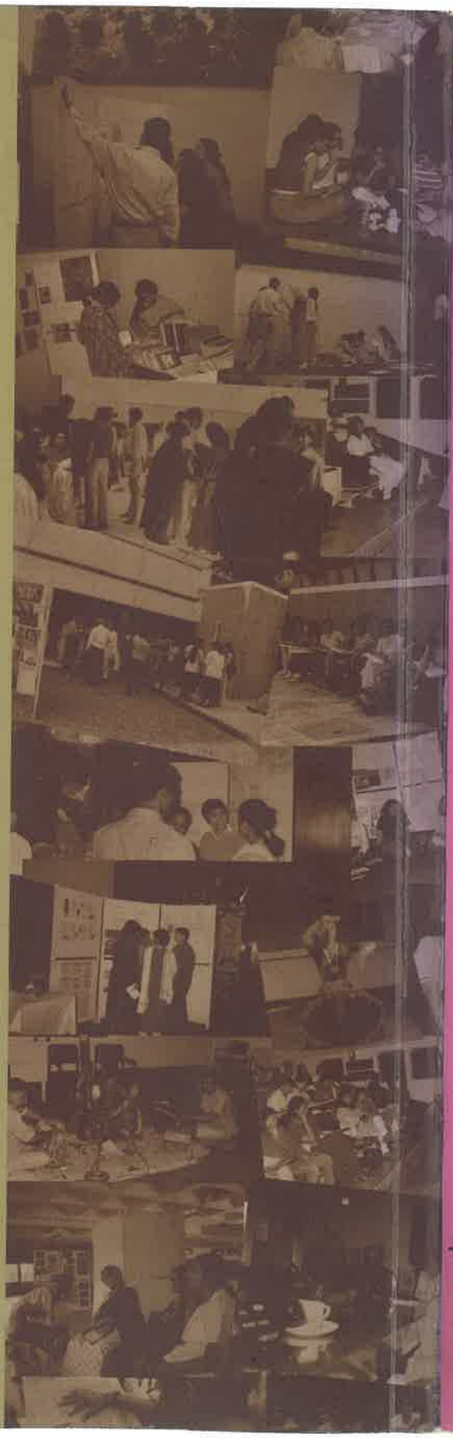
Law and Gender Inequality
By Flavia Agnes; Published by Oxford University Press; 1999
provides an analysis of the current trends of the debate on the Uniform Civil Code, located within a highly charged and communally vitiated political scenario.

The Nation, The State and Indian Identity
Ed. Madhusree Dutta, Flavia Agnes, Neera Adarkar; Published by Samya publication, Calcutta ; 1996
addresses the changing politics of 'identity' in the arena of various social sciences in post Ayodhya era.

State, Gender and the Rhetoric of Law Reform
By Flavia Agnes; Published by SNDT Women's University, Mumbai; 1995
examines the hiatus between the pro-women aspiration of legal enactments and the anti-woman norms and practices of the courts.

Journey to Justice: Procedures to be Followed in a Rape case
By Flavia Agnes; in English and Marathi; 1992
analyses the legal system which is structured around only the state and the accused, from the perspective of the woman victim.

My Story Our Story... of Rebuilding Broken Lives
By Flavia Agnes, in English, Marathi and Gujarati
an autobiographical account of domestic violence.(Originally published in English, and since then translated into several Indian languages)



Sites and Practices

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मजलिस