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Editorial

It is that time again. Not of the year. But of four years. The Olympics are here again. But, the world's greatest sporting extravaganza, this time around, seems to be marred even before it started. The Beijing Olympics seems to be in the headlines more for the global political rhetoric than anything else. While only the naïve would see sports as a space 'outside politics', this time, the political part does seem to be overshadowing the event.

Not surprisingly, the boycott of the Olympics gets more press than the issue which gave rise to the possibility– that of Tibet. The issues of sovereignty and democracy as evident in the conflict over Tibet have been visited in many parts of the world in recent years and historically informed, in many cases, by legacies of colonialism and by unequal relationships between the North and the South. The rhetorical flourish around the issue of Tibet and the Olympics to be held in Beijing reinvoke the North/South divide in the context of this great sporting event which purports to be truly global.

Even after the process of decolonisation set in after the Second World War, the North has retained a political (and therefore ideological) high ground, which enables the more powerful of these to seek to intervene in disputes in the South. In many such cases, the issue of democracy has often been a sore point for both sides. Southern countries, particularly of Latin America and Africa have often had reason to complain about the hectoring and big-brotherly attitude of Northern states and leaders, often bringing about otherwise unlikely alliances.

There are of course extremely complicated issues involved– of theory, of realpolitik and of ethics. For instance, can the notion of individual oriented democracy have universal currency? Or should that be seen as a 'provincial' experience of Europe and be treated as such? And how or where does one place ideas that are not so conveniently assimilated, like that of group or community-based notions of society and polity, rather than taking the individual as the unit?

Conversely there are some other issues that are equally difficult to answer. Can the argument of cultural and other differences be used to justify forms of oppression? What happens when such issues are raised in relation to gender, caste, ethnicity etc.?

Perhaps the only answer that can be given with any degree of certainty is that there are no clear-cut answers. We will try to explain these and other relations in greater details in the coming issue(s).

In keeping with this, the current volume deals with issues in so called 'marginal' societies, which remained at the periphery of colonial and post-colonial attempts at modernising backward nations and regions. The first article by Anup Shekhar explores the position of women in post-colonial Mizoram. At the same time it also draws attention to the trajectories of unrest and insurgency in Mizoram against the Indian state, together with attempts by Mizo women to carve a separate spatial identity for themselves and make their voices heard. Bidisha Dhar's article on the Lucknow Industrial School provides an interesting account of the many ways the colonial state was attempting to consolidate itself, in the aftermath of the revolt of 1857. Keeping in pace with growing industrialisation the need was felt for a technically proficient class who would fit the demand for labour in sectors of mining, communication and railways among others.

The third article by Mark Funteh is a case study of the Grassfields people of Cameroon. He argues that Western Powers focused all attention on the exploitation of African resources and were, perhaps for that reason, unable to understand African society and its needs. This led colonial powers to impose reforms from above, which contributed towards indigenous conflicts and unrest. There were no mechanisms to address let alone resolve the disputes, which led to intractable conflicts in various parts of the continent.

In *Across the South*, we have three reports of conferences that deal with the diversities of modern academic exercise and knowledge production. Kathinka Sinha-Kerkhoff reports on a conference where academicians from various South countries took up issues like academic globalisation and the benefits and hazards it entails, the existence of a 'common pool of knowledge' and whether knowledge can function as an individual entity. The felt need to grapple with diverse research methodologies in the changing context of new paradigms of epistemological interventions and methodoloigcal transformations is reflected in the attempt made at the 'Alternative Research Methodologies Workshop', the details of which are provided by Geetika Bapna in her report. Jishnu Dasgupta studies a conference of young researchers at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, which is remarkable both in its content and its organisation.

Studies on diasporas have made a huge impact in recent times. The e-Magazine has already carried many and diverse contributions on related themes in our quest to represent different voices across territories and research frontiers. In this issue Kumar Mahabir provides an account of Caribbean born Indian actors, who, inspite of being ethnic minorities, have been successful in making their presence felt in Caribbean films.

In *Encounters*, Peter Alexander, from the University of Johannesburg in South Africa, talks at length about various issues ranging from his research interests in mine workers of South Africa and India to issues affecting their work and livelihood patterns. His emphasis on details, including statistics, together with a South-South comparative dimension makes the interview enormously enriching.

The *Book Review* section too presents a variety, drawn from varied regions and experiences- from a class of artists in West Bengal and their unique art forms to studying linkages between India and Trinidad through the mediums of music and migration. The latter review adds to the diasporic content of this issue.

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Mustering Empowerment experiences from Mizoram: A Leap from 'Private' to 'Public' Living Spaces

Anup Shekhar Chakraborty

The author born of mixed parentage was raised in the Zo hills in Mizoram. He has been researching on the issues of identity, migrations, religion, ethnicity and state building in Mizoram for the past four years. The article is partly based on an ongoing Ph. D. work from the University of Calcutta, India. The author graduated (2001) with Honours in Political Science from St. Xavier's College, Kolkata and pursued Post-Graduation in Political Science (2003) from the University of Calcutta. The author presently is a Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, St. Joseph's College, North Bengal University and teaches Political Science and Human Rights.

Abstract

This article deals with the negotiation of women embattled by patriarchy on the one hand and the long running struggle between insurgency and the State. It tries to map how Mizo women sought to empower themselves by mechanisms that shifted from the 'private' to the 'public'.

The 'Northeast' in general and Mizoram[1] in particular provides a unique experience in understanding the trends in everyday politics as a living space dictated[2] by the politics of 'inclusions' and 'exclusions' projected by the *Nexus of Patriarchy*[3]. Mizoram, as a category in contemporary Indian politics 'rings the faint bell' of 'the protracted insurgency led by the legendary Laldenga, of the Mizo National Front in the Christian area'; and the success of India's democratic mechanisms as reflected through the *dual processes* of (1) *the signing of the Peace Accord (1986)* and (2) *the implementation of 'Cosmetic Federalism'*.[4] The region remains a geo-political puzzle and mapping its location and its people becomes a quest in itself for many Indians.[5] The complexities involved in the regions politics, state-building and citizen-building efforts based on the logic of *exclusions and inclusions*, hardly echoes beyond the *Zo tlang ram*.[6] Against this silhouette, the paper attempts, *first*, at reflecting on position of women in the 'post-colonial' era within the larger social ambit of statecraft from the insurgency period

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1 Mizoram, one of the federal states of India located at the extreme northeastern fringes has experienced diverse socio-political upheavals ranging from secession to acceptance of the constitutional mechanism of India to being 'an Island of Peace', within a span of three decades. The whole territory officially came under British rule in 1895. The area was bifurcated into South Lushai Hills under the Superintendent or Assistant Political Officer of Chittagong Division of Bengal Province, and the North Lushai Hills in control of the Political Officer under the Chief Commissioner of the Assam Government. The North Lushai Hills and the South Lushai Hills were amalgamated as one district- 'The Lushai Hills District' in 1898, under the charge of one Superintendent under the Chief Commissioner of Assam. See for details A. C. Ray, *Mizoram Dynamics of Change*, Pearl Publishers, Calcutta, 1982, pp. 12-17, 20-24; Lalrimawia, 'A Brief Survey of the Administrative Development in the Lushai Hills (1890-1947)', *Proceedings*, NEIHA, 4th Session, 1983; S. N. Singh, *Mizoram– Historical, Geographical, Social, Economic, Political & Administrative*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 113-114.

2 I agree with Michel Foucault's notion of a spatialised history which reflects the arena for power contestation, 'A whole history remains to be written of spaces', which would at the same time be the history of powers' which in the case of the Northeast determines the criteria for inclusion and exclusion. For details see, Paul Rabinow, (Ed.) *The Foucault Reader*, Peregrine, London, 1987. Also see Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, Verso, London 1989, p. 21; and Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, Vol. I., Verso, London, 1991.

3 The Zo tribes and their sub clans form the majority and dominate all the socio-politico-eco-cultural arenas of the society. The Church and the State are the instruments through which the majority dictates their terms to the minorities including the women and Vais. I call the coalition of the majority, the church and the state the Nexus of Patriarchy because it represents the functioning of the patriarchy which tries to dominate the others. The nexus of patriarchy dominates and marginalises women and by the same token marginalises the "others"– men and women inclusive.

4 See Jyotrindra's article in Amrita Basu & Atul Kohli (eds.), *Community Conflicts and the State in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 183-214 and Sanjib Baruah, *Durable Disorder– Understanding the Politics of Northeast India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi,2005, pp. 42-45 respectively for these.

5 Lalhmingthanga former Finance Minister of the Union Territory of Mizoram has mentioned similar experiences in his 'Foreword' to A. C. Ray's *Mizoram Dynamics of Change*.

6 The 'Zo hills' or 'Zo tlang ram' has special significance in the sense that the 'imagery of the Zo region and Zo unification' goes as far as the echoes travel in the hilly terrains of the region between Chittagong Hill Tracts and the Chin Hills. The sense of a boundary and international borders is hardly real to the tribes of the region for affinities of primordial identities are far stronger and deeper. The sense of a boundary makes sense only when contextualised in terms of the 'others' which is again a large and fluid category and at times overlaps with the image of foreigners. In other words the boundary makes sense only when placed in the light of insider and outsider debate. Even though the Zo territory within India has been named Mizoram, the term Zoram or 'Zo Tlang ram' continues to be in use to refer to 'the land of the Zos', in other words the term 'Zo tlang ram' or Zoram has a kind of emotional nostalgic appeal and attraction.

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onwards against the backdrop of the phenom-enon of Community Policing. *Second,* it attempts at highlighting the *survival strategies* adopted by the women to protect their rights and create their own spaces and have their voices heard in the public sphere; and contribute towards Gen-der Empowerment and Human Development[7] in Mizoram.

Women and Statecraft in Post-Colonial Mizoram

Women, Insurgency and Community Policing

The history of post-colonial statecraft in Mizoram mirrors the contesting trajectories of Nations, Nationalisms and Identities projected at various levels leading to sustained strife and the history of insurgency led by Laldenga and his Mizo National Front (MNF)[8] against the Indian State echoes the same. The Zo/Mizo society witnessed the high handed atrocities of the Indian Armed Forces in the name of controlling the secessionist movement and protecting the 'Indian Nation' from foreign influences and dis-senting voices for maintaining the 'Ekta aur Akhandata' (Unity and Integrity) of Bharat Mata (Mother India i.e. the 'Motherland'). The result of the insurgency and counter-insurgency strat-egies was a gross violation of the Human Rights of ordinary innocent citizens and the further marginalisation of the already marginals espe-cially the Women.[9] The strategies adopted by both the Centre and the MNF, led to the dwin-dling Human Rights situation in the Zo/Mizo society as is evident from the Memorandum submitted by Brigadier T. Sailo and 'The Human Rights Committee of Mizoram' to the Prime Minis-ter of India in 1974 on the 'Civil Military relation-ship in Mizoram'.[10] The strategies for instance the Malaysia and Vietnam style 'Village re-grouping', evening curfews etc. aimed to

counter the MNF movement led to regimentation and gross violation of Human Rights in Mizoram as evident from the unaccounted mass-rape of women by the Security Forces during the pe-riod. Naturally these policies haunted the psyche of the common people and the notion of 'Friendly Police' either in the case of Civil Police or Military could never be constructed. The public notices issued to the common citizens to support the MNF movement and resign from Government posts/Offices and the victimisation of those who dared to defy the diktats of the MNF led to the creation of a distorted notion of 'Community Policing' and the functioning of the politics of *Pan Optics*.[11] The issue of Human Rights was used by Brigadier T. Sailo for launch-ing his Peoples' Conference Party (P. C. Party) and conveniently sidelined once the party and its leadership got prominence.[12] Almost all parties and leaders during the insurgency gave lip service to the issue of protection of women and the marginals. The parties aligned them-selves with the powerful Churches and made emotionally appealing public speeches for peace-building and the construction of an 'Ideal Zo Christian State'.[13] This was the second instance in the history of *written* politics in the Zo/Mizo society that the collaborative nexus of 'Politics and Religion' had systematically side-lined the cause of women and the marginals.

The post-insurgency state-building process in the Mizoram in general has tilted heavily on the mantras of 'self-governance', 'autonomy', 'self-determination' and 'self-definition'. In keeping with this spirit the whole process of 'Zo state-building' has been aimed at freeing or liberating *physically as well as mentally*, the Zo/Mizo Christian people and their territory from the *dual* prejudice and hegemony functioning syn-chronously at two levels: Administrative and

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7 The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is a measure of inequalities between men's and women's opportunities in a country and gives some indication of how much women are empowered in given society. It is an index that focuses on inequalities or variables in three areas namely political participation and decision making, economic participation and decision making, and power over economic resources. It is one of the five indicators used by the United Nations Development Programme in its annual Human Development Report 1995. For details see chapter-3 in *Human Development Report 1995*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 72-79; <http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/1995/en/>. I take this opportunity to thank Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGIDR), Mumbai and UNDP/Planning Commission for selecting me to be a part of the Young Scholars' Programme 2007, 19 November- 1 December 2007 and providing excellent learning experience.

8 John Vanlal Hluna, "Mizo Problems Leading to Insurgency", *Proceedings*, NEIHA, 6th Session, 1985.

9 See Animesh Ray, *Mizoram Dynamics of Change*, and Sanjay Barbora, "Rethinking India's Counter-Insurgency campaign in the North-East", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 2-8 September, 2006, pp. 3805-3812.

10 Lalchungnunga, *Mizoram: Politics of Regionalism and National Integration*, Reliance Publishing House, New Delhi, 1994.

11 The Mizo society serves as a good example for Bentham's Panoptic Society. In the Zo/Mizo society people live under the spectre of the Pan-optics i.e. constant surveillance of the church and the moral agencies. The only difference being that in the case of the Mizo society the observer can be seen and sometimes partially invisible.

12 See Animesh Ray, *Mizoram Dynamics of Change*, pp. 236-237 and Lalchungnunga, *Mizoram*.

13 John Vanlal Hluna, *Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram: A Study Of The Impact Of Christianity On The Political Development In Mizoram*, Synod Press, Aizawl, 1985.

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Religious. The Post-Colonial 'Zo world' has witnessed the dual operation of *Proselytisation* and *Colonialism* and the introduction of marked *structural and functional changes* in the Zo/Mizo society.[14] The loss of indigenous Zo way of life and the fear of being usurped by *alien cultures* compelled the Mizos/Zos to live under the spectre of the 'Pan-Optics' through the watchful eyes of the State, the Church and its agencies. The Youth organisations like the Young Mizo Association (Y.M.A); the Khristian Thalai Pawl (K.T.P) & also the *students' organisations* like the Mizo Zirlai Pawl (M.Z.P) have been functioning as instruments of '*systemic or structural control'*.[15] These agencies in the attempt to build the ideal Zo Christian state project a spectrum of varying attitudes ranging from prohibiting liquor & drugs, controlling sexual behaviour & checking prostitution, controlling HIV/AIDS to checking *foreigners*[16] and calling 'Vai Bandhs'[17] etc. The superficial imposition of the archaic rules based on Christian ethics on the people for fighting social evils results in the blatant violation of Human Rights. The enforcement agencies selectively target women, the Poi's (Burmese) and the Vai's and project them as '*the nexus of evil'*, conspiring to destabilise the *Ideal Zo Christian state*. These strategies of selective targeting, 'scapegoat mechanisms' that are employed to camouflage the loopholes and failures of the various attitudes projected for building the Ideal Zo Christian state stand as evidences of the '*reduction of human freedom'* in the Zo/Mizo society.[18]

The discriminatory processes acting against women at various levels snip their chance to play an *active role in politics* and other determining position as is evident from the facts backed by statistics. In a state, which boasts of nearly eighty seven per cent female literacy and where women out-number men in as many as twenty-six out of the forty constituencies, only one woman has so far been elected to the State Assembly ever since it attained statehood.[19] The latest report about 'Crime against women in Mizoram' conducted by the Aizawl based Human Rights Law Network (HRLN), sponsored by the National Women's Commission, revealed that teachers and fathers were involved in most of the crimes against women in the state. The report highlighted the general condition of women in the Mizo/Zo society and the psychological violence that takes place most often in homes and school settings by the male members of the family and teachers. Mizoram records the second highest crime rate against women in the North East and on an average; police registers one case in three days. The most common form of violence against adolescent girls and unmarried women ranged from being pushed or shoved or pulled by the hair to that of the use of weapons or a threat to do so. The research also revealed that eve-teasing was a big problem faced by adolescents and unmarried women in the state. 75.81 per cent of adolescents in the research had experienced eve-teasing while 42.63 per cent of unmarried women experienced it. According to police record, the crime rate against women had steadily gone up from 2001 to 2003. While cases registered in this respect were 114 in 2001, this rose to 136 in 2002 and to 219 in 2003. The report said, instead of lodging complaints and reporting the incidents to the authority, women are compelled to make compromises or conciliations on the Christian principle of '*forgive and forget'* which is the main obstacle to reveal the exact statistics of women atrocities in Mizoram.[20] The Gender Empowerment scope is snipped at its very bud by the

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14 See Frederick S. Downs, *Christianity in North East India*, ISPCK, Delhi, 1983, pp. 14-15 and E. J. Thomas, *Mizo bamboo Hills Murmur Change (Mizo Society Before and After Independence)*, Intellectual Publishing House, New Delhi, 1993.

15 See Sangkima, "Young Mizo Association: Its history, features, some aspects and its role in transforming the Mizo Society", *Proceedings*, NEIHA, 6th Session, 1985 and Apurba K. Baruah, *Student Power in North-East India*, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 2002.

16 The notion of foreigners as perceived by the Mizos is apparently confusing and very broad it includes all 'others'. It is very difficult as to exactly pinpoint who would be labelled as a foreigner by the church and its agencies. The general accepted notion is that it includes the 'Vais', the Chakmas & the Burmese and at times it also includes the 'Zo' tribes from the other side of the borders. Here it must be noted that they usually make no distinction between Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, and Indians etc.

17 The latest of these 'Vai Bandhs' were called by the MZP, the Mizo Students' Union and the YMA following the killing of a Mizo youth on 18 July 2007 by suspected Bangladeshi goons at Dholai in Cachar District, Assam. Quit Mizoram notices were issued to the 'Vais' and a blanket curfew was imposed on the 'Vais' which was lifted only on 25 July 2007. The MZP, however, claimed that it had not imposed any curfew, but merely requested non-Mizos to stay indoors for their own safety. It also called a 24 hour bandh at Vairengte the nearest town to Silchar, Cachar or the plains and demanded Rs. 15 lakh as compensation for the slain youth. See for details J. B. Lama, "The inside and out of Mizoram's ethnic skirmishes", *The Statesman*, 30 July 2007.

18 Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Routledge, London, 1966.

19 S. N. Singh, *Mizoram*, pp. 173-74; *Statistical Handbook (s) of Mizoram*, Table No. 6. 1, pp. 82-83, Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Government of Mizoram, 2002; Sukhendu Bhattacharya, "Women at a disadvantage in Mizoram", *Press Trust India*, Aizawl, 15 November 2003, http://www.rediff.com/election/2003/nov/15mizo.htm

20 Bureau Report Zeenews.com, Aizawl, August 11, 2006: "Mainly Fathers, teachers commit crime against women in Mizoram", accessed on 30 September 2006 <*zeenews*.com>.

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patriarchal attitudes prevailing in Mizoram and results in a grim Human Rights and Human Development situation.

Survival strategies of Women in the Zo/Mizo Society: Experiments in Spatiality

Women in the Zo/Mizo society backed by Western Education and the Evangelical activities[21] in course of time have challenged the patriarchal hegemony through the formation of women's organisations like the MHT- *'Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual'*[22], MHIP- *'Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl'*[23] and PHP- *'Puitu Hmeichhe Pawl'* etc, for safeguarding the interests of the Mizo women.[24] The formation of these women's organisations represents *the second instance of rebellion against tradition*[25] in the Zo/Mizo society and also symbolises the *emergence of women* from the spatial existence of the *private* to the *public*, and the creation of an external medium for women's voices to be echoed at the public level through '*Politics of Whispering Bamboo'*.[26] The MHIP declared the period 1997-2001 as "Women's Year" in Mizoram for creation of awareness on issues such as "the low status of women in the society" and "to review the Mizo customary law". In this regard, the MHIP had

been touring the length and breath of the state covering even the most remote and interior villages and conducting workshops, seminars and group discussions. The MHIP is now earnestly pursuing the matter with the state Government to take action and the matter now under serious consideration.

These organisations attempt to consolidate the position of women in the Zo/Mizo society and resurrect them from the common disadvantages scripted by patriarchy. These organisations at different times and in different degrees have fought for women's rights ranging from Customary Rights, Property Rights to Rights of Inheritance etc. These organisations also reflect the mustering of women's voices on the lines of common victimhood and common disadvantages in the Zo/Mizo society against the dictates of the Patriarchy. Women in the Zo/Mizo society through the construction of their own spatial zones have provided a breathing space for venting the voices of the marginals. They have been successful in bargaining their own roles within the larger ambit of state building and thus helped in proliferating the benefits of Democracy to the margins. The high tide of

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21 Lalrimawia, "Missionaries and Education in Mizoram", *Proceedings*, NEIHA, 5th Session, 1984; John Vanlal Hluna, *Church and Political Upheaval,* and "Role of Missionaries in Mizoram Education", *Proceedings*, NEIHA, 7th Session, 1986.

22 The 'Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual' was initially founded in July 1946 as 'Mizo Hmeichhe Hmasawn Pawl' and later renamed as 'Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual'. It is the oldest women's voluntary organisation in Mizoram and has made commendable contributions for people in general and women in specific. For detailed reading see, Sangkima, chapter-19, 'Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual: A Study In Social Perspective' & also chapter-16, 'Women And Politics In Mizoram through The Ages', in Sangkima, *Essays on the History of the Mizos*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 2004, pp. 194-205, 159-174.

23 The Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP) was established on 6 July 1974 and was registered under Registration No. 5 of 1977, Society Act 1860 (Act XXI of 1960). It's Headquarter is at Treasury Square, Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram. The MHIP is one of the biggest voluntary organisations in the state and its work area covers the whole territory of Mizoram. Any organisation that is solely engaged in Social Welfare works may be affiliated to the MHIP. For details see 'Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl Mizoram', Retrieved 30 September 2006 from *http://www.Mizoram.nic*.

24 Sangkima, "Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual: A Study in Perspective", *Proceedings*, NEIHA, 17th Session, 1996 and Sangkima, *Essays on the History of the Mizos*; Bonita Aleaz, *Emergent Women Mizo Women's Perspectives*.

25 The last phases of the 'Colonial Rule' in the Lushai Hills brought about an apprehension among the New Elites, of the possibilities of reverting back to the Pre-Colonial system of Chieftainship. Such an apprehension resulted in the birth of a political party called the Mizo Union on 9 April 1946 which inevitably lead to the Commoners' Movement or 'Lal Sawi' (Shaking/dismantling the Chieftainship). See for details N. N. Acharyya, 'Modernisation of Mizoram', *Proceedings*, NEIHA, 5th Session 1984; Sangkima, 'Mizo Uprising: A significant event in the history of Chieftainship in Mizoram', *Proceedings*, NEIHA, 11th Session, 1990; Chitta Ranjan Nag, *Mizo Polity And Political Modernisation*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1998, p. 72. This was one of the first instances of rebellion against tradition in the Mizo society, resulting in the permanent displacement of the Traditional Elites by 'the Politicians' (political parties) at the political level. Few scholars refer to this Commoners' movement as 'The Mizo Non-Cooperation Movement', see for instance, K. Laldinpuii, 'The Mizo Non-Cooperation Movement, 1948-49', *Proceedings*, NEIHA, 17th Session, 1996.

26 Bamboo plays an important role in the life and tradition of the Mizo/Zo tribes. It is the perennial source of livelihood & economy but no attention is paid to tap the benefits of this natural resource, which is in abundance in the state. The unchecked felling (smuggling) of bamboo plant has led to ecological disasters as well as loss of revenue to the state. The only time the state & its people woke up to the importance of bamboo is when the ritualistic fifty years cycle of flowering of bamboos occurs in the region leading to great famines– Thingtam & Mautam. The flowering of the bamboos haunts the Mizo psyche & serves as a constant reminder of hunger & the two decades of secessionist movement. I use the bamboo plant as an allegory for women in the Mizo/Zo society whose utility is never acknowledged until the outburst of expression. For detailed reading on the flowering of bamboos in Mizoram, see J. D. Baveja, *The Land Where the Bamboo Flowers*, Assam Publication Board, Gauhati, 1970. Also see Appendix 3 'Bamboo, the Giant Grass' in Brig. C. G. Verghese and R. L. Thanzawna, *A History of the Mizos*, Vol. II, Vikas Publishing House, Delhi, 1997, pp. 292-293 and S. K. Barpujari, 'Bamboo-Flowering in Mizoram A Historical Review', *Proceedings*, NEIHA, 17th Session, 1996, pp. 326-339.

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these women's activities in the public realms coincided with the history of Peace-Building in Mizoram. These women's organisations worked in collaboration with the other prominent actors in the Zo/Mizo society and helped brokering Peace. The role played by women in peace-building compelled the *Nexus of Patriarchy* to acknowledge the potential of women and as-cribed them the status of Peace-Makers.

These movements organised by women for themselves mark important multi-layered pro-cesses. First the emergence of women from the spatial existence at 'the private' to 'the public' that is the flow of women's voices from the private '*Politics of Whisperings*'[27] to the public '*Politics of Whispering Bamboo*'. Second it reflects the attempt of women to be part of the socio-political mechanisms functioning in the society and thereby become stakeholders in the state-building process itself. Third it is an attempt to regulate the hegemony of the 'nexus of patriarchy' and acting as the consciousness of the Zo society itself. Fourth, it is an attempt by women to create a space for their own voices and protect their rights as citizens and human beings.

Conclusion

These strategies employed for constructing '*the Ideal Zo Christian state',* often echoes the frustrations in achieving the same; and directly manifests itself in *the quest of finding the en-*

emy and perverse need of creating '*the Other'* as an object of condemnation so that those who condemn can judge themselves to be 'Good'.[28] The *varying attitudes* projected for state-building harps thoroughly on *morality, moral codes* and *spirituality*.[29] These attitudes lead to the persecution, marginalisation and victimisation of women and the *others* by the hegemonic tendencies of the nexus of the church-the state-patriarchy. The line between the public and the private domain becomes fused, and the panoptic gaze of the *Nexus of the Patriarchy* becomes overwhelmingly hege-monic. Women and the other marginals become the targets of the voyeuristic attitude of the 'moral agencies' and 'Community Policing' time and again. A gendered reading of the women's experiences in Zo/Mizo society helps to reflect on the position of women as marginals and at the same time echoes the gender biases and the Human Rights situation as in operation in the Zo/Mizo society under the unique phenomenon of Community Policing and Panoptics. The emer-gence of the women's organisations is an effort at balancing the skewed socio-politico-economic situation specific to the Zo/Mizo situation and hence an effort towards empowerment of women through democratic mechanisms and a move towards the realisation of Human Develop-ment and sensitising Patriarchy.

27 Whispering is the by-product of 'Politics of Silencings' maintained by the nexus of patriarchy at the public domain and the private domain. The functioning of the chauvinistic patriarchal attitudes tends to silence women at the public arena but at the private domain women are able to built strategies to overcome the limitations of 'Silencings'. In their private space women are able to built strategies and speak and at times their voice echoes out of the household into the public arena through their male counterparts. These echoes of women's voices & the voices of the marginalised are what I call whisperings.

28 Thomas. S. Szasz, *The Manufacture of Madness*, Harper & Row, New York, 1970.

29 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality,* Vol. II, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1987, p. 28; Arvind Singhal and Everett M. Rogers, *Combating AIDS*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2003, pp. 223-224, 228.

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The Lucknow Industrial School c. 1892-1918: A Case Study of Technical Education for the Artisan[1]

Bidisha Dhar

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Abstract

The article primarily concerns itself with the problems that arose while implementing the state program of technical education in the Industrial School of Lucknow in 1892 established to impart technical training to the city's artisans. It tries to answer the larger question that whether the state sponsored technical education programme for the artisans was successful with the help of a micro-level case study of the Industrial School, Lucknow. The focal point of the article is the history of the Industrial School and the article attempts to answer the larger question through the microcosm of the history of the Lucknow Industrial School.

Introduction

The Lucknow Industrial School started functioning from 1 November 1892 in the vicinity of the Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway workshop and near the neighborhoods of the railway artisans. The area was called the Wingfield Manzil. The railway artisans, who were also the bonafide or resident artisans, resided in the areas to the east and the north east of the Wingfield Manzil.[2]

The institution, Sir Auckland Colvin, the Lt. Governor of the United Provinces, declared in his Opening Day speech, was to impart elementary instruction in carpentry and drawing at the initial stage and training in iron and other metal work at a later stage subject to the success of the School. The elementary training would help them to qualify as working apprentices in railway and other large workshops. Several railway authorities or 'practical men' from throughout the Province were to be represented on the Committee of Management of the School to attend to the 'practical' supervision of the trainees.[3]

The Lt. Governor's speech was rooted in the exigencies of the times. From the 1860s there was an increased tendency to emphasise on the aspect of practical education in the government quarters. Charles Wood's educational despatch of 1854 had hinted towards the need for the government endorsement of this 'much neglected' aspect of public education in India. Hunter's *Report of the Education Commission* of 1882 mentioned more specifically that to meet

"the needs of a complex state of society" in India there was "a need for some corresponding course which shall fit boys for commercial and industrial pursuits" and recommended a "bifurcation in the upper classes of high schools– one leading to the Entrance Examination of the Universities and the other of a more practical character, intended to fit youths for commercial or non-literary pursuits."[4] But the first major document that dealt with technical education at length was the *Memorandum on Technical Education in India prior to 1886* by A. P. MacDonnell, the Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department. The document specified that the reasons for the government's urgency to implement its plans for technical education in the various provinces were two-fold. There was a glut in the employment sector and new avenues for employing the increasing number of the unemployed youth had to be found. Otherwise, the government feared, their discontention would give rise to nationalist feelings. Also the government claimed that given the increase in opportunity for technically trained men in the areas of mining, railways, manufacturing and other industrial enterprises, expansion of foreign trade, interaction with the foreign markets, there was an urgent need for technically trained men.[5]

Mid-nineteenth century was the time for the consolidation of the British state in the aftermath of the 1857 Rebellion and this required a continuous supply of a less expensive but skilled

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1 This paper is a work in progress.

2 Nesfield, Director of Public Instruction, NWPO to Secretary to Government, NWPO, 11 August 1892, PED, NWPO, Vol. 1, Jan-July, 1893.

3 *The Pioneer,* 6 November, 1892.

4 *Papers Relating To Technical Education in India, 1886-1904. Memorandum on Technical Education in India prior to 1886.* pp. 1-4.

5 Ibid.

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and trained class of overseers, assistant engineers, mechanics, surveyors.[6] William Hoey's monograph of 1880 mentions that the in the post-1857 period, the need for communication had become indispensable leading to railway construction and road building.[7] In the United Provinces also throughout the 1860s and the 1870s, the state had made major investments for the expansion of the provincial railways, and other kinds of construction works. In Lucknow the Railways had arrived in 1862 as an attempt by the colonial state to re-construct the city in the aftermath of the Rebellion and as a supplement to the British military establishment.[8] The Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway connected Lucknow to Benaras, Kanpur and Shahjahanpur and the entire length of the railway communication was 52 miles.[9]

Improved communication, however, played a simultaneously decisive role in the survival and decay for particular manufactures of Lucknow depending upon their export value and the import of machine-made counterparts and transformed Lucknow in to a central trade depot.[10] As in other parts of India, in the Province too, the Railways also perpetrated an increasing demand for engineers, mechanics, and foremen mechanics and men of the Forge and the Workshop which required a prioritisation of technical education over literary education.

As part of the technical education programme in the Province a few things were to commence.[11] For instance, the Education Department would impart instruction in drawing, especially in free-hand drawing, and in physical science in central normal schools. The teachers trained at these schools will eventually be deputed to give instruction in High Schools. Secondly, the Allahabad University had decided to conduct an alternative final examination for candidates interested in commercial and industrial pursuits.[12] Thirdly, a programme was being worked out where through a re-arranged system of examinations at the matriculation level, an increase in the number of students seeking admission to the Roorkee College of Engineering was being sought. In Roorkee, simultaneously, a course in mechanical engineering and that of

workshop instruction was to be introduced.[13] The plan was to link the Roorkee College to the provincial education system and to include in its curriculum preparatory training courses in telegraphy, instruction for the mechanical apprentices apart from already existing instruction courses in building and road engineering or in irrigation or road construction to meet up the demand for mechanical foremen and mechanical engineers with the introduction and growth of machinery in these provinces.[14] The Industrial School at Lucknow was the last linkage in this scheme of industrial and mechanical training.

Industrial Schools– The Context

In 1886, when MacDonnell prepared his Memorandum, there were forty five industrial schools in the country with an attendance of 1,379 students.[15] There were mainly three types of Industrial Schools– missionary institutions, those associated with public works departments especially the railways, and those which were reformatory institutions. The oldest amongst them was the Nazareth Industrial School in the Madras Presidency which had been established by the late Canon Margoselsis at Nazareth in the Tinnevelly district of the Madras Presidency by the missionaries which was set up to train the Christian members of the Panchama caste of South India and by virtue of this could not be absorbed in the existing artisan caste structure. The School also trained the Christian orphans of the 1877-78 famine. The members were trained in carpentry, blacksmith's work, weaving and tailoring so that they could be financially self-dependent.[16] At Ranchi too, the Industrial School was set up by the Christian missionaries but later taken over by the government. It taught members of the Kol community in reading, writing, and arithmetic along with carpentry and smith's work. In the North Western Provinces too the Industrial Schools at Gorakhpur for boys and Benaras for girls were missionary institutions and taught weaving, shoe-making, tailoring and baking to the boys and needle work to the girls. The students were all Christians. Amongst the Industrial Schools which were run by the government were the ones at Dharwar,

6 Deepak Kumar, *Science and the Raj, 1857-1905,* Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1995, pp. 136-137.

7 William Hoey, *A Monograph on Trade and Manufactures in Northern India,* American Methodist Mission Press, Lucknow, 1880, p. 2.

8 For details, see, Veena Talwar Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow, 1856-1877*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, pp. 42-48.

9 *The Gazetteer of Oudh*, 1877-8, p. 43.

10 For a detailed discussion of the affected trades, see Part I of William Hoey's monograph.

11 *The Pioneer,* 6 November 1892.

12 *The Pioneer,* 5 April 1892.

13 *The Pioneer*, 6 November 1892.

14 *The Pioneer,* 5 April 1892.

15 For a state wise division of the number of Industrial Schools in the country, see *Memorandum*, p. 5.

16 *Report of Indian Industrial Commission, Inspection Notes,* p. 97.

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which catered to the railway workshops but had to be closed when the railways rendered it unnecessary. The School at Dehree in Bengal was maintained by the Public Works Department for the sons of artisans employed in the canal workshops at that place. It taught elementary mechanics, practical geometry and subjects taught in an ordinary vernacular school. The industrial school at Insein, Burma catered to the Europeans and to the local people in general and not to any particular class and the Williamson Artisan School in Assam were attached to the railway workshops. The former had promising prospects and the latter was reported a failure. Then there were industrial schools attached to the gun factory in Madras which trained Europeans to become Government servants. At the Ratnagiri Industrial School, also a government institution, students belonged to the artisan and the labouring classes who were taught drawing and practical geometry and were imparted training in special trades in the factory to which the School was attached.[17]

The Fardunji Industrial School at Surat was a private institution and its students came from the backgrounds other than artisan or the labouring class. It aimed to turn these in to 'skilled artificers'. In Punjab and Central Provinces some industrial schools tried to attract members of the upper caste with the idea that manual labour did not involve degradation of work and by letting the students know the advantage of advanced tools. However, these industrial schools performed very badly and they had to be closed down.[18]

Lastly, there were Industrial Schools which were Reformatory Schools run for convicts especially juvenile convicts. They were promoted by Mary Carpenter who during her visit to India mentioned the need for low cost Industrial and Reformatory Schools.[19] In her report about the Reformatory and Certified Industrial Schools

in India presented to Sir John Lawrence, the Governor General of India in Council, she strongly recommended and urged the Legislature to set up Certified Industrial Schools and Reformatory Schools for juveniles and hardened offenders respectively.[20]

Mac Donnell's *Memorandum* suggested the inclusion of the industrial schools within the provincial education system and affiliate them to a central institution in the province to improve their condition. The aim was to make them more commercially viable. In the case of the Lucknow Industrial School, initially there were plans to affiliate the School to the Mayo School of Arts, Lahore,[21] but finally the School was associated to the Technical School, Lahore which also trained traditional artisans for apprenticeships in the railways and other large workshops.[22] Thus, the School was given a more technical nature because it had to finally serve as a feeder institution to the Roorkee Civil Engineering College. In 1901, after E. C. Buck's *Report on Practical and Technical Education* was published an attempt was made by the state to tap the skills of the artisans involved in handicrafts production. Was the attempt successful? And what kind of training was envisaged for the sons of the artisans?

This article explores these questions but primarily concerns itself with the problems that arose while implementing the state programme of technical education in the Industrial School of Lucknow. It tries to answer the larger question that whether the state sponsored technical education programme for the artisans was successful with the help of a micro-level case study of the Industrial School, Lucknow. The focal point of the article is the history of the Industrial School and the article attempts to answer the larger question through the microcosm of the history of the Lucknow Industrial

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17 Alfred Croft, *Review of Education in India in 1886,* Government Press, Calcutta, 1886, pp. 85-86.

18 Ibid.

19 Mary Carpenter, *Six Months in India,* Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1868. Mary Carpenter had taken an active part in the Reformatory Movement in post-industrial revolution England which was based on the principle of reforming the young criminals, urban poor, destitute by a moral and industrial training. There was an implicit idea that the reformation of these classes could take place only by instilling the habits of industry which would discipline them and make them capable of earning their own livelihood. Having carefully studied the principles of prison discipline, she had published *Our Convicts*. In India, she had visited a number of prisons and institutions in the Bombay Presidency and worked on prison discipline, reformatories, lunatic asylums, government schools, and female education.

20 *Parliamentary Papers, 1877.*

21 Art Schools were different from Industrial Schools. For details regarding art schools, see, Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *The Making of a New Indian Art: Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c.1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992 and Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850-1922*, Cambrdge University Press, Cambridge, 1994.

22 GOI, Home, Education, August 1874. Sir Auckland Colvin's Minute on Technical Education in *Papers Relating to Technical Education in India*, 1886-1904, Calcutta, 1906, pp. 123-31. For details regarding the separate training systems in the Madras and the Bombay Presidencies, see, *Memorandum*, pp. 28-40. The Lahore School supplied tools and a drawing teacher for the Industrial School, Lucknow and also set the syllabus for the latter.

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School.

The Lucknow Industrial School: Initial History

The Industrial School was very specifically set up for the sons of the *bonafide* artisans. The artisans, in this case were the railway artisans and the attendance to the School was made compulsory for them. Along with them, poor children from the Eurasian and the Anglo-Indian background could also be admitted to the School. Twenty per cent of the seats in the school were reserved for these children. Lastly, but significantly, the School was to also train the 'industrial classes' of the city.[23]

Europeans and Eurasians

A major influx of the working class Europeans began in the early-1850s and increased considerably in the 1870s. The immigration was related to the building of communication networks which the British undertook on a large scale from the 1850s. They mainly worked as platelayers, fitters, firemen or as semi-skilled workers in the railways.[24] They also worked as intermediaries in government departments and private European enterprises and as domestic servants, nurses, mid-wives, clerks, teachers and shop assistants for European employers. The members of this class formed a link between the European officers and their Indian subordinates in the police service, the railways, the public works, jails, factories and engineering works. Below them was the class which comprised of the orphans, vagrants, prostitutes, convicts and lunatics.[25]

By the end of the nineteenth century, these classes formed nearly half of the European population in India. These poor Europeans and Eurasians, as Bayly explains, formed a very depressed and volatile element, unsure of employment but on the other hand, deeply committed to the ideas of European dominance.[26] From the 1870s, with the government attempts to promote technical education amongst the Indians who could be employed on lower rates, especially for the subordinate posts in the Railways, the competition amongst Indians and the poor Eurasians and Europeans for such jobs increased and this often led to racial conflicts.[27]

Contraction in the employment opportunities for the unskilled and the semi-skilled Europeans reduced their chances of upward social mobility and their deteriorating condition led many individuals like Lord Canning and private organisations like the Friend-in-Need Society to advocate a free training in technical instruction for them. The fear was that in the absence of such opportunities they too would start exhibiting the worst traits of their Indian counterparts and become unmanageable as well as profitless. The plan was to employ them as local mechanics or skilled labour in railway workshops to save them from becoming vagrants, beggars or dependents on charity.[28] This concern about the lower rungs of the English society was a reflection about the colonial anxieties for maintaining an image in the colony which made it imperative to remove any degenerate European from the native gaze.[29] But this did not imply that such degenerate Europeans could be considered equivalent to their Indian counterparts. Such strong racist vibes clearly dominated the thinking of the Secretary of the Friend-in-Need Society when he declared that for the poor Eurasian children, the Lucknow Industrial School provided an opportunity to be trained "not under a scorching sun or under the unfavorable circumstances of an Indian street but under the double shelter of the workshops roof and supervision by professionals who are of the same race as themselves."[30] In the 1870s, there were 4,222 Europeans and 760 Eurasians in Lucknow city.[31]

Industrial Classes

Another section of the society which the School was planning to draw upon was the vague category of the industrial classes of Lucknow. In the 1870s and the 1880s, these classes in the city mainly comprised of the carpenters or the Barhais, blacksmiths, potters, the leather workmen or the chamars, weavers, dyers,

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23 *Proceedings of the Education Department of the NWP&O*, 26 October 1892, Vol. 1, Jan-June 1893, Progs. No. 256.

24 C. A. Bayly, *The Local Roots of Indian Politics, Allahabad, 1880-1920*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1975, pp. 52-57.

25 David Arnold, 'European Orphans and Vagrants in India in the Nineteenth Century' in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, (JICH)*, 7, 1979, pp. 106-14. Some other literature on the subject is David Arnold, 'White Colonization and Labor in Nineteenth Century India' in *JICH*, 11, 2, January 1983, pp. 133-158.

26 Bayly, *The Local Roots*, pp. 52-7.

27 Ibid.

28 Proceedings of the Education Department of the NWP&O, 11 August 1884, vol. 1, Jan-June, 1893.

29 Deepak Kumar, *Science and the Raj,* p. 236.

30 Proceedings of the Education Department of the NWP&O, 11 August 1884, vol. 1, Jan-June 1893.

31 *Gazetteer of Oudh*, 1877-78. Veena Talwar Oldenburg has described the lifestyle of the European elite in Lucknow. See, Veena Talwar Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow* pp. 242-246. One can also get a glimpse of the interaction between the Indians and the Anglo-Indians in the Lucknow of 1930s in Attia Hossain, *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, Penguin Books-Virago Press, London, 1988.

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bangle-makers, metal workers, perfume manufactures, makers of gold and silver lace and the practitioners of the *chikan* work. Majority of these workers were very poor and belonged to the Muslim community and resided in Hasanganj and Chauk areas of Lucknow.[32]

Amongst these workers, the economic condition of the weavers was fast deteriorating due to the competition that their hand woven cloth was facing from the cheap, finer, machine made European cotton cloths which were fast gaining popularity amongst the general public. The weavers generally belonged to the Hindu Kori and the Muslim Julaha castes. Their deteriorating economic position had forced some of them to work as reapers during the harvest time and had pushed many others towards destitution forcing them to migrate towards new destinations in search of new means of livelihood.[33] But the Muslim Julahas were always singled out by the government who blamed that their dogmatic approach towards learning any new technique was responsible for their deteriorating economic condition and consequently made them social bigots.[34] The Lucknow Industrial School was not concerned about them initially. Amongst the working classes, the school tried to attract the carpenters.

The Course Structure

One finds an elaborate description of the course structure in the policy documents and embedded within the discourse of this course structure is the constructed perception of the artisan. Colonel A. M. Brandreth, the Principal of Thomason Engineering College, Roorkee, stressed the importance of three things for the artisan– technical drawing, patient application of manual labour, strong observation power to enable him to construct figures from the drawings of an engineer. The artisan was only required to construct the

product as per the engineer's direction and imagination.[35]

The curriculum, formulated by the Department of Public Instruction, comprised primarily of the practical instruction in carpentry and drawing which formed part of the technical training although reading, writing, arithmetic, elementary mechanics and physics were also included in the syllabus.[36] Elementary drawing formed the basis of technical education for the artisan.[37] It was important to convert him to a skilled artificer.[38] "Drawing with a rule and a compass", as the *Memorandum* explained, trained the "hand and the eye" of the workman or the artisan to cultivate greater delicacy and penmanship which was a necessary preparation for hand training for the mechanical arts.[39]

The technical drawing which was envisaged for the artisan was different than the artistic drawing which was the forte of Art Schools.[40] In fact, one finds a considerable debate even within the official circles on the issue as to whether an industrial or an art school should have been established in Lucknow. Most of them favoured an industrial school in the city which would successfully tap the hereditary skills of Lucknow's artisan population and turn them into skilled workmen so that they could qualify the entrance test for the mechanical apprentice class of the Roorkee College.[41]

This was also reflected in the inaugural speech of the Lt. Governor who envisaged the School as a possible link to the Roorkee College, as discussed earlier.[42] Colvin justified his reasons for keeping the curriculum to its basics. The industrial classes of this province had a tendency to generalise, exaggerate, to be inaccurate, and to imitate, thus, rendering them incapable of any independent thinking. To expect any such proclivities to the contrary

32 W. Hoey, *Trades and Manufactures of Northern India,* Publisher, Place, 1888.

33 *Gazetteer of Oudh, 1877-78.*

34 Gyanendra Pandey, 'Economic Dislocation in Nineteenth Century Eastern Uttar Pradesh: Some Implications of the Decline of Artisanal Industry in Colonial India', in Peter Robb, ed., *Rural South Asia: Linkages, Change and Development*, Curzon Press, London, 1983.

35 This is the opinion of Colonel A. M. Brandreth , the Principal of Thomason Engineering College, Roorkee which he in his letter dated 21 December 1887, wrote to Sir Auckland Colvin, the Secretary To Government, North Western Provinces and Oudh (NWPO). The training of an artisan and an engineer also had to be very clearly distinguished. It would be the engineer's job tomake the design of a drawing marketable.

36 E. White, the Director of Public Instruction in the North Western Provinces, P. E. D., NWPO, Vol.1, JAN-JUNE 1893.

37 *Memorandum* in *Papers Relating to Technical Education in India,*1886-1904, pp. 36-37; Home, Education, B, Proceedings, January 1891, Nos. 14-15.

38 Alfred Croft, *Review of Education in India*.

39 Mr. Tawny, the Officiating Director of the Public Instruction in Bengal expressing his views in the *Memorandum*.

40 For the contradictions between Art School and Industrial School Training, see, Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism,* p. 17.

41 E. White, Director of Public Instruction, NWPO to Secretary to Government, NWPO, PED, NWPO, 19 March 1888, Vol. 1, Jan-June 1893, Progs. No. 18. Ian Derbyshire, "Economic Change and the Railways in North India, 1860-1914", in Ian J. Kerr (ed.), *Railways in Modern India*, Oxford UniversityPress, New Delhi, 2001.

42 *The Pioneer*, 5 April 1892.

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from them, for instance, to be proportionate, accurate, to think or to analyse or in other words to have a propensity to comprehend physical science would be without any benefit. Such qualifications were also true for the local Europeans and the Eurasians.[43]

Interestingly, M. J. White, the Principal of the Canning College, also provided a very specific reason for the need for industrial school training for the sons of the artisans: "the artisan's son, naturally unfit for higher mathematics and philosophy, should be… allowed to earn an honest livelihood in a goods shed… or a shop."[44] These perceptions about the Indian artisan influenced the technical education programme of the colonial state which imparted only certain basic technical attributes to the colonial subjects. The colonial state had its own agenda to cater to. It was solely interested in administering a colony and increasing its production of export commodities for which new technologies and new forms of labor were required. Alongside this the colonial rulers also wanted to preserve the status quo in the colonial society which they thought was threatened by the Western contact and this apprehension led them to restrict technical training to the teaching of craft and agrarian skills over academic education. However, the colonised demanded an academic education rather than training in crafts and agrarian skills. This led to a conflict between the plans of the colonisers and the ambitions of the colonised. While implementing their plan, the rulers charged the colonised with having a kind of cultural bias towards academic education and against manual occupations.[45] In the Lucknow Industrial School also, the entire actualisation programme of the technical education turned out to be a clash between the artisan's aspirations to improve his social status and the official's designs of trying to contain him from doing that.

The Teething Troubles

Soon after the School had started functioning, the officials realised that the implementation of their plan would not be so easy. Owing to their poverty and the limited resources, most of them came to the school for free general education or learn English or drawing to become a draughtsman or possibly a drawing master in one of the primary schools of the city which would enable him to earn thirty rupees a month. So perturbed was the state by this tendency of the artisan that in one of his visits to the School the Lt. Governor, Mr. Crosthwaite strongly recommended that the school be named 'School of Manual Training' to indicate it very clearly to the students that the objective of the School was not to offer a general education. He also suggested that the English coursed be revised to be only a basic language course and that the students above the age of fourteen should be kept to manual training alone.[46]

But the management committee refused to implement his recommendations of withdrawing general education and revising the English course in the industrial school curriculum fearing an exodus of the students. In actuality, the English course prescribed was already a very elementary one, barely enough to make the students comprehend the working drawings and the written orders in railway workshops and to understand the instructions of the supervisors who were mostly Englishmen. And a further withdrawal of it would hamper such plans. In any case the school had had a very unsettled beginning. Out of the 85 students on the roll in 1892, 38 had left the school by 1894.[47]

One of the reasons for this persistent problem of falling attendance was the poverty of the students which allowed them to receive only a minimum training enough for subsistence. Thus scholarships and along with it an employment guarantee in the Lucknow Iron Works were

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43 Ibid.

44 The Canning College was established in 1864 and was supported by the landlords or the talukdars of the Province. The Gazetteer of Oudh, 1877-8 recorded that one percent of the students in the college were the sons of the artisans and the manufacturers.
However, when the Industrial School was established the 'respectable native gentlemen' of the Province agreed to send their sons to the school so that they acquired some industrial training which was otherwise only provided in a dirty bazaar shop.
Nesfield, Director of the Public Instruction to Secretary to Government, NWPO, 11 July, 1893, Vol. 2, July-Dec 1893; M.J.White, Principal, Canning College, Lucknow to the Under Secretary to Government, NWPO, PED, NWPO, 25 September 1891, Vol. 1, Jan-June 1893, Progs. No. 54.

45 Daniel Headricks, *Tentacles of Progress*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1988, chapter 9.

46 In the beginning, the age bar was fixed at 8 years as the lower limit and 12 years as the upper limit.
For details regarding the changes in the qualifying age, Crosthwaite, Lt. Governor, NWPO in his Minute on the Lucknow Industrial School, PED, NWPO, 7 March 1893, Vol. 1, Jan-June 1893, Progs. No. 270.

47 T. C. Lewis, Director of Public Instruction, NWPO to Secretary to Government, NWPO, PED, NWPO, 8 May 1895, Vol. 5, June-Jan 1897.

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offered.[48] This had an encouraging result with the enrolment picking up from 106 to 160 in 1895.[49] But the main contentious issue remained the lower priority accorded to general education in the curriculum. Within a year the resultant problem was visible again when the Lucknow Industrial School was affiliated to the Roorkee Engineering College after a committee headed by Lt. Colonel John Clibborn,[50] the Principal of the College, recommended the affiliation of all the technical schools and industrial schools of the province, to the Roorkee College of Engineering and the Principal of the Roorkee College would become the ex-officio visitor to these schools. The government plan was to standardise engineering and mechanical training in the Province so that the increased demand for skilled mechanics could be met. The students from the affiliated schools were to be provided with opportunities to study in Roorkee and alternatively technical equipments and teachers from the College were to be sent to these schools [51]

At the Lucknow Industrial School the curriculum was restructured to meet the entry qualifications of the mechanical apprentice class in the Roorkee College of Engineering. This meant a renewed emphasis on manual instruction in carpentry, blacksmith's work, glass blowing and clay modeling over general education comprising of elementary English, vernacular mathematics and elementary mechanics which was relegated to the night classes. The standard of the general education was so low that Lt. Colonel

Clibborn was himself dissatisfied with the standards. So the School management arranged for night classes for the students to achieve at least a minimum standard in the instruction of English language. But the artisans unable to take the pressure of night classes in the school began to desert the school.[52] After the new rules came into force in July 1897 the number on the rolls fell from 170 to 117, the average daily attendance from 138 to 105 and the percentage of attendance from 80 to 73.[53]

From 1897 to 1903 the administration tried to bring the school back on track by trying to widen the employment basis. An arrangement was worked out with the Kanpur Woolen Mills to offer internships to provide the students with a practical training in the course of dyeing, and a few government railway companies: The East Indian, Oudh and Rohilkhand, Indian Midland, Bombay, Baroda and Central Indian Railway Companies.[54] However, by 1903, the School was again in the doldrums.[55] One important reason was the implementation of Sir E. C. Buck's *Report on Practical and Technical Education* in 1902.

Towards an Engineering College

Edward Charles Buck of the Bengal Civil Service was deputed by the Government of India to inquire into the prospects of technical and practical education in the country.[56] Significantly, the Report recommended a market oriented, mass production of the artisan products. For this the Government's assistance was

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48 Inspector of Schools, 2nd Circle, NWPO, to Director of Public Instruction, NWPO, 30 August 1895; Locomotive and Carriage Superintendent, Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway, to Inspector of Schools, 2nd Circle, NWPO, 16 August 1895; Superintending Engineer, 2nd Circle, Provincial Works, NWPO, to Inspector of Schools, 2nd Circle, NWPO, 28 August 1895, PED, NWPO, Vol. 5, Jan-June 1897.

49 W. N. Boutflower, Director of Public Instruction, NWPO, to the Secretary to the Government, NWPO, 2 May 1896, PED, NWPO, Vol. 5, Jan-June 1897.

50 John Clibborn was the Principal of the Roorkee College from 1892 to 1902. Before this he had served the Public Works Department (henceforth, PWD) and worked in numerous canal projects in the Terai region and also in the Sarda Canal project. For details, see, K. V. Mital, *History of Thomason College of Engineering,* University of Roorkee, Roorkee, India, 1986.

51 *Proceedings of the Committee appointed by His Honor the Lt. Governor to consider the expediency of bringing the Lucknow Industrial School and other similar schools in to connection with the Thomason College, Roorkee.* Nainital, Saturday, 6 June 1896, Vol. 5, Jan-June 1897.
The idea was to make it the controller of the engineering training in the province. The Principal of the Roorkee College became the ex-officio visitor to these schools, the students from these industrial schools could come to study at Roorkee, teachers and tools from Roorkee were sent to these schools.
There was considerable expansion in the Roorkee College after Clibborn became the Principal of the Roorkee College in 1892. In 1896, the mechanical and the industrial apprentice classes and a few lower level courses to train foremen, technicians and skilled workers were started. Before that in 1894, to systematise the functioning of the College, the Committee of Management was constituted and the College was affiliated to the Allahabad University. For details, see, Mital, *History*, pp. 148-151.

52 T. C. Lewis, Director of Public Instruction, NWPO, to Secretary to Government, NWPO, 24 September, 1897, PED, NWPO, Vol. 10, July-Dec 1899. Headmaster, Industrial School, Lucknow, to Inspector of Schools, 2nd Circle, NWPO, 2 November, 1897, PED, NWPO, Vol. 10, July-Dec 1899.

53 Ibid. The new rules implied that the duration of the total course structure of the school was shortened from 9 years to six years and an increase in the per hour working of the school day. The students felt overworked and withdrew from the school.

54 T. C. Lewis, Director of Public Instruction, NWPO, to Secretary to Government, NWPO, 12 July 1897, PED, NWPO, Vol. 6, July-Dec 1897.

55 Atkinson, Principal, Thomason College, Roorkee to Secretary to Government, United Provinces, 13 February 1903, Vol. 16.

56 S. N. Sen, *Scientific and Technical Education, 1781-1900,* Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi, 1991, pp. 432-40.

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to come in the form of initial advances, expert instructors and the provision of raw material. The aim was to utilise the dexterity of the Indian artisan and improve his production process by introducing him to better tools and hand machines.[57] And for this, the report suggested, the industrial schools premises were to be utilised. This required some sort of standardisation in the functioning of industrial schools all over India.

In the 1902 Educational Conference at Shimla, the recommendations were accepted by the Government of India. The industrial schools were to develop as educational institutions where master artisans from the markets would be called and trained to improve their working style and technique. Over all, the plan was to mechanise artisan production for which a survey of the local industries was important. In the North Western Provinces, Lt. Colonel Clibborn of the Roorkee College headed a Committee to survey the local industries and implement the recommendations of the Conference. The recommendations of the Report had a big impact on the functioning of the Lucknow Industrial School.[58]

Meanwhile, in 1897, a new headmaster had been appointed in the School replacing Babu Tara Prossanno Banerjee to whose case we will return to in the last section. The new headmaster of the school, Mr. P. H. Swinchatt, surveyed the principal artisan workshops in Lucknow and considered the following industries for the mechanisation programme: Embroidery or the manufacture of *chikan* (art muslin), calico printing, manufacture of silver ware, *bidar* or inlaid work including *zarbaland* (relief work), clay modeling, brass work, *tar kashi*. A copper ware manufactory was also visited.[59]

But even while collecting information about the industries it became clear that the artisans were all against the practicability of the new recommendations in the industrial school. The reasons perhaps lay, as Swinchatt described, in the working style of the artisans.[60]

The artisans, for instance, the calico printers,

worked along with their family members in the summers and sold their products in the winters. This was too comfortable a situation, Swinchatt considered, to abandon and get attracted to the offers of the industrial school– rent free accommodation, advertisement of their products and instruction for the improvement of their techniques. The artisans themselves were unwilling to leave their home even for a few hours or, to be enforced within the discipline of a school curriculum.[61]

Thus, even after a payment of twenty rupees per month only three artisans came to the school– a calico printer, a copper smith, a *tarkashi* worker. But the entire mechanisation programme was a failure because any improved method increased the cost of production. The artisans did not need any suggestions to improve their techniques. What they needed was to tell them how to produce more at cheaper rates. Thus, the artisans were not finding the suggestions economically appropriate. The number of students in this section was gradually nearing zero because the industrial education it offered was not something which the artisans wanted. On the other hand, due to a strict distinction between the general and technical education, the students in the Roorkee Preparatory class of the School, were failing to qualify for the mechanical apprentice class.[62]

Interestingly, in one of the petitions to the School management, the students expressed their strong intention of being trained as skilled workmen to be employed as foremen mechanics, fitters etc. in the railways or be able to qualify for the mechanical apprentice class in Roorkee which they were not able to because of the inadequate standard of general education in the School which did not match up to the standards of the Roorkee entrance examination.[63]

Meanwhile, the Locomotive Superintendent of the Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway, P. A. Hyde offered to employ the pass outs from the School. The school was required to turn out a class of men who could cater to the lower grades of the mechanical section of the railways

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57 The technological officer of each province along with the local associations was to identify the industries which could be developed indigenously so that the import of such articles could be stopped and for this a detailed survey would be undertaken. Weaving was identified as a viable export industry. For details, see, *RPTE.*

58 These officials who conducted the surveys would be able to instruct the teachers of the industrial schools about the industries surveyed. If such teachers were not available in India then the officials would be called from England who would first study the industry and then they would train the teachers in it. E. C. Buck, *Report on Practical and Technical Education,* 1900-1 (henceforth RPTE). For a detailed description of E. C. Buck's Report, see, Sen, *Scientific and Technical Education,* pp. 432-440. Sen gives a detailed account of Buck's Report but misses the discussion as to why these policy discussions were taking place.
Secretary to the GOI, Home, Education, to Secretary to Government, NWPO, 20 November 1901, PED, NWPO, Vol. 13, Jan-June 1902.

59 Secretary, NWPO to Director of Public Instruction, NWPO, 7 December 1901, PED, NWPO, Vol. 14.

60 G. N. Chakravarti, Inspector of Schools , 2nd Circle, NWPO to Director of Public Instruction, NWPO, 22 March 1901, PED, NWPO, Vol. 13. Clay-modeling was already taught in the industrial school by that time.

61 Ibid.

62 Secretary to Government, NWPO to Director of Public Instruction, NWPO, 22 June 1901, PED, NWPO, Vol. 13.

63 Proceedings of a meeting of the Committee of Management of the Industrial School, Lucknow, held on the 16 April 1903, Vol. 16.

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as fitters, charge men, *mistris*, carpenters, turners, smith and foundry workers. Thus, the school committee decided to modify the curriculum according to the requirements of the railway companies. As for Roorkee, an arrangement was worked out that the headmaster of the School would nominate the suitable students for the mechanical apprentice class and the entrance test was done away with.[64]

After 1907, the School was transformed in to a purely technical school and by 1912 it was renamed as the Government Technical School. Sources about the history of the School become less descriptive after this period and after 1918 one does not find mention of the School in the Public Instruction Reports. The overall sense that one gets is that the School stabilised after 1907. The artisans were now being attracted to the School. This could not have been abrupt. Were they attracted by the employment offers in the Railways? The facts as to whether the Europeans and Eurasians continued to be given a reservation in the School become blurred. By 1918, the School had become the Mechanical Engineering College. Interestingly, in the *Inspection Notes* of *the Indian Industrial Commission, 1916-18*, the history of the School, was recorded from 1899 that is, after Swinchatt took over as the Principal of the Industrial School. The history of the School from 1892 to 1899 were completely omitted and along with it the contributions of the first principal of the School, Babu Tara Prossano Banerjee.[65]

Conclusion

Thus, the present work seeks to trace the developments of technical education for the artisan and focuses on a particular institution in Lucknow, the Lucknow Industrial School, founded in 1892. The discussion about the technical education was initiated with MacDonnell's *Memorandum* in 1886. It held that it was important to encourage technical education due to a glut in the employment sector related to literary education. Thus, there was a need to emphasise practical education in the country. On deeper analysis it becomes evident that in the second half of the nineteenth century, Empire building had necessitated the colonial state to invest in various construction works. This had led to a rise in demand for skilled and cheap labour.

The School was set up for the sons of the railway artisans, for the poor Eurasians and Europeans and for the industrial classes of the city who were mostly artisans. The trainees were to be taught the elementary general education, drawing, and manual training and were to be employed as railway apprentices. The School was modeled on the Railway Techni-

cal School, Lahore. From the beginning the School was envisaged as a feeder institution to the Roorkee Civil Engineering College.

What is most interesting in this whole debate is the problematic of the policy implementation of teaching the artisans English and general education free of cost. While the emphasis of the authorities was to solely impart manual training to the artisans, the artisans had other plans. Most of them wanted to learn drawing to become draughtsman and also learn English even though it was extremely elementary barely enough to make the students comprehend the working drawings and the written orders in the railway workshops and to understand the instructions of the supervisors who were mostly Englishmen. The clash of interests between the state and the artisans is visible throughout the period. After the Industrial School was affiliated to the Roorkee Engineering College in 1896 the entire structure of the Industrial School curriculum was oriented towards the Mechanical Apprentice class in the Roorkee College. General education was reduced to such an extent that even the authorities from the College asked the School authorities to raise the standard of general education up to the level that the artisans could comprehend the syllabus of the mechanical apprentice class. Besides the complaints of the College authorities, the artisans were also withdrawing in large numbers because of the pressure of extra hours of training in general education to achieve a minimum standard. These were the attempts that the School was making to convert itself in to a more specifically technical school. This trend was visible throughout 1897 till 1899 when the headmaster of the School, Babu Tara Prossano Banerjee was replaced by Mr. Swinchatt, an English technician.

In the post 1901 phase, the School briefly tried to experiment with the idea of drawing the artisans from the market to the School, improve their skills to enable them to cater to mass production. However, because the artisans were not willing to come to the School leaving the comfortable environs of their workshops, this experiment failed completely and the School was in the doldrums by 1903. Then, there was a brief phase where the interests of the mechanical apprentice class of Roorkee dominated, which soon faced opposition from the railway authorities who wanted to make the School solely a training site for railway apprenticeship. Finally, the School became a purely technical school and went on to become the Mechanical Engineering College by 1918. After this, the history of the School went into oblivion.

64 Hyde, Locomotive Superintendent, Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway to Inspector of Schools, 3rd circle, Lucknow, 14 July 1906, Vol. 23.

65 *Indian Industrial Commission, Inspection Notes, 1916-18,* p. 8.

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Conflict Prevention and Peace Making in Cameroon: The Case for Indigenous Strategies in the Grassfields Region

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Abstract

There is an assumption that the failure or ineffectiveness of conventional Western methods is largely responsible for conflicts that continue to plague many African societies. Given this situation, efforts worldwide are made to seek new approaches to conflict prevention, management and resolution in Africa. This quest has led to a school which advocates the use of indigenous African approaches to resolve conflict.[1] This essay follows this approach. It examines some indigenous mechanisms employed by the Grassfields peoples of Cameroon in addressing conflict-related issues. It argues that the restoration and use of these local techniques could still be useful in managing and resolving conflicts, especially intra and inter-communal conflict.

Peace and conflict (war), those contrary conditions of mankind, are however alike in one important characteristic, that both are aspects of a society's relations with other societies. They are linked, too, by an intermediate zone in which the tension caused by the interaction of societies is mitigated towards one end of the scale of their relations by peaceful tendencies while towards the other end it is exacerbated by influences hostile to peace. Though not cherished, war frequently occurred among the people of the Cameroon Grassfields.[2] Consequently, conflict prevention and peace making became unavoidable actions of people, operating on both permanent and impermanent bases to minimise the conflict phenomenon. Despite this effort, the region had the highest rate of intra and inter-communal conflicts in Cameroon. This migratory and implantation trend of the Grassfields chiefdoms was done amidst conflict so too was their expansion. Most conflicts in this region of over 150 independent villages were propelled by competition over the control of resources, land and people. More powerful chiefdoms waged wars to gain control over their neighbours.[3] According to Vansina, wars of conquest were not meant to annihilate enemies; rather they were means of annexing weak kingdoms by stronger ones.[4] Succession questions, the refusal to pay tributes, non performance of mortuary rites, the attempt to monopolise trade, the maltreatment of messengers on diplomatic assignment, and sometimes the refusal to offer princesses for marriage and poaching sometimes provoked disputes.[5] These problems were aggravated under the German and British colonial periods when colonial authorities introduced the tax system and some communities were obliged to pay via others which they sometimes resented. Also, the territorial and administrative division of the region and the classification of chiefs into various categories by the colonial masters added to sources of conflict.[6]

The Grassfields is composed mainly of the Tikar, Bamileke, Bali-Chamba and Tadkon/Widekum in the North West and West Provinces, (see map) who all claim diverse origins. With

1 David R. Smock (ed.), *Creative Approaches to Managing Conflict in Africa,* USIP Press, Washington, 1997.

2 The appellation Grassfields was introduced by the Germans to refer to this region that comprises a multiplicity of linguistically diverse political communities with varying modes of centralisation of powers, which correlated inversely with population densities. Today, the region extends from the highlands of the North-West Province to the West Provinces. While the North West Province represents what is also known as the Bamenda or Western Grassfields, the West Province represents the Eastern Grassfields.

3 P. N. Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy: A Study of Inter-Chiefdom Relations in the Western Grassfields, North West Province of Cameroon*, Department of Sociology, University of Yaounde, Yaounde, 1987, p. 6.

4 Jan Vansina, "A Comparison of African Kingdoms", *Africa,* 32, 1962, p. 328.

5 Ibid., pp. 14, 19.

6 Patrick Bungfang, *Inter-Chiefdom Conflicts in the North West Province of Cameroon from 1889-1999. Colonial and Post Colonial Influences*, M.A. dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2000, p. 2.

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regard to the socio-political organisation, the people live in a well-structured society, hierarchically stratified. At the apex of this hierarchy was the *fon*, the chief priest of the land, on whom all final decisions concerning crucial issues rested. He ensured stability in the community; settled disputes and promoted reconciliation among his people. He had the prerogative to declare war and/or make peace with his enemies, and his word was law.[7] After the *fon*, came the secret societies or regulatory societies also classed in order of strength and duty, the most supreme being the *kwifon.* This was followed by the notables. Between the notables and the free citizens– men, women and children– were the diviners, and after the free citizens were the slaves, although they formed no social stratum.[8] As a matter of fact, all these persons contributed in enhancing peace and stability in the region, made manifest in their conflict prevention and peace making efforts.

One outstanding method of averting conflict by the Grasslanders was their application of preventive diplomacy. Plano and Olton see preventive diplomacy as action to prevent disputes from arising, to resolve them before they escalate into conflicts or to limit the spread of conflicts when they occur. In Africa such actions were carried out by official representatives of states.[9] According to Robert Smith, diplomacy, generally, is the fundamental means by which foreign relations are conducted and foreign policy implemented. It includes all the operational techniques whereby a state pursues its interest beyond its jurisdiction.[10] In pre-colonial times, the Grasslanders used diplomacy to maintain cordial relations among themselves. Nkwi confirms this by stating that "… deliberate endeavours to promote friendly contacts and maintain good relation among the Grassfields states were great."[11] In fact, the increasing need for inter-dependence imposed the need for this cordiality. Thus, their basic perspective of diplomacy was to enable them live in harmony with their neighbours as well. Following the recurrence of war in the region, the people engaged in the implement of constant diplomatic measures at securing peace, which include the conclusion of treaties, the signing of alliances, the development of trade and the paying of tributes.

As earlier highlighted, the responsibility to take decisions about war, peace, treaties and negotiations with other states was in the hands of the *Fon*. But he used accredited diplomats to achieve his objectives, except in situations when his personal intervention was imperative and crucial to avoid the imminent escalation of war. Accredited traditional diplomats were men trained in the art of traditional diplomacy with the know-how to negotiate and transact business with other chiefdoms on behalf of their respective kings or rulers.[12] They acted as "shuttle" diplomats to discuss peace initiatives with others chiefdoms. Though the status of those chosen to carry out diplomatic duties varied from one chiefdom to the other, they were mostly princes or warriors. Diplomats carried credentials or badges in such form as a buffalo tail, baton, staff and spear, which differentiated them from other village notables. Also, they wore special clothing and enjoyed certain privileges and immunities. In the practice of diplomacy, these envoys required some immunity, like protection against arbitrary detention. Any violation of this immunity was punishable. Another category of diplomats was the resident representatives maintained in foreign chiefdoms to maintain good relationship with their chiefdoms. These diplomats occupied the centre stage in establishing treaties with other neighbouring communities.

Treaties or pact-signing characterised Grassfields preventive diplomacy particularly in the pre-colonial times. Treaties were signed as a way of winning the friendship of perennially hostile groups, especially to end border disputes. The binding nature of treaties was enforced by the swearing of oaths. Amongst many of the ethnic groups of the Grassfields, oaths entailed the annual killing of a slave and/or animal, followed by the preparation of sacred emblems and potions and the mingling and consumption of the blood by both parties as the years evolved. For example, due to the perennially hostile relations between Mankon and Bafut, both chiefdoms took a decision to terminate their long-standing differences. After prolonged negotiations between the two sovereigns in 1889 both chiefdoms finally signed a non-aggression pact under a fig tree on the Bafut-Mankon border, Azommanukan. This was

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7 Chilver and Kaberry, *Traditional Bamenda, Precolonial History and Ethnography of the Bamenda Grassfields,* Government Printers, Buea, 1966, pp. 16-19; Claude Tardits, (ed.), *The Contribution of Ethnographic Research to the History of Cameroon Cultures*, Vol. 2, CNRS, Paris, 1981.

8 I. Fowler, "African Sacred Kings: Expectations and Performance in Cameroon", *Ethnology*, Vol. 32, June 1993, p. 17.

9 Jack C. Plano and Roy Olton, *The International Relations Dictionary*, Holy Rinehart and Winston Inc, New York 1969, pp. 213-14.

10 Robert Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy in the Pre-colonial West Africa*, Metheun and Co. Ltd., London, 1976, pp. 12-13.

11 P. N. Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy*, p. 41.

12 Ibid., p. 51.

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marked by the performance of rituals and the burial of a live dog and two slaves, one from each party. At the burial spot, Mankon and Bafut swore never to fight each other and promised to live in peace and harmony as brothers. They agreed never to abrogate the pact, especially by signing a similar treaty with another chiefdom. [13]

A similar pact was signed between the Mbembe and Nkambe peoples. Immediately after the installation of the Berabe chiefdom in its present site, it sent three princes to establish friendly relations with the Ntumbe ethnic group in Nkambe. The princes performed the desired oath-taking with their neighbour, aimed at never fighting each other and standing by each other in times of aggression from a third party. This was already good grounds for the establishment of a sound alliance between both groups.[14] This oath-taking mechanism prevented the escalation of war or resolved prevalent conflicts.[15]

An important issue about non-aggression pacts was their sacred character. The sacrifices and oath-taking meant that once the treaties had been concluded, they had to be respected to the letter by both parties without which, it was believed, a spell or misfortune would befall the violator. But, the rituals and beliefs surrounding such pacts were not enough to sustain their respect due to other intervening variables. First, with the death of the *fons* who signed the treaty, their successors, especially the warring types, hardly respected them. Second, the changing political situations (balance of power) in the region forced *fons* to abrogate such treaties for new ones with other communities. For instance, in 1901 following the growing strength of Nkwen, Mankon abrogated the pact with Bafut and entered into an alliance with Nkwen and Bali-Kumbat.[16] All of them agreed to mutually defend and protect each other. This explains why the Bafut and Mankon resumed their hostile relations during the colonial and post-colonial periods. The treaty between the Nkambe and Ntumbe people did not help them for so long as both people soon developed a hostile character towards one another. Nonetheless, such treaties made chiefdoms sometimes turned their enemies into friends; easing hostility between them for at least a while.

Diplomatic interactions amongst chiefdoms of the Cameroon Grassfields also took the form of exchange of gifts, as it was customary for chiefs to exchange gifts with their peers. These royal exchanges were a diplomatic move meant to normalise or strengthen friendly ties since a gift of valuable items from one chief to another demanded a reciprocal gesture when the occasion presented itself. This is what Christaud Geary calls "prestige exchange" between traditional chiefs.[17] In Bafut, for instance, this was done on behalf of the *Fon* by the *Bukum* who carried the gifts in a royal or palace bag called *aba'nto*, to which was fastened a porcupine quill.[18] The royal or "diplomatic" bag contained among other things rare and valuable items like ivory, cloth, salt, kola nuts, brass pipes, guns and gun powder, cam-wood, chevron beads, palm oil, royal carvings, palm wine, goats, caps, ornamented calabashes, stool, leopard pelts and slaves. This practice survived the colonial period.

In 1975, for instance, the *Fon* of Babungo sent stools and specially designed cow horns (cup) to the *Fon* of Baba I. On his part the former received traditional robes from the latter. Although the use of the palace-bag strategy helped in sustaining peace-time relations, it was also used by warring chiefdoms to end hostilities. So, when it was sent by a rival belligerent chief, it was interpreted as a hand of friendship and so hostility was ended. The value of the "prestige exchange" was minimised, especially during the post-colonial era with the growing strength of the money economy, modernism and human right campaigns by the government and civil societies.

Another means by which some Grassfields chiefdoms strengthened diplomatic ties with the neighbours was by sending princes to live in the courts or palaces of friendly *Fons*. For example, in spite of the fact that Bafut rivalled and even fought several wars with Kom, the *Fon* of Bafut, Abumbi I, sent one of his favourite sons, Prince Shu Ayieh, to live in the Kom Palace.[19] Though this was a measure to prevent the young prince from elimination by other aspirants to the throne, it was also regarded as a means to promote friendly ties with Kom. When Shu Ayieh, who succeeded his father in 1932 as Fon Achirimbi II, became king in 1932, he was indebted to the Kom throne for his protection and

13 F. A. Ndenge et al. *Focus on Nukwi-nu Fo Ndefru II*, p.78; John Fru Fobizi, "Mankon-Bafut Relations, 1889-1901: From Bitter Enemies to Fraternal Allies, Long essay in History, University of Buea, 1996, p. 22.

14 Mbembe-Ntumbe Land Affair Proceedings, AC/5, 1932, National Archives Buea (N.A.B.), p. 3.

15 Mark Bolak Funteh, "Missionary Contribution to and/or Modification of the Yamba Precolonial Society 1914-2000," MA dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2003, pp. 24-26.

16 Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy*, p. 22.

17 Chirstaud C. Geary, "Art and Political Process in the Kingdoms of Bali and Bamum (Cameroon Grassfields)", *CJAS/RCEA,* XXII, I, 1988, p. 23.

18 E. M. Chilver*, Traditional Government in Bafut*, Nigerian Field Society, West Cameroon, 1963, p. 11.

19 Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy*, p. 55.

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courtly training. In order to pre-empt future trouble between Bafut and Kom, especially after his death, he too in the 1960s sent the heir to his throne, John Neba Forbin, to his colleague, *Fon* Galega of Bali who later worked in conjunction with West Cameroon Government to resolve the tense wrangling among the Bafut people over who to succeed Achirimbi after his death in 1968.

Royal trade which was a common practice among the Grassfields chiefs, was another formidable weapon used against the escalation of war.[20] Articles of trade included war captives, ivory or food items. Goods could also be delivered to another chief on credit. The chief who received goods on such terms automatically found favour with the supplier chief, hence hardly declared war against his chiefdom. Such a gesture helped to create an anti-war environment, as it is generally said that "you cannot bite the finger that feeds you."[21] But with the growing influence of the money economy, population growth and scarcity of foodstuff in the region, the effectiveness of this method was no longer the same. Its practice was not so frequently exercised by the chiefs.

More so, the marriage institution also served a great deal against war. In the pre-colonial times, chiefs of the Grassfields established, promoted and cemented their relations through royal marriages. Chiefs desiring to make or cement friendly relations usually gave out beautiful princesses in marriage to neighbouring chiefs or princes. For example, Bafut exchanged royal wives with Kom, Babungo, Nkwen, Bali-Nyonga, Mankon, Bum, Bambui and Bali. The free circulation of women, notably princesses among traditional rulers was important in the sense that in the absence of an accredited diplomat, the royal women acted as resident ambassadors of the chiefdoms to which they got married. As such they were the ones to provide hospitality to indigenes from their chiefdoms who entered the palace. The marital bonds made less likely the occurrence of war between neighbouring chiefdoms. Hardly, therefore, did chiefdoms with marital ties go to war with one another.[22] But these foreign wives later became sources of conflict as most spied on their husbands for their chiefdoms and when suspected or caught in the act. This was what accounted for the escalation of the Sop-Rom conflict of 1982. The use of the marriage could be a formidable

method of preventing conflict among the Grasslanders if only they respected the true norms of the institution; love, faithfulness and trust.

Some special ceremonies such a death celebration of mortuary rites, enthronement of a fellow chief served a good purpose in the establishment of peaceful environment for interaction amongst the pre-colonial people of the Grassfields.[23] All friendly chiefs were to be informed or invited to such occasions by special envoys dispatched by their counterpart.[24] For example, during the funeral ceremony of the deceased chief, neighbouring villages or ethnic groups, hostile and friends were often invited to participate in the celebrations. A chief going to condole a colleague was always accompanied by special associations and dance groups. During this time, the host chief together in concert with his invited counterparts performed certain rituals. Such a gesture could normalise relationship between two unfriendly chiefdoms. Despite these measures of preventing conflict, disputes still occurred among the Grasslanders.

The recourse to war was only after all avenues for diplomatic settlement had failed. That explains why before war was declared, there was usually a period of negotiation undertaken by emissaries. An emissary carried a peace plant (*nkeng* or the *shunshut* among the Bamums) to the enemy chief. This meant the denouncing of war by his chiefdom. If the enemy chief accepted the plant it meant he was ready for peace negotiations, but its rejection meant the declaration of war. When war was imminent, the launching of attack did not come as a surprise to the belligerents. The date and place for confrontation was pre-arranged by both parties.[25] When war escalated and became prolonged and/or devastating, the Grasslanders sought ways to manage and resolve the dispute, that is, peace making.

The most obvious traditional aspect of conflict resolution employed by the Grassfields people was the traditional council. This was a gathering of village elders through the invitation of the chief to settle a thorny issue in the village. With the escalation of hostilities among the Grasslanders, the council played a vital role to manage and resolve them. Once an issue seemed as would disrupt societal harmony, the sound of a gong or the beat of a special drum instantly assembled the elders, either under the

20 Ibid.

21 Mbah Vash'TI Ambo, *Pre-colonial Trade and Marketing System in Meta Division from Pre-colonial Times to1884*, M. A. dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2004, pp. 34-40.

22 Linda Ankiambom Lawyer, *The Role of Women in the Development of Kom since the Pre-colonial Period,* M. A. dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2005, p.28.

23 Mark Bolak Funteh, *Non-Governmental Organisations in Conflict Resolution in the North-West Province of Cameroon. 1990-2004*, D. E. A. dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2005, p. 41.

24 Ibid., p. 45. Failure to do so meant that the chief had no obligation to attend.

25 Nkwi*, Traditional Diplomacy*, p. 84.

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shade of a tree or under the roof of a chief's palace. In pre-colonial times, such village gathering was exclusively for men (but since the colonial period women have increasingly been involved). The discussions were frank, free and fruitful with the guilty asked to pay a token fine as a symbol of confession and return to the society as well as the general assembly resorted to a friendly and brotherly round of drinks at the end of the exercise. This is confirmed by Thierno Bah when discussing about conflict resolution techniques amongst Africans.

Bah posits that the "palaver" (referring to conflict) was always held at a symbolic, sacred spot such as a tree or cave. He goes on to state that the date of such meeting was fixed by the geomancers for an auspicious period. Those taking part were people known for their knowledge of the customary law and esoteric practices, expressed their views in sayings and aphorisms which were and still are actual histori-cal references, warnings and recommendations intended to ensure that compromise in justice prevail. Even when the chief was the accused person, he was expected to be mature enough to be above emotional jibes. After all, the primordial objective of the procedure employed in the palaver was not to establish the right and wrong of the case, but to restore unity and harmony in order to effect a reconciliation of hearts and minds. That is why a joint meal brought the palaver to an end.[26] If the problem was regarded as not being human, the elders called on the ancestors through oracles to solve it. This attests to the fact that the desire to solve problems amicably was the main thrust of the African character,[27] in general and Grassfields character in particular. These strat-egies were employed mostly in the settlement of internal disputes. Different methods were employed to end inter-community conflicts.

Solutions to inter-chiefdom crisis were mostly influenced by the diplomatic role of the chief and/or his envoys. In a situation where the permanent resident envoy or foreign representa-tive was involved, he went to his host after receiving orders to do so from his chief, and tried to negotiate for peace. The conditions given by his host as prerequisite to peace were channelled to his chief. In most cases, he went back to meet with his village council and had the situation controlled. But in situations where

no official of this kind existed, the chief used "shuttle" diplomats to carry on the task. In such circumstances, an emissary used the traditional peace tree as a symbol of desiring peace and an invitation to the negotiating table.[28]

Such envoys could also carry along palm wine, fowls, kola nuts or cowries to show a willingness to discuss peace. For instance, around 1800, Baba I and Babungo were at war over Mashasha piece of land that separated their borders. Since the Babungo proved stron-ger, Baba I sued for peace. It sent messengers with a white cock tied on a long bamboo to the *Fon* of Babungo. The white fowl stood for the restoration of a pure relation void of bloodshed, while the long bamboo meant that such desired relations were to be prolonged.[29] The Babungo *Fon* did the same in return and peace was restored between both chiefdoms. Amongst the Yamba, Mesaje, Mbembe and Wimbum chiefdoms, a newly fabricated gong played the role that the fowl played among the Baba. It was with these objects that the enemy chief used to convince his village councillors to ac-cept a ceasefire and to begin negotiation with the enemy.

Secret societies and prisoners of war also played an important role in peace-making. With the escalation of war they were go-betweens in the establishment of peace. Bah confirms by saying that even prior to the escalation of hostilities, a prisoner of war was released and sent to act as a go-between, trying to restore serene relations between the parties. They took steps, to prevent the situation from getting complex and becoming non-negotiable.[30] During the first bloody Babungo-Kom land dispute of 1800, Kom sued for peace after losing many of their fighters. The *Fon* of Kom released five Babungo captives under Kom custody, during which the prisoners were given traditional loin-cloths to wear. They were also given a tradi-tional or palace bag containing kola nuts, cam-wood and a traditional loincloth to give to the *Fon* Njifuan of Babungo. This was a sign that they were seeking peace. In return, *Fon* Nyifuan sent to his counterpart a similar bag containing beautiful woven cloth, necklaces and cowries, and this brought the dispute to an end.[31] Apart from using the political means to bring peace between hostile relationships, the

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26 Thierno Mouctar Bah, "Traditional Peacemaker," *U.N.E.S.C.O. Sources*, no. 62, October 1994, p. 14.

27 George Ngwane, *Settling Disputes in Africa, Traditional Bases for Conflict Resolution*, Buma Kor, Yaounde, 1996, pp. 51.

28 Bah, "Peacemaker," p. 14.

29 Bungfang, "Inter-Chiefdom Conflict," pp. 18-19; *Blasius Fukachia Kidio, Political Conflicts in Kom, North West Prov-ince of Cameroon 1951-1997: A Political History*, D. I. P. E. S. II dissertation , University of Yaounde I, 1999, pp. 30-1.

30 Bah, "Peacemaker," p. 15.

31 Lawyer, "Development of Kom," p. 56.

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Grasslanders also employed economic and socio-cultural methods.

The utilisation of trade was a vital instrument to initiate negotiations and make peace, especially when antagonism between chiefdoms prolonged. At different situations, the *fons* of other chiefdoms rallied themselves and decided to exclude the warring parties from all trade. Of course, since such decisions often concerned their most cherished goods, they had to terminate the war. A case in point was when the Batibo and Meta villages stopped supplying the Bali-Nyonga with cocoyams, palm oil, beats, beans and groundnuts when Bali-Nyonga subdued the Widikum villages of Ngyen-Mbo and Ngyen-Muwa in 1952. This economic sanction helped to oust the Bali from these areas and end the problem.[32] However, the Bali did not leave the area easily. This was because when Bali was sanctioned, other chiefdoms; mostly its allies maintained their trade links with it. Hence, Bali did not feel much of the compelling pressure of the other chiefdoms to end the war. This explains why the Bali took much time to leave the Widikum area. The use of trade sanctions to this effect could be very effective if all Bali trade connections complied at the same time to terminate their relations with it.

Socially, the marriage institution played a key role in the management of hostilities as well. An example was during the Nso-Babungo War of 1906, commonly known as the Coffee-Coffee War. Due to its devastating nature on Babungo, *Fon* Sake decided to sue for peace. He did so by sending a delegation to *Fon* Sebum of Nso, headed by Prince Timbufua, with a royal bag containing many precious items. In return, the *Fon* of Nso went beyond material gifts by sending alongside a young girl, Manyam, the daughter of Shey Wo Nkarkur, a notable. She was received into the royal palace and got married to a prince. Generally, women received as gifts from other chiefs were considered precious by the recipient. But, with the passage of time, this method of making peace became obsolete, especially with the growing importance of women's emancipation and human rights in most African societies and the Grassfields chiefdoms of Cameroon in particular.

Furthermore, the *mabi,* (mother of twins or triplets) played a fundamental role in the negotiation of peace amongst some Grassfields societies. Amongst the Yamba, for example, the *mabi* occupied a prestigious position within this society, believing to possess supernatural or mystical powers. In situations of conflict, she intervened at the battleground by holding up high in her left hand the fresh branch of the *nkeng*. At this juncture, because of her wailing, hostilities were stopped in order not to anger the ancestors, believed to have found favour with the *mabis.* During hostilities, the battle front experienced the presence of many *mabis,* thus their wailing could easily be heard.[33] The people's changing perspective about the powers of the *mabis*, with the advent of Christianity and formal education, rendered her role in peace making increasing ineffective although they are still respected.

Furthermore, funeral celebration of deceased *fons* among the people of the Grassfields was another avenue for the promotion of peace. During the presentation of condolence, the other chiefs present communicated their desire for peace negotiations. As the newly enthroned chief took the oath of office, all the chiefs present committed themselves to live in harmony with one another. Other war rituals were equally performed. In the case where war had escalated between some chiefs present during the ceremony, they were prompted by such rituals to engage in a cease-fire. Despite the fact that chiefs' funeral occasions occurred rarely to match the frequent incidence of conflicts in the region, their values to peace making proved important. This mechanism is still very much in use. But its value in serving the people would be more if the war rituals performed during such occasions applied not only to specific war instances, but to all the stakeholders for life.

The forgoing analysis suggests that in the past, local and indigenous mechanisms played a crucial role in the peace process in the Grassfields of Cameroon. They were effective in preventing, managing and resolving conflicts within, between and among traditional states. Many of these traditional techniques were lost to colonialism. The introduction of new approaches since the advent of colonial rule eventually led to their neglect. But the new approaches have shown their limits in handling the peace process. The result has been the escalation of conflict and violence which have caused loss of lives and property. This has led to reflections on alternative means of conflict prevention, management and resolution. To this effect, this paper has explored some of the customary mechanisms employed by the people of the Cameroon Grassfields since the pre-colonial period to address conflict-related issues. It argues in favour of the relevance and use of locally or customary-based initiatives at conflict prevention, management and resolution. No doubt, some of the methods examined poses questions related to current global debates on

32 Ernest Ticha Tibi, *The Bali-Batibo-Meta Relationship 1889-1999: A Hundred and Ten Years of Conflict*, M. A. dissertation, University of Yaounde, 2002, p. 25.

33 Ibid., 54.

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human rights and gender. This explains why sceptics and neo-modernists argue that the methods used by our forefathers are outdated and so cannot fit within the present realities. But contrary to what many think, tradition is dynamic and evolves over time. Traditional leaders in many African societies have become peace and human rights advocates and so can shape their various traditions to serve the society in trying to prevent, manage and resolve the numerous and wide-ranging conflicts that plague the region, the various stake-holders, the Government and civil society organisations should not totally turn their backs on customary methods, but integrate them where necessary in finding a sustainable peace. In this way, history would have served its purpose.

THE GRASSFIELDS REGION OF CAMEROON

What lessons?

When colonial and post-colonial regimes entered into local communities, though at different intervals, many of the indigenous methods used in preventing managing and resolving conflicts were abandoned in preference to modern methods. Administrative policies, especially the carving out of new boundaries and administrative units constituted one of the provocateurs of conflict and hostility. Some of the new methods employed to solve these problems did not tie well with the traditional concept of justice. Hence, the region has continued to experience all kinds of conflict, some of which

have led to loss of lives. According to the United States Institute for Peace, local conflict in parts of Africa is growing increasingly intense and violent as arms become more plentiful and state authority structures slowly erode.[34] Local conflict, whether intra or inter-communal, frequently follow ethnic or lineage lines. Some examples from Cameroon can make this point clearer.

There are many locally-based initiatives which can be used to address problems of such nature. Traditional mechanisms have been used to reduce, manage and sometimes resolve conflicts in Niger, Ethopia, Somalia, Somaliland, Ghana and Sudan. In Somalia, for example, the traditional assembly, the *Shir,* uses elders as negotiators in conflict. In Somaliland, the peace process was inspired and driven by traditional leaders with almost no outside intervention.[35] It involved the creation of council of elders, which has a recognised role as mediator throughout the region. This resulted in the establishment of local peace accords within the informal political structure. Other mechanisms used include the local courts, kinships, compensatory processes and the healing ceremonies. In an attempt to cement the Akobo Peace Conference that sanctioned the end of the intra-Nuer fighting in 1994, traditional leaders led a forty-five day reconciliation meeting based on customary law and traditional mediation approaches.[36] The sub-regional organisation ECOWAS has instituted the Council of Elders comprised of elderly statesmen.

In fact, modern or outside peace initiative usually does not agree completely with the interest of the local population. In contrast, indigenous or locally initiated conflict management and resolution processes often involve significant segments of local authority structures and often signify what the community desires. For peace to be sustainable, methods of conflict resolution should be drawn from the local culture. This includes using the right methods and persons to negotiate. It becomes crucial therefore that in seeking for an indigenous approach to address issues related to peace, all the segments of the community such as traditional authorities, elders, women's associations and other local institutions should be called upon to participate.

34 D. R. Smock (ed.), *Creative Approaches to Managing Conflict in Africa*, USIP Press, Washington, 1997, p. 16.

35 Smock (ed.), *Creative Approaches*, p. 21.

36 John Prendergast, *Frontline Diplomacy: Humanitarian Aid and Conflict in Africa*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, London, 1996, p. 122. By the time a peace deal was signed, it had taken an estimated 1, 300 lives and 75, 000 cattle.

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INTERROGATING TRANSITIONS: CULTURE, ECONOMY AND SOCIETY
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 11, 12 and 13 March 2008

Junior Research Fellow, ICHR, working on the politics of development in Bihar. He observes Bihar but participates in West Bengal. Recently agitating against the acquisition of farmland for industry, he has been charged with six cases, including obstruction of public servants, assault on cops and ministers. Currently out on bail, he awaits trial. When not in the thick of political fray, he is an aesthete, lover of book and music, old things and this city of joy.

Jishnu Dasgupta

The three-day conference organised by the History Association of the Centre for Historical Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University was a pleasure to be at. The conference, and the body that organises it, are quite unique in nature. The way in which it functions is something a lot of other academic institutions in India, and indeed, across the South, can learn much from.

The conference itself, provides a platform for young researchers to present their work. By bringing together a number of people working on varied themes from various institutional spaces across the country, an entire gamut of possibilities– of exchanges, interactions and even osmosis are created. The presence of peers as well as specialists and senior academicians also helps to hone their work, while the audience, many of whom would pursue research at some later stage, also have the opportunity to engage with a number of issues outside the classroom setting.

The History Association's activities are conducted largely by the students of the Centre, though others, including members of the faculty and a number of ex-students also contribute. All in all, it is an enriching experience to watch the way it functions.

The Conference was divided into three sessions each day, taking up various issues, interrogating various aspects of history of the sub-continent and elsewhere.

The first paper of the first day was that by Bodhisattva Kar of the CSSS, Kolkata, and titled, "The Birth of the Ryot: Rethinking the Agrarian in British Assam". He portrayed a juxtaposition made by the colonial government in the North-Eastern region of the sub-continent– that of the *ryot* as the settled cultivator and the savage (tribal) invader. Complicit in colonial policies of taxation as well as that of 'peace' in the empire, this drawing of lines saw the former as the bulwark of civilisation (and of the empire) against the "savage neighbours". The terms of discourse were themselves predicated on understanding the *ryots* as 'peaceable, sedentary and useful' while the others were 'troublesome,

nomadic and worthless'. Kar showed up the fallacies of this binary and the disengagements these produced.

Queeny Pradhan, of Delhi University, in her paper, "The Politics of Landscape: Simla, Darjeeling, Ootacamund and Mount Abu (Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century)", spoke of the construction of the native (particularly of hill tribes) as passive recipients of processes. But, the natives did make their own negotiations, often retaining the areas of their residence as spaces of retention of their identities, which in turn, were often separate and variegated from the various identities seen to be part of the category of natives, even in one region. The ways she spoke of these spaces, however, laid her open to charges of reification of aspects of these identities and the way they are played out.

Alok Pandey, of the Department of Anthropology, Hyderabad University spoke of the effect of colonial and post-colonial policies, particularly of growth and development on the Todas of the Nilgiri Hills ("When Grasslands become harsh lands: Changing Pastoral People and Environment Equations"). He showed how they have lost the mooring of their pastoral lifestyle and economy through a rise in human population coupled with a decline in that of kine. But this paper had several problem areas, as use of words like time immemorial for pre-colonial times, almost as if there was no history then, gave it an essentialist flavour. Adding to the problematic nature of the paper were stray references like the one he made in the case of Kurumbas, where he spoke, unquestioningly of their magical powers "to harm them" (Todas), referring to a popular belief prevalent among the latter group.

After the hard-bitten scholarship on agrarian history and anthropology, perhaps something of a little different note was required. Kashshaf Ghani, of the University of Calcutta, provided just that, through a discussion of something that was, though equally serious, a topic of interest other than music too– that of devotional music in South Asian Islam (*Sama*). His paper, "Outpouring of the Soul: Locating *Sama*

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in South Asian Sufi Tradition**",** portrayed the Sufi shrine as an alternative space of Islamic practice from the mosque– more equal in terms like gender. He delved on what was the most contentious arena even in this space– *Sama*. *Sama* was frowned upon by important Sufi sects like the Qadiris and Naqshbandis, and suffered attempts to regulate it by the state. Yet, it is a site without which it is impossible to understand South Asian Islam. In this paper, he brought out various issues within *Sama*, including use of prophetic imagery and indigenous linguistic codes, as well as its textual roots, the controversies surrounding it, particularly the struggles with 'traditional' Islam, the negotiations with the state and political power.

Manu V. Devadevan, of Mangalore University, presented an exploration of the material context of early settlement in modern Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Pondichery and its semantics in "Inside the Country: The Semantics of Settlements in Early Tamizhagamv". In the course of his study of varied material including literature like *Ettutogai* & *Pattupattu* as well as singing of *Kurunji* songs, he brought out issues such as effects of irrigation, rainfall and climatic conditions, as well as migratory patterns including invasions. He thus questioned the very notion of settlement as a given.

Sima Mallik of the University of Delhi spoke on "State Formation and Religion: Chhattisgarh". Despite some very interesting and comprehensive data, her presentation was hampered by the historical leaps she sometimes undertook.

Deepashri, of the CHS, talked of the constant fear of the colonial state about religious disturbances– even their potential terrified the 'masters' in "Religion in the Capital City of Delhi". Thus, she complicated the image of an allpowerful state and its panoptican function. However, the evidence being loaded with examples of disorderly conduct of only one community, at least as far as he presentation was concerned, leant itself to a communal understanding of it, as mentioned by the commentator. She, however tried to clarify some of these points in the ensuing discussion.

Sonali Mishra of the University of Delhi presented "Satellite Towns and Production Centres of a Metropolitan Port Complex: Masulipatanam in the Sixteenth Century". It was a very rich paper in terms of detail. However, one could, as a member of the audience, have hoped for a more lively engagement, on several planes.

Anil Persaud**,** of the IIAS, Amsterdam, ("The Century of Prejudice: The Geometry of Migration and the Politics of Destinations") took up the issue of why Whites did not migrate back to the Caribbean even after slavery was abolished and there was a demand for labour. In doing so, he also studied the debates around emigration in Britain at that time, thereby pointing out that indentured labour did not even figure in the 'enlightened' discourse on emigration in nineteenth century Britain. Rather, what emerged were attempts to fit in theories developed for elsewhere and applied to the tropics– which were always fashioned to be somewhere else.

V. J. Varghese of the Centre for Development Studies, Kerala, in "Land, Labour and Migrations: Understanding Kerala's Economic Modernity", dealt with the processes of developing a consensus in favour of migration and exploitation of the wastelands of Travancore and the Malabar and how the wastelands were themselves fashioned. He spoke of how the various caste associations, economists and the governmental discourses came together in a complex interplay of native agency and colonial policy.

Lipokmar Dzuvichu of JNU, New Delhi, in a brilliant exposition, dealt with several complicated issues involved in "States and 'Illegal' Practices along the Northeast Frontier of British India". One got a sense of the idea of the porous border through his fascinating study that touched on several issues including fear of the 'unknown' frontier tribes, notions and policies of development of the colonial state and many others. At the end, perhaps, the audience was left to ponder on the impossibility of control by states, no matter how omnipotent they might appear to be.

Kaushik Chakraborty of Jadavpur University, Kolkata, presented "Nation State, History and the Revolt of 1857". Sadly, his attempts at drawing connections between current and historical events were rather sparsely worked out. And he seemed to suffer from a quite unacademic romanticisation of the indigenous, particularly as something outside exploitation.

Gagan Kumar, another student of the host university followed with "Why British Won A Lost Battle, Delhi 1857". It was a piece of greatly detailed military history, based on solid archival work, which sought to explain this remarkable military feat.

The concluding paper of this section, "150 Years of 1857", marking the anniversary of that great uprising was "Changing the Plot: Property and Polity in the Aftermath of 1857". This paper, presented by Anish Vanaik, also of the CHS, was thought by many of the audience to be the best paper of the Conference. Through his analysis of the reordering of the civil-political space in the aftermath of the mutiny, he painted a picture of property relations dependent on both the legal and the contingent, bursting the veneer of inscrutable modern property relations. Focusing on issues like loyalty and military necessity that informed these, he showed up the ambivalence of law and policy that (perhaps necessarily) accompanied the arrival of modern property relations in India.

Sujithkumar Parayil of the Kannur University, Kerala, spoke of the conflicting and collating of modernity and traditions in "'Steady., Please.,

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Smile...!' History of Early Studios, Visual Conventions and Practices".

Anish R of JNU, in his "Itinerant Missionaries and the Creation of Public Spaces in the Nineteenth Century Keralam", threw light on itinerant preachings of Christian missionaries, something hitherto largely ignored, despite its wide prevalence in colonial countries, including India. He challenged the received wisdom of discontinuance of the practice in view of the failure to convert, and the subsequent turn to concentrating on areas like education and medicine by showing not only the perpetuation of itinerant preaching but its hold and popularity among the target audience. In fact, he showed that the (continued) practice of itinerant preaching informed a host of other processes, including the very emergence of public space through their practices and discourses, which often contained notions such as human equality and dignity, and was at least partly responsible for the emergence of Hindu preaching practices.

Devika Sethi, of CHS presented a tantalising account in her "The Censored Turns Censor: The Transition from Colonial to 'National' Censorship in the 1950s India". She interrogated issues of censorship in newly independent India, particularly with the professedly liberal Nehru at the helm. She displayed the continuance of colonial institutions of power, in this case censorship, in the name of defending society and state, which she pointed out, held portents of a dangerous future hidden in the so-called age of hope, that would come to fruition two decades later. In doing so, she left a sense of the fearful inscrutability of power, even when an emancipatory movement comes to hold the reigns.

Snigdha of the University of Delhi, interrogated gender identities etc. in Mathura, one of the most important cities of the subcontinent in the ancient period through inscriptional evidence in "Gender Identities in Early Historical Mathura: A Study of Inscriptional Evidence". Through a careful study of grants, she inquired into the gendered politics and economics of the period by investigating how gender identities are reflected through citations and how they bring out the economic and social status, kinship ties, and are often used as points of assertion, disavowal or refashioning of the same.

M. Christhu Doss, of JNU, New Delhi, in his "Re-visioning Caste Question: Attitudes and Policies of Protestant Missionaries in Colonial Tamil Nadu 1706-1813", brought out several concerns rarely addressed. He showed how the vision of caste as immutable, often seen as an ingrained part of native nature like their skin itself, went with the hopes of changing the state of affairs through the missionary activities. The oscillating attitude between appeasement and attack on the system, reflected the ambivalence inherent in the activities of the missionaries.

Dhrubkumar Singh of Benaras Hindu University, Varanasi, in a short and brilliant presentation titled "Organizational Evolution of Public Works Department in Relation to the Emergence of Engineering Education in Nineteenth Century Colonial India: An Appraisal of a Flawed Inheritance", argued convincingly for a reading of the technical policy of the colonial British government, designed to train merely lower level officials to sustain what the regime saw as its civilising mission, as a necessarily limited and limiting policy. This, in turn, made it impossible to sustain any policy of industrialisation, even if it had been the intention of the regime. His paper clearly problematised any notion of the existence of such an intention, given the policies.

Bidisha Dhar, of JNU, in "Educating the Artisan: Creation of an Industrial Labor Force?", brought out the tension between the intentions of the colonial state in setting up technical education schools and those of the recipients– the artisans. Placed in the context of the limited, yet present needs produced by the developmental paradigm, it, in effect, brought out the contradictions necessarily in the colonial system.

The last paper of the conference was that of Dhiraj Kumar Nite, appropriately also of the CHS. Titled "Precarious Life, Terrible Work: An Enquiry into Aspects of 'Accident Ridden' Wealth Creation in the Mines: Jharia Coalfields, 1890s-1950s", it was charged and politically sharp, bringing out the tragedies of miners that lies at the base of the wealth generated. He brought into his paper feelings, without which, perhaps, no writing of histories of the downtrodden is possible. The LCD Display Screen turning red behind him of its own accord, provided an appropriate, though unintended backdrop to his presentation. The presence of one of his interlocutors, so often hidden from such 'formal academic occasions', also helped to lend a diferent flavour to his presentation.

And, at the end, there was an open house discussion of the issues raised over the three days, and how they related to the title of the seminar. This, in turn, brought out several issues about how the discipline is or can be seen. All in all, it was a delight to be at this conference, and one came away enriched, both from the scholarship and the method of organising.

# The Common Pool of Knowledge: A Workshop Report*
Patna, 4-7 February 2008

Kathinka is currently the Director of Research, Asian Development Research Institute, Ranchi, India.

Kathinka Sinha-Kerkhoff

"I am glad the common pool of knowledge has upset you all". This is what Professor D. N. Jha, an eminent historian from India, said during the inaugural session of an international workshop on "Coping with Academic Dependency: How?". According to Jha, knowledge is not monopolised by a few privileged in the world but belongs to mankind. Once it becomes part of the public domain it can be used by all, he thinks, independent of the place of residence. During the workshop, Jha denied that there is academic dependency of scholars residing in the South and he did "not understand why we make so much out of it". Jha strongly believed that knowledge is individual. The proposition that certain individuals are excluded from the pool of knowledge was according to him "an insult to our intelligence" as "we are intelligent people and can criticise what others want to impose upon us". In his talk he indeed illustrated how some Indian historians among whom he grew up as an historian had been able to reject "a European view of Indian history" and "were not dependent on the West".

None of the other twenty-five or so workshop participants, almost all social scientists based in the South, agreed with him on this matter however. Dr. Sabo Bako, a post-doctoral researcher at the Department of Political Science of the Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, Nigeria, for instance, felt that the whole idea of a "common pool of knowledge" was a myth. He opinionated that, "knowledge in the world is not commonly owned, not commonly produced and not commonly applied". He added there would not have been any need for an international workshop like this one that took place in Patna, the capital of the state of Bihar in India, if such a pool of common knowledge indeed existed. All other participants shared his views and welcomed the opportunity to voice their opinion during the three-day workshop. As Professor P.

P. Ghosh, Director of the Asian Development Research Institute (ADRI), put it during his vote of thanks on the first day, "many times things are done that are immediate but not those things that are important. We have now organised a workshop that is important for us and we thank the South-South Exchange Programme for Research on the History of Development (SEPHIS) for making this possible". Thus, though Professor D. N. Jha's opinion had no takers, his remark had set the tone for the deliberations on academic dependency that took place between 4 and 7 February 2008 during the workshop organised by the ADRI and SEPHIS, represented in Patna by Dr. Maris Diokno, Dr. Marina de Regt and Dr. Anjan Ghosh. The Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR) also contributed to the workshop in a limited capacity.
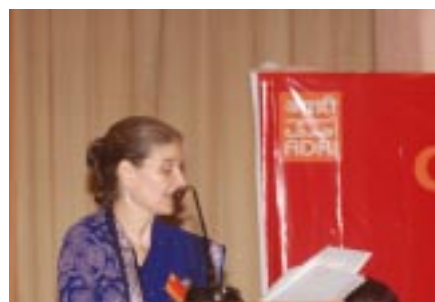
The Magnitude of the Problem

The workshop was intended to enhance our knowledge of the costs and benefits of academic globalisation for social scientists residing in the "South". We particularly wanted to assess the impact of location on the career trajectories of these scholars. As Dr. Anjan Ghosh of the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta (CSSSC) and SEPHIS Coordinator formulated it, we asked,

> Is academic dependency extant in countries of the South in an era of neo-liberal globalization? Electronic and digital technology has interconnected and integrated the world into a 'global

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village'. But has this incorporation diminished the unilateral flow of information and the 'consumption' of the periphery by the metropolis?

Clearly, participants agreed with Ghosh who described during his valedictory speech how neo-liberal globalisation has created conditions in many parts of the South leading to the evacuation of advanced research and higher studies. One objective of the workshop was therefore to develop a flexible career model that would guide these "marginalised scholars in the South" to cope with academic dependency. Yet though the tone of the workshop was set during the inaugural session, there clearly was a difference of opinion among the participants as to what constitutes academic dependency, who is dependent on who, what and where and on the question of how to cope with academic dependency.

A Common Pull of Knowledge?

The Magnitude of the Problem

According to Dr. Alatas, an expert in the field who is as an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology of the National University of Singapore, there is no *pool* but an *ocean* of knowledge and parts of this ocean are polluted while others are clean. He further argued that we cannot swim in all parts of the ocean and do not even have the choice to select the part in which we will swim. In his key-note lecture on the subject, Alatas also referred to the work of his late father, noted social scientist Syed Hussein Alatas, on "Academic Imperialism" and the "Captive Mind" and explained that the problem of academic dependency was not a new one. It originated during the first phase of globalisation during the colonial days of the nineteenth century. This point was elaborated upon by Professor Sujata Patel, Head of the Department of Sociology, University of Pune during her public lecture. Patel, a historical sociologist, explained how colonised people had inherited an entire matrix of binaries that created hierarchies, social exclusions and inequalities. Basing her arguments on her numerous publications on the subject, Dr. Patel explained that academic dependency has become reformulated in the context of globalisation as some participants personally experienced like Dr. Ayokunle Olumuyiwa Omobowale, Lecturer at the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social

Sciences, University of Lagos, Nigeria and Dr. Tharcisse Nsabimana, Professor and Dean, Kigali Institute of Education in Kigali, Rwanda. These two scholars felt that globalisation, along with structural adjustment, had made things worse in their countries and according to them as well as according to Professor Hetukar Jha from Patna in India, there now is a clear distinction and hierarchy between the "centre" and "the periphery" within their own countries and regions as well as internationally. There exists a dialectic relation between the "periphery and the metropolis". Dr. Anjan Ghosh added that we should also ask ourselves, "who is dependent on what?" Dr. T. C. A. Anant, Member of the ICSSR and a well-known Indian economist, who provided the inaugural speech, emphasised and illustrated that this reality of academic dependency also has implications for public policies.

Many participants felt that academic dependency could not always be equated with a "South-North" division. Dr. Shaibal Gupta, Member Secretary, ADRI, pointed to the "periphery within the periphery" by way of example, and thereafter quipped, "there also is a South in the North and a North in the South". Eminent historian and member of the SEPHIS Steering Committtee, Dr. Maria Serena I. Diokno from the Philippines accurately summarised that special categories of the North and the South really shift on the basis of how one approaches the question of academic dependency; that is, either as an epistemological (or theoretical) problem or as a structural (or practical) one. In short, all agreed that academic dependency is a reality for many scholars in the world and in particular, though not exclusively, those residing in, what is commonly referred to as the South. Though some of the paper presenters such as Dr. Fernanda Beigel, post-doctoral researcher at the Universidad Nacional de Cuyo Centro Universitario in Mendoza, Argentina and Carlos P. Tatel, Assistant Professor at the Department of Anthropology at the University of the Philippines in Quezon City, showed in their papers that one could, under certain circumstances, bypass academic dependency, participants almost all agreed that academic dependency existed and manifested itself on the practical as well as the theoretical level. Participants also agreed that it was high time to tackle this geo-politics of knowledge on both levels.

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Academic Dependency at the Practical Level

Dr. Shaibal Gupta of ADRI mentioned that bringing people from the South together is not an easy proposition. It is, Gupta believed, "much easier to get people from the North to the South [though not always vice versa!] than from the South to the South". And right he is. Apart from sheer distances between Argentina and India for instance, trying to get somebody from Burundi to India, to give another example, is difficult and expensive, as the former country does not offer Indian visa facilities for which one has to visit Rwanda. An extreme example of "practical" academic dependency manifested itself during the workshop when we got the news that Samuel Nilimi Nkumbaan, Lecturer in Archaeology at the University of Ghana in Legon, whose ticket and visa was bought and travel scheduled, had been refused passage, as he could not produce a transit visa for Germany where he was to change planes. Such a visa had not been deemed necessary at the time of booking however.

While discussing Nkumbaan's paper in absentia, Dr. Ratnakar Tripathy, Senior Research Fellow in ADRI, pointed to many more examples of this kind of academic dependency. Besides, Hetukar Jha, a well-known social scientist of Patna, discussed the factors afflicting the course of social sciences in the universities and colleges of India and in particular in Bihar, where the conference took place. In this context, the phenomenon of hierarchisation of universities/ institutes appeared to be quite visible. Likewise, Tharcisse Nsabimana analysed the situation which the institutions of higher education from the African Great Lakes region went through from the 1990s onwards. Nsabimana mentioned that the higher education system in the region is devastated due to neo-liberalisation which has made the institutions of higher education in the Great Lakes region heavily dependent on each other and on international donors. This, Nsabimana argued, "leads to academic dependency".

Overcoming Academic Dependency: A Flexible Career Model

Participants did feel that "just coping" with academic dependency (manifested on the practical or theoretical level) was not enough and Alatas even mentioned that the term "coping" had a pessimistic connotation. Indeed specialised scholars such as Sujata Patel explicitly discussed ways of "overcoming" academic dependency. During the part of her special lecture that dealt with the "second phase of globalisation that we are seeing now", she related the first phase of academic dependency during imperialism with the later phase and argued that we all (in the North as well as in the South) inherited certain "divisions" (binaries) from the past which are now institutionalised and reproduced causing inequalities in present society. An epistemology was thus created that till date, Patel argued, structures the construction of all academic knowledge. This is what Patel defined as academic dependency. In order to overcome this kind of academic dependency Patel therefore called for new ways through which we can transcend the binaries. She in particular emphasised the need for the formation of a new knowledge community that could work through "networks" of knowledge production that work at the levels of space, culture and profession. Indeed, rather than talking about "coping" with academic dependency therefore, workshop participants wanted to reduce or even "overcome" this academic dependency and urged its "dismantlement".

Participants argued we should "reflect on developing a flexible career model for social scientists in the South to transcend academic dependency today". However, Professor Muchkund Dubey, Chairman of the ADRI and President of the Council for Social Development in New Delhi, while delivering the Presidential Speech was of the opinion that this effort to try and reduce or even overcome academic dependency was an uphill task as it involves the dismantling of a paradigm based on an unequal world order, which status-quo the minority (but dominant powers) seeks to maintain. The papers by D. N. Jha, Beigel and Tatel encouraged a more optimistic outlook however.

At the end of this very successful workshop, which also received tremendous attention of the local media (newspapers as well as television in Patna), all seemed to agree with Mahatma Gandhi who had during a conference in New Delhi in 1946, as recalled by Professor Dubey during his speech, expressed his dislike of having to live in a world that was no "world-world". All thus supported the actual globalisation of knowledge that would make the "pool of knowledge" truly "common". Anjan Ghosh warned however, "we have no ready-made answers but speculations". Other participants agreed and

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during the valedictory session various "specula-tions" were proposed for the development of a "flexible career model".

One of the recommendations provided by the participants was that there should be more South-South exchange. Yet it was cautioned that such exchange should not support new kinds of hegemonic power within the South. Besides, the sponsor should not become the "Big Brother", one participant quipped. Dr. Chirashree Dasgupta, Assistant Professor in ADRI, therefore invited people to evolve different South-South collaborations that could confront the hege-monic powers in the North *as well as* in the South. Sponsored through these new "net-works", scholars in the South could try to, if not overcome, then at least reduce academic de-pendency. In this regard it is interesting to conclude with an excerpt from the paper of one workshop participant (Mario Rufer):

> Almost all my academic life and objectives have to do with academic dependency. I was twenty four years old when, holding a B. A. in History (from the interior of Argentina). I decided to pursue an M. A. in African Studies, but in Mexico. Why? Because I thought– as an intuitive knowl-edge at that time– that learning about other places in the "global South" (and *from* those places) could encourage a change in a disciplin-ary regime so rooted in Western epistemologies and methodologies.

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Report on the Alternative Research Methodologies Workshop, University of Philippines Diliman, 8-26 October 2007

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Geetika Bapna

The nature of social science research has undergone radical transformations, both in terms of theoretical exegeses and methodological practice, in the last few decades. This change is related as much to the ways in which the object of study is carved and simultaneously what is considered as an object worth studying within the changing paradigms of social sciences. Broadly speaking, it is these shifting registers in the corpus of historical and social research that the workshop aimed to conceptualise and facilitate.

Thus the focus of the workshop on alternative research methodologies has to be understood in terms of what the official disciplinary formations do not easily accommodate in their research practices. That is, if the contestations offered by the variety of new epistemological and methodological interventions were not to be included within the mainstream knowledge production, it would continue conversing about select groups and reiterating invisibilities and stereotypes, indifferent to the sensitivities of the rapidly changing world and the people in it. In this sense, the alternative research methods are implicitly linked with recovering knowledge about social groups who have been invisible as actors, for instance, women, peasants, blacks, migrants and other marginalised sets of people within the context of post-colonial political spheres. It simultaneously attempts to legitimise their knowledge as valid, though it may not be so construed within the 'official' catalogue of knowledge production working with set and pre-fixed rules of evidence, truth and objective knowledge.

Given this, the research interests of the participants at the workshop itself reflected this interdisciplinary concern and the themes of work comprised varied issues relating to religion and politics, culture, sexuality and practices of power, social and political movements, gender ideologies within popular culture, shifting ideologies of love within popular culture, visual politics of religion, social practices of marriage and widow inheritance, ethnicity and power formations, forms of social protest, migration and ageing etc. The training of the participants was also in equally diverse disciplines and some located within interdisciplinary contexts. The

workshop aimed to provide a platform for new methodological discussions that enabled different disciplinary locations to interrogate both the resources and the limits of their respective disciplines and to borrow from the new research philosophies and methods in reconfiguring the debates of valid knowledge.

The conceptual discussion was broadly structured around three axes: (a) Documents as Sources– Rereading the Archives. Focusing on everyday forms of knowledge, the discussions attempted to not only reconfigure the notion of 'archive' but also refigure its meaning and interpretative practices. (b) The second important theme of the workshop was around orality and oral techniques of social research. Often brushed away as non-objective and unscientific it was argued how oral narratives constitute a very intimate and significant form of knowing and sometimes the only available method for reconstructing the past as well as the histories of silences. (c) The third part aimed to examine visual sources and material culture. However, due to unavoidable contingencies this part could not be incorporated within our discussion of alternative research methodologies.

In the following account I provide a broad outline of some of the key themes and discussions that emerged under the first two heads respectively.

Documents as Sources: Rereading the Archives

An important methodological discussion that emerged during the workshop was around the issue of rethinking 'archives'. One of the contributions of new debates within historiography has been with respect to re-casting the notion of what constitutes an 'archive'. Moving away from 'official recorded evidence' as the only

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source of historical knowledge, the extension of the idea of the archive has opened up new possibilities of research. Accordingly, everyday life, subjective histories of pain, violence, trauma, and how people cope with it has become a valid subject of historical research. These new areas of study have simultaneously opened up a methodological spectrum that has not only re-figured our understanding of 'archive' but also complicated our understandings of the same. It was pointed out that memory as remembrance through photographs, memoirs, artefacts, letters and chronicles constitutes an important collective and social historical resource. In the same vein, it was emphasised the need to problematise the ways in which we access the archive because there is no such thing as an unmediated access to the archive and the researchers presence is something that has to be consciously reflected upon in the process of doing research. A related theme of discussion pertained to the question of relations of domination and resistance. Most participants were interested in locating everyday forms of resistance and the ways in which people survive and cope with different forms of hegemonic formations. A focus on everyday life, people's subjectivities, was associated with a parallel discussion on questions of 'evidence'. It was argued after much heated discussions and deliberations that the practice of historical writing has to be premised upon certain acceptable disciplinary conventions, which may change and shift over time and may themselves become a site of conflict and contested practice. That it is more significant to accept contestation as a part of practise within the disciplines rather than including new forms of social enquiry within the same dogmatic realms. It was also pointed out that any archive or source acquires meaning and relevance through the lens of the present and the questions that constitute our present. In this sense all understanding of the past are shaped by our concerns of the present.

Orality and Oral Techniques

A second important methodological debate raised at the workshop was around the nature of oral forms of knowledge against the written. Conventionally, oral knowledge has been associated with non or semi literate societies and written forms with literate or 'modern' civilisations. Complicating these simple binarisms the participants at the workshop attempted to examine the nature, form and modes of oral knowledge. In this context it was pointed out that oral methods comprised of a range of methodological tools such as oral interviews, life history, testimonies, oral historical narratives, as well as orality as performance. Each of these methods constitutes a small subset of what may fall within oral techniques or oral knowledge.

Focussing on the nature of oral narrative, the discussions moved along issues of reflexivity within research, ethical issues within story telling, problematising the voice of the narrator in the text, as well as questions of social translation. All these issues received attention through discussions around specific readings and the attempt was to raise difficult questions that may not have any straightforward answers but constitute the continuing process of social research. Further, there were discussions around the category of 'experience', in itself, a layered category as well as how to make sense of contradictory layering within narratives. Again as social scientists we are not only gendered beings but acquire different positionalities in our lives and these identities that we embody shape our research inquires. These aspects of the relations between our embodied beings and the research process as well as the obligations of social historical research were some of the other issues raised during the course of the workshop. Also, the nature of myths, legends and narratives as forms of anthropological knowledge was examined through specific case studies.

In conclusion, the discussions while opening up a spectrum of methodological tools were simultaneously invested in complicating the methods of social research by problematising the methods at the same time. Raising parallel questions of self reflexivity within research, the position of the researcher, ethical issues within research the overall attempt was to move away from objective factual self evident truths that are eulogised within classical approaches towards more nuanced, complex, context based approaches to research that saw marginal forms of knowledge as valid knowledge and conceived all research as mediated and shaped through the presence of the researcher. However, on a prudent note, it is also worth considering, as it was during the workshop that mainstream academic practice does not concede ground to alter the norms of scholarly pursuits drastically so the alternative methods, beyond their theoretical efficacy are to be creatively used in conjunction with the regular, oft-repeated techniques of research.

Caribbean Indian Actors in Cinematic Movies

Kumar Mahabir

Kumar Mahabir is an Assistant Professor in the School for Studies in Learning, Cognition and Education at the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT). He did his Ph. D. in Anthropology at the University of Florida. Mahabir is the author of seven books, including two national bestsellers, and several articles. He has been the recipient of a number of grants including one from SEPHIS in 2005.

   Mahabir is also the CEO of the company, Chakra Publishing House, and Co-curator of the Indian Caribbean Museum.

Twenty-eight years after the screening of the first Hindi movie, *Bala Joban* [Sweet Youth] in Trinidad in the Caribbean, an immigrant law student in London made his debut in a British-made cinematic movie. Basdeo Panday became the first Caribbean Indian to be an actor on the big screen in *Nine Hours to Rama* (1963). Panday's part as the laundryman in *Nine Hours to Rama* was brief, but it was a speaking role that earned him notable credit among stars like Horst Buchholz, José Ferrer and Valerie Gearon. The movie about the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi was nominated for the BAFTA Film Award in the Best British Cinematography Category in 1964.

   Panday also acted in two other British cinematic movies: *Man in the Middle* (1964) and *The Brigand of Kandahar* (1965). The first two films were distributed worldwide by 20th Century Fox, and the third by Warner Brothers. All three films were set, in whole or in part, in India, with Panday being one of the few non-white actors to play a speaking role in these movies.

   About five years after Panday appeared on film, another Trinidad Indian stage actor-turned-politician, made his debut on the cinema screen. Ralph Maraj appeared as the leading actor with Angela Seukaran in two movies released in the same year: *The Right and the Wrong* (1970) and *The Caribbean Fox* (1970). Both movies were the first-feature films to be produced in Trinidad and scored commercial successes at box offices at home and in other Caribbean islands. *The Right and the Wrong* won a Gold Medal at the Atlanta Film Festival for its excellent cinematography.

   But it was really in *Bim* (1974) that Maraj excelled as a film actor in the title role of Bim/Bheem Singh. The story was based on the composite life of the notorious assassin, Boysie Singh, and aggressive trade unionist and Hindu leader, Bhadase Sagan Maraj. Film producer and critic, Dr. Bruce Paddington, states, "… it was certainly one of the most important films to be produced in Trinidad and Tobago, and has become one of the classics of Caribbean cinema."

At the United States Virgin Islands Film Festival in St. Thomas in 1975, *Bim* won a gold medal special jury award as "a film of unusual merit."

   The Caribbean Indian actor who has earned the honour of starring in the most Hollywood films is Errol Sitahal. He portrayed a business executive in the comedy *Tommy Boy* (1995) starring Chris Farley. Sitahal was also the mysterious Indian servant with a pet monkey in the movie *A Little Princess* (1995). The engaging family drama is ranked as one of the finest children's films in the 1990s. Sitahal appeared in another Hollywood blockbuster, *Harold & Kumar Go To White Castle* (2004). In this adult comedy, distributed by New Line Cinema, Sitahal was Kumar's stern father who is an Indian medical doctor.

   Also making her extraordinary appearance as an actress on stage and cinema was Grace Maharaj. She starred in scores of stage performances, numerous television commercials, four television serials, and four full length movies: *Bim* (1974), *Man from Africa/Girl from India* (1982), *Men of Gray 11: Flight of the Ibis* (1996) and *The Mystic Masseur* (2001). In 1994, Maharaj received the prestigious Cacique Award in Trinidad for her long service to drama.

   Other notable Trinidad Indian actors who have been featured in speaking roles in cinematic movies include Kenneth Boodhu in *The Caribbean Fox,* and Simon Bedasie in *Bim, Operation Makonaima* (1972), and *Men of Gray 11*. Hansley Ajodha and Devindra Dookie also acted in *Men of Gray 11.* Other performers like David Sammy, Patti-Anne Ali, Dinesh Maharaj, Keith Hazare Imambaksh and Anthony Harrypaulsingh have all appeared in minor roles in *The Mystic Masseur*. Directed by Ismail Merchant and filmed on location in Trinidad, the movie is an adaptation of a novel by Caribbean Indian Nobel Prize laureate, V. S. Naipaul. The Guyanese comedian Habeeb Khan played a leading role in *If Wishes Were Horses* (1976), the only English-speaking musical film in the Caribbean.

   The Caribbean has a fledgling film industry and, consequently, prospects for acting in

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cinema are extremely limited. But opportunities abound in stage dramas, television movies, short documentaries and advertising commercials. It is important that Indians appear in the spotlight in numbers commensurate with their size in the population. It is also important to celebrate their achievements because they have struggled as ethnic minorities to achieve visibility and stardom on the silver screen. They exhibit certain collective cultural codes and social behaviour which their audiences can often recognise and identify (with). And it is heartening for a people to see themselves as stars on screen– even if in fantasy.

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Interview with Peter Alexander

Peter Alexander

Peter Alexander is now professor of sociology and director of the Centre of Sociological Research at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa. He was born and went to school in Britain, and after a year teaching in Swaziland he studied African History and Social Anthroplogy at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. He was a political activist, working for organisations like the British Anti Nazi League, and then did a Ph. D. at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in London. His Ph. D. was later revised and published as Workers, War and the Origins of Apartheid. Alexander's work crosses disciplinary boundaries and he has held positions in Politics, History and Development Studies,at various universities, before focussing on Sociology, in which field he held a research fellowship at Oxford University before moving to South Africa in 1998. His recent books include the co-edited volumes *Racialising Class, Classifying Race* and *Globalisation and New Identities*, and his current projects include work on a special issue of the *South Review of Sociology* on Indian Sociology. He is Vice-President of the South African Sociological Association and a co-organiser of the Crossing Boundaries labour history conference being held in Johannesburg this September.

1. Are you involved with SEPHIS in any form, as a participant or a resource person in any of their workshops?

Not really. I was once funded by SEPHIS to attend a labour history conference in New Delhi three years back. After that I do not recall any association with SEPHIS.

2. So, you have been to India earlier also. This is not the first time then.

Yes, I have been here twice before, and on both occasions to attend a labour history conference in New Delhi. I wanted to come to India for many reasons, but mainly to develop a comparative dimension to my research.

3. What sort of a comparison do you wish to develop?

I have been researching on the coalmines in South Africa. Historically, the main mineral mined in South Africa has been gold, diamonds before that, and later coal was second. Platinum recently overtook gold as the most important mineral. Coal became a very significant mineral from the 1970s following a big contract with the Japanese. So coal mining became a major industry mainly from the 1970s. it is now the third mot important mineral in South Africa. Platinum and Gold are the two big ones. Coal is not far behind in terms of business value. South Africa is now the fourth biggest exporter of coal in the world and the fifth biggest producer of coal in the world. So its history is little bit like that of India, in that it was a significant producer of coal in the early part of the twentieth century. Not a big player, but soon to become one internationally like India. Partly for that reason and partly because of the size of the industry. I thought that these are two individual cases similar in certain respects. Both part of the empire in the early part of the twentieth century. So I wanted to compare them, without knowing how it might come out. Another interesting aspect is the employment of women in the mines. It is because of the fact that no women were employed in the mines of South Africa. But I thought that looking at the employment of women in the mines in India might help me understand why women were not employed in the mines in South Africa.

4. Is the South African coal industry male dominated?

Yes, until very recently there were no women working in the coalmines in South Africa. This only changed in 1996 when the new legislation was passed. That encouraged women to work underground in the mines and work above ground, which is important in the context of the coal industry. Nowadays, more than half of the coal mined in South Africa comes from open cast mines. Compared to other countries quite a lot of big machinery is involved in mining. A lot of these are driven by women who are considered to be more reliable. So, today there are women miners. But until recent times there were no women miners. I ought to qualify the statement if I say that there were some women involved in small-scale mining. We know very little about small-scale mining in South Africa. Although now there is a considerable amount of small-scale mining going on all over in Africa.

5. Where did the migrant labour come from?

In terms of the larger workforce in the coalmines, during the period of my research till the 1950s, most of the labourers came from Mozambique. The second most important area of sending labourers would be Lesotho. In the gold mines too, Lesotho and Mozambique were major sending areas. The third most important area, developed after the Second World War, was Malawi, but that too was outside South Africa. Then there is the Transkei in the eastern part of South Africa- a poor rural area.

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6. Is Transvaal still the dominant coal producing area?

Yes, it is. The name is all that changed. There were four provinces till 1994. With democracy a number of provinces were broken up and now we have nine altogether. And the area where the coal is mined is Mpumalanga.

7. Is the restriction on women from working in the coalmines voluntary or something imposed by the government?

That is interesting. The women were banned by legislation to work in the mines of South Africa. They were banned by the 1911 Mines Act, under the Union of South Africa. This came about following the British victory in the South African war. And prior to Union there were two independent republics and two British colonies. And there was early legislation in one of those two republics, the South African Republic, later the Transvaal. And that legislation in 1898 banned women from working in the mines. So there was a ban on women working underground. And regarding whether it was voluntary or not, I have not been able to find any reasons as to why the ban was imposed. So I cannot provide an absolute answer as to why the ban was introduced.

8. Keeping in mind the health hazards, perhaps. What do you think?

The ban in Europe and in the USA had a big impact on South Africa. In Transvaal, the main mining centre, quite a lot of white mining workers came from Britain. Many engineers came from Germany and quite a few came from the US. Australia as well provided some white miners. In those countries such a ban was already in place. So they came to expect that women would not work underground. On the African side migrant labour had started to establish on a voluntary basis early in the nineteenth century. Partly through working in the farms and partly through work in the sugar plantations. And also for work in the diamond mines of Kimberley. This is around 1870. So that was all voluntary. And on the most part the people who migrated were men. So there was an existing flow of voluntary labour migration. I do not agree with the argument that this prevented women from working underground in the mines. Since most of the labourers who worked underground in the diamond mines of Kimberley were women. In the 1880s nearly half of the African miners in Kimberley were regarded as permament, meaning that most would have been settled with their wives. Also a lot of women lived with mine workers in Natal, the second major area in coal production. And by 1925 a quarter of the men working in the Transvaal mines had women working with them. So women were coming to the mining areas. But they were not working underground. I think it

would be too simplistic to assume that women were restraining themselves from working underground. At least from the African side. From the white side of things there was a different story. I think white women would refuse to work underground, after all, they were banned in Britain and so on.

9. The major proportion of workers in the mines were migrant labourers or local population?

I do not know the exact figures. The industries always encouraged migrant labour. They depended very heavily on migrant labour. I suspect that in gold mining the majority of labour was migrant. It was a bit different in platinum and coal where a higher proportion of the workforce settled close to the mines. And that has been the case historically. In 1908, there was a ban introduced on women living around the goldmines. This was imposed in a way that it resticted the number of married mine workers, workers with wives, to three percent. And then in 1926 a similar ban was imposed in the coalmines, but it limited the number of married mine workers to fifteen percent. And after that, there were more women settling around the coalmines than in the goldmines. So therefore marriage implied a definite settlement for mine workers although it may not be admitted. In that case the demand was more for migrant workers although officially it may not be admitted that way.

10. So generally there has been a tendency to isolate women from mining areas.

Yes, that is true. But the important question is why that happened? And the dominant argument in South African history and sociology has been that it was better to have a migrant labour workforce enforced by legislation in order for the mines to be profitable. And the quality of gold in South Africa is quite low, and to get gold from underground you have to dig deep mines. The combination of deep mining with low quality meant that the only way you could be successful was through cheap labour. And the dominant argument behind migrant labour was that it could be obtained cheaply. The cost of reproduction was higher in the urban areas than rural areas. The old and the infirm could be sent back to their homes when they had outlived their utility. The housing options for migrant workers could be cheaper compared to settled families. So migrant labour was the cheaper option, or so it was thought. But what I discovered during my research was the reason why rules were imposed restricting women from settling in the mining areas, was more political than economic. The authorities feared particularly about crime and immorality if women were allowed to settle in mining areas. That was the key reason initially for banning the settlement of women around mines.

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11. Do you find a gender dimension in this mining workforce? Keeping in mind the fact that migrant labourers were preferred to women workers.

In the mining industry the migrant workforce was 'totally' male, partly or even mainly because legislations banned women from working underground. But certainly because the practice of the mine recruiting 'agencies'. I say agencies because the mining industry was overwhelmingly dominated by one agency. That mining agency recruited men from rural areas. The situation is just beginning to change. But still we have one major mine recruiting agency, called the TEBA, controlled and owned by the Chamber of Mines. It has not recruited women from rural areas. So even after the legislation changed in 1996, the mining agencies are still interested in recruiting predominantly males. It is a controversial question whether they should start recruiting women. The general feeling is that migrant labour system is not a good thing for families and migrant workers themselves. We are now concerned about equality. So given this concern about equality the question is whether women be recruited in the migrant labour system. Although it is not too good a thing, I think there should be equality.

12. The problems that were kept in mind while imposing the ban in 1911– has a remedy been found or is it just overlooked now?

Regarding the new legislation in 1996 I am not sure of the provisions in it. But it definitely has been in regard to the prohibitions to the earlier legislations.

13. At present you are working with the department of Sociology?

Yes, but my background is in History. I am at present a Professor in Sociology. I do not have any qualifications in Sociology. My history is sociological and my sociology is historical. So perhaps one day I will finally become a historical-sociologist.

14. So are you looking into this problem as a historian?

I hope so. My work is historically readable and is based heavily on the archives. Also something around interviews and newspaper readings. I think the comparative aspect that I am working on might lead one to make certain general conclusions rather then ones made by a historian. So some historians might dislike my approach, since there is an element of conjecture involved. But sometimes this conjecture can lead on to new research questions which then may be tested in terms of research. But sometimes one has to recognise that you are projecting possible ways of filling gaps without necessarily being certain that you are right.

15. You took up India as a possible area for comparison mainly due to its colonial legacy?

Mainly because of the similar types of industries. Also in the case of mining we are concerned with an industry, which was international. Early on, the coal used in West Bengal came from South Wales. Later, some of the coal sold in Calcutta came from South Africa. So it was an international industry. There had to be some concern about the price at which coal was produced so as to compete with the world market. And this means that there are similar kinds of pressure towards mechanising. Because eventually mechanisation becomes the cheapest way of producing coal. Once you start mechanising, the machinery and the method of producing coal becomes similar around the world. Even before that, the basic method of mining coal is similar throughout most of the world. The same stall and pillar technique. At least it is the same in India and South Africa. So the method is the same as far as the method of coal mining and the economics of coal mining is concerned internationally. More specifically the size of the mining industry and the colonial environment.

16. It was also the intrinsic part of the economy of both countries.

Coal mining was pretty less significant contributor to the Indian economy in the early part of the twentieth century than it was to the South African economy. Although by 1920s India was producing roughly twice as much coal as South Africa, the economy was at the same time much bigger than South Africa. The population was much bigger.

17. Do you find the South African coal industry being mechanised in the last couple of decades?

We are not talking of the last couple of decades. In case of South Africa and in India along with the rest of the world the real mechanisation in the coal industry took place in the early twentieth century, if not in the last half of the nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century it was the introduction of the coal cutting machines. What is interesting about South Africa is that there was very extensive mechanisation in the very early days, so by 1920 the coal industry in South Africa, particularly in the Transvaal was the most highly mechanised coal industry anywhere in the world; even higher than the United States and UK. I found it very interesting since I had the assumption that the cheap labour at the coalmines would mitigate against heavy mechanisation. But it did not happen to be the case. Machines, according to one government engineer, saved forty jobs. So if you had one machine saving forty jobs then mechanisation would be really

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cost saving for the industry. In South Africa, mechanisation occurred very rapidly and very early. One might ask the question- why did it not happen in India?

18. Are you looking for an answer to this question?

One of the things that is really striking, and distinguishes the Indian and the South African coal industry in the 1920s is the abundant employment of women in the Indian coalmines compared to their total absence in the South African context. The second thing is that the Indian coal industry is heavily labour intensive while the South African industry is highly mechanised. So in 1920 the output of coal in South Africa per worker was about three times more than in India– a massive difference. The Indian coal industry employed some twenty times more people. The key part of my argument is that in India in the early 1920s, the industry was dependent on family labour. So a very high proportion of women who were working in the mines, were working alongside their husband, son, father or other family members. So this took care of family costs, since the children along with their mothers just went underground into the mines. So it was a system of family labour. They would just come and go. Sometimes they would work for two to three days underground and take some bedding with them. And sometimes they would not come at all, especially when it was wet and the mines were flooded without any chances of coal production. This was to the advantage of the mine owners who would not employ workers when work could not be done in the mines. But sometimes it could be disadvantageous to the mine owners. They wanted coal from under the ground and the people would not come to work since it would be the harvest season. That however did no matter once the mines were mechanised. With the coming of machinery to Indian mines in the middle of the 1920s the mine owners wanted the machines used efficiently. They still preferred a workforce who would come on time; get the work done and go back only to return the next day on time. So family labour was not much in demand. Another advantage was the coming of the water pumps. With these it was possible to mine coal all throughout the year. The argument that mechanisation meant total exclusion of women from mining does not stand ground, because the cutting machines did work previously done by men rather than women. My argument would be that mechanisation primarily led to an attack on family labour, firstly by excluding children from the workforce. This ideologically would mean that women would now have to stay back at homes to look after the children. So it was only subsequently that women were excluded as labourers from the mining industry.

19. Did you find anything interesting regarding the recruitment of tribals in the Indian mining sector?

I would agree with that. You find very few higher caste women working in the mines in the area around Dhanbad. There is a very high proportion coming from the *adivasi* background of Chotanagpur, i.e. Jharkhand. The majority of the *adivasi* workforce had experiences of men and women working together, so family labour was not unusual. The situation changed in fact toward the end of the 1920s probably because of the banning of women. Some of the older mine workers went off to work elsewhere and they were often replaced by migrant workers from Bihar, U. P. and areas where agriculture was not well developed. Interestingly some of that was organised through a mining labour organisation. It was organised migrant labour like that in South Africa. It would be interesting to compare the migrant labour system in India to that of South Africa. I wonder if the British in India used the South African model in developing migrant labour.

20. What do you think of the labour force in the Indian mines?

The most interesting thing about the labour force in the Jharia coalfields was that it was mostly local in the early twentieth century. The people either came from the local villages around the mines or they were coming from not very far away. The local villagers and mine workers had the advantage of going back from time to time to their agricultural fields and then coming back again. But the migrant workers coming from far in U. P. or from areas in north Bihar were covering long distances. So they were not family labourers, but only men. Some would argue that since migrant labourers were coming from far they had a lesser degree of commitment to their work. But I would argue that since they were covering long distances, and coming on their own, they seldom returned. Therefore the mine being their home and also their earning area they were more committed than local workers who always had the option of going back to the fields now and then.

21. So the agriculturally lean season always gave locals the opportunity to go back o the mines to tide over the lean period.

I think most of the times they were working in the mines, but for certain periods, like harvest time, they would work in the fields.

22. Is the employment pattern in South African mines contractual or on a daily basis?

For the most time migrant labour was recruited for a period of time- longer period of time for the Mozambiquean workers than for the local workers. Normally the Mozambiquean workers came for a year, but were forced to stay for longer

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periods of time, mainly because till 1914, the method for calculating a year in the coalmines was through completed shifts of work. So in one day if you cannot complete one shift it would be carried forward to the second day. And this was a major area of complaint for the mineworkers. So much so that the Chamber of Commerce, which recruited workers for the gold mines, pressed on the need to change this regulation otherwise it would be difficult to recruit workers for the coalmines from Mozambique, and might impact adversely on recruitment for the gold mines too. But in any case, the Mozambiquean workers had to often work for two years before they cold finish their contracts and return home to the rural areas. On the other hand local South African workers would work for six months at a time or less. So the reason why Mozambiquean workers were preferred was that they would stay for long and their experience as mine workers would make them suitable for skilled mine jobs.

23. So, the local workers carried on their agricultural pursuits simultaneously.

Yes, it is true to some extent for the British South African workers, those from Lesotho, Swaziland and , Botswana, as well as South Africa itself. These were treated as one type of mine worker, different from Portuguese East Africa, Mozambique. The Mozambiquean workers had different recruiting patterns and separate contracts. The Portuguese mineworkers were recruited by the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association. The British workers were recruited by the Native Recruiting Corporartion. In Transvaal, quite unlike what was the situation in Jharia, there were very few local mineworkers, in the sense of coming to the mines on a daily basis from their homes. The reason was that areas surrounding the mines were very sparsely populated. I am not exactly sure of the reason but the lack of soil fertility could be a major reason. Also the fact that the Zulu king Shaka's empire-building venture would have affected the population concentration in these areas.

24. Were the main coal mining areas sparsely populated too?

When I talk about the main coal mining areas, I mean the mines in the Transvaal. That was a sparsely populated area. Natal is an area where most of the local population are Zulu-speaking and it is not sparsely populated. Even in Natal it was difficult to recruit local mine workers; the principle reason being that the population had good agricultural lands and so why would they go for employment in the horrible mines. In Mozambique the situation was different. There were local wars in the end of the nineteenth century, which caused a lot of disruption. There was also the problem of how the Portuguese controlled the country and its labour. The Portuguese who were living in the southern part of Mozambique in quite a large numbers were able to secure forced labour for their projects. This was *Xibalo* or forced labour. So for the Mozambiquean workers it was better to go to South Africa and work in the mines than do *Xibalo*. The situation was harsh there but you get better pay. Also linked to this was the process of becoming a man– you go to South Africa as a boy and return as a man, with a fair amount of money to support your family back home. Men had to pay a certain number of cattle to the father of the bride. So working in the mines helped them to get the necessary resources to do this. This is probably one of the reasons but not the only one.

25. So was there a clear incentive of being paid well in the mines.

Let us leave apart the hazardous part. Mining in South Africa as is understood sociologically, if not historically, is through the phrase of 'cheap labour'. This is something that needs to be questioned seriously. I am personally against this cheap labour connotation in South Africa. The fact that it is cheap is only in comparison to the white miners employed in South Africa. It should be remembered that the white miners were doing different work from the black miners and they were paid ten times as much as black miners. So keeping in mind this comparison one might regard the black miners as cheap. But taking another comparison, they were paid much more than mine workers in India. In the 1920s, if we include food an so on, a South African worker was paid about fifty per cent more than an Indian mine worker. And one should remember that in the 1920s the mineworkers in India were the best paid of all workers in India. It changed later in the 1930s, when the pay of the Indian coal miners collapsed, and the black South Africans were receiving about twice as much as their Indian counterparts. So in the light of this comparison you just cannot call describe South African labour as cheap labour. At least until 1897, calculated by the historian Patrick Harries, the pay of mine workers in South Africa was greater than the pay of white workers in European mines. Only the American mine workers were paid more at that stage.

26. Were there Indians among migrant mine workers in Africa?

Yes, there were in Natal, but not in the Transvaal. Most of the Indian mine workers were indentured labourers. Indentured labour was stopped in 1911. But Indians still worked as indentured labourers into the 1920s, though there numbers were small then. There were lots of indentured labourers working in the sugar fields, and they were paid a little more when they came to work in the mines. There is another interesting comparison in terms of cheap labour– that is Indian indentured labourers were paid considerably less than black

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mine workers. The reason being that they were forced labour. If you finished your contract on a plantation, you have a number of choices. You can go back to India. Though most did not actually, since conditions in India were worse than those in South Africa. So most of indentured labourers stayed in South Africa. And then they had a choice of signing up to work in the sugar field or doing something else, like work on in the mines. The mine owners would have liked to employ more Indian workers, but they could not get enough. But the situation changed with the ending of indentured labour. Now the Indians were paid better. So much so that the average pay of Indian workers was higher than the black workers. The demand for Indian workers increased since many of the Indian workers moved to skilled occupation. They were allowed to work in skilled jobs in Natal, but not the Transvaal. So the pay of Indian workers went up quite quickly during the later teens and early 1920s.

27. Is coalmining in South Africa privatised or is it state owned at the moment?

The coalmines are mostly privatised in South Africa. What happened was the process of monopolisation. Not to the degree as in diamonds. There was only one company mining diamonds in South Africa. Absolutely overwhelmingly the diamonds were mined by one company– De Beers. In gold mines there were relatively few mining houses, sometimes six, though the number varied. In platinum also mining came to be dominated by two mining houses. Still the biggest producer of coal in South Africa is Anglo-American, which has held that position since 1945, when it bought a major competitor. They dominated the coal industry. The second major mining house is Biliton, the Australian mining company. And then there were number of smaller producers of coal. There are, however, three parastatals mining coal. But they are not primarily coal miners. One is Eskom, which produces electricity. Then there is Iscor, now mostly owned by Mittal, which produces iron and steel. And the other is Sasol, which produces petroleum from coal. Sasol is now using this coal-to-oil technique in China. I do not know whether it is the same in India or not. Given the vast amount of coal it is possible to produce petroleum from coal in good quantity in India.

28. Apart from this any other project that you are working on?

Yes. I am working on a more political project concerning class. How people see class, how is their understanding of class shaped, etc. So it is about class identity, and its link with work (or lack of it), and with income and culture. The work I have done so far is on a big survey in and around Soweto. But I am hoping to develop a comparative dimension to that research. I am hoping to find somebody in India who would be interested to collaborate with me and compare and exchange some of the ideas that we are seeing in South Africa with the Indian situation. But I hope that in the course of conducting similar kinds of research in India I would be forced to rethink my conclusions made in the South African context. And in the process look towards developing a kind of hypothesis by looking at the comparative process.

29. Do you intend to include this class study within the mining project?

I think the questions about class are more contemporary questions. What seems to be emerging from the Soweto research are two things: People who we were interviewing had two relations with class. One is class relation to work. People, who are workers, describe themselves as working class. But the same people could also describe themselves as being middle class or being lower class or poor. So they have one sense of class related to work, and another sense of where they live, how they live. I think that when we developed this idea about class there was a much closer relationship between where people worked and where they lived. So the people who are workers also lived in working class communities. And the concept of working class that did not come naturally but were campaigned for politically by working class movements. Particularly in Britain in the early nineteenth century there is a shift in discourse from people to working class. There are two different senses in which people tend to use class– one related to production and the other related to reproduction. The second idea that we are developing is connected with that, and that is what we need to think about class in terms of work rather than exploitation. Of course, there is an association between the two. But in a situation like that of Soweto, and it is even more true in the Indian situation, there is a high proportion of people who are not employed as workers. In fact, in our case, when we try to think about work we like to move towards the idea of how people get an income and how they survive, how they subsist; because that it is supposed to be the key material factor. In order to get work there has to be shelter and there has to be ways found to transform natural goods into useable things. Now work can be undertaken on the basis of exploitation. In the case of Soweto only a minority people are engaged in exploitative work, working for somebody else in a factory, in a school or whatever. Large numbers of people are receiving state pension or a disability pension. In other words they are surviving on the basis of somebody doing work somewhere else and paying some kind of a tax which they then get some kind of a benefit from. Then there are large numbers of school and university students.

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Then there is the bourgeoisie, a very small group. There are also small business owners. Then there are people who are middle class, in the sense that they are professionals– doctors, lawyers, and university lecturers. And then there are the unemployed. And then there are two other groups which we discerned– the 'survivalists', petty traders who would never become big entrepreneurs but are doing it because they cannot get any job. So they do not have a long-term commitment towards petty trade. And then there are people who are partially employed, in other words they are not even part time workers. They work a bit here and there. One interesting thing is that it seems that people who are unemployed have a slightly higher standard of living than people who are partially employed. They can be are unemployed because they are families living on the pension of some family members or somebody with a job. On the other and the partially employed do not have the 'luxury' of being unemployed. They have to find some employment somehow to survive. The point I want to make is that all of these categories are related to work and work is important as means of survival. But it is also important in other ways, as it helps people's ways of organising. So the way in which the employed workers organise is going to be different from the students. One of the motivations of carrying out this study was to understand and make out a difference between the employed workers and the unemployed or the poor. Because there are social movements organised around the unemployed and the poor and they are quite separate from the trade unions. Trade union in South Africa for most part do not organise the unemployed. I did a survey among the main social movement in Soweto, and ninety per cent of the people at its annual conference were not employed. Not one among them was a trade union member. So this element of separation is quite striking. There are also organisations that accommodate the traders, only those who have a long-term commitment to trading, not the temporary or the marginalised. I think there are different arrangements for the professionals, and the few people who are part of the bourgeoisie. So work in a way shapes the type of organisation the people are involved with. So this is why I think work is emerging as being a key factor in understanding people's sense of class. It effects organisation. So the link between labour history and my current work is to do with 'work'. Since one of the things that has developed in recent times in labour history is to define labour history in terms of work, rather than in terms of labour in the sense of being employed. And this shift I suppose has come from the South– from labour historians working in India and South Africa, who have begun to focus their intellectual activity on work rather than employment. If you do that it expands labour history very greatly and could make it much more inter-disciplinary. One of the things I got from Indian historians is to redefine labour history in such a way that it could involve non-historians– anthropologists, sociologists, geographers and so on. And this is what we are now beginning to do in South Africa as well. Rather than being a handful of labour historians now there are several handfuls of labour historians.

30. Do you wish to include this within your current work?

Yes. But the arguments that I am making are open to rigorous empirical research. In Soweto we have these categories on whom we intend to work on further.

Interviewed by Kashshaf Ghani

Negotiating Contingencies: Changes in an Indigenous Art Tradition

Claudio Costa Pinheiro

Claudio was born in Rio de Janeiro, in 1972. For a long time he has been dealing with the boundaries between history and anthropology– with a B. A. in History, M. A. and Ph. D. in Anthropology. He is currently an associate researcher to the department of Anthropology (Campinas State University, Sao Paulo, Brazil), where he fills a Post Ph. D. enrolment and plans include opening a centre of Indian studies. For the last ten years he has been investing in South-South connections and comparisons both on academics and arts, especially involving India and Brazil. Together with a Brazilian film-maker friend he shot and is editing a documentary, concerning southern West Bengal Patua painting artists, on colonial translation dilemmas. Actually he is planning a second movie on Indian soccer supporters for the 2010 World Cup.

   After living in India for a while he has got irremediably addicted to the cuisine, music, cinema and, above all, to its people. His hobbies include cooking Asian food, listening to Brazilian music and jazz and furniture designing with his father. Despite being a globetrotter and passionate for the East, his heart lives at his beloved Copacabana neighborhood, Rio.
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Frank Korom, *Village of Painters: Narrative Scrolls from West Bengal*, Museum of New Mexico Press, Santa Fe, 2006, pp. 119, illus. (Paul J. Smutko Photographs). Jacketed Paperback $29.95; ISBN: 0-89013-489-8 / 978-0-89013-489-4.

Frank Korom's interests in Asia are not recent. His career counts on extensive investments exploring the connections between expressions of folklore, religion and arts, concerning the Asian continent itself (especially South Asia, Iran and Tibet) or its worldly spread diaspored communities. Although his professional background concentrates on folklore studies, Korom's work crosses boundaries, joining literature and methodological proceedings like those from anthropology and history. From this combination of themes and different disciplinary perspectives comes the "Village of Painters".

   The volume was formerly conceived as a catalogue, in company to the International Museum of Folk Art (Santa Fe, US) 2006-2007 exhibition of *Patua* paintings from West Bengal. Nevertheless, the publication is much more than a simple arts' catalogue. It presents a caste from West Bengal– the *Patuas*, also known as *Chitrakars* or the *picture makers* in Bengali– and their art– the *Pata* or *Patua* paintings and performances. The book, richly illustrated with samples of the paintings and Paul J. Smutko's photographs, is written in an essayistic style accessible to any secular reader and divided into four sections. The first three present: A brief ethnography of his arrival at the Naya village; the background and stylistic differences of this artistic genre; its repertoire and painting techniques; the historical and mythological origins of the caste; the region's environment; and the accommodation between transformations and adjustments of this group and their art to Modernity. The last part, "Sacred selections and profane portraits", is a selection of some colorful plates' excerpts. Frank mingles this panoramic presentation with a detailed inventory of the literature on the topic, interesting insights and analyses of the *Patuas* and their art.

   Patuas' art consists of drawing colourful scrolls (that can vary on format, style and theme) and singing poems that accompany the paintings in performing the stories. Stories normally originate from *epic narratives*, *spiritual quests* or *secular themes* and the repertoire can range from excerpts from the *Mahabharata* or *Ramayana* to contemporary events like the "9/11 attacks" or the 2004 Southeast Asia Tsunami, from passages of the life of Krishna to those of Bin Laden, from the lives of Muslim saints to metaphoric narratives where they themselves appear as protagonists. There are no rigid boundaries between the themes and even the most sacred stories serve for entertainment functions: "The songs deal with sacred and secular issues within the same frame of reference by utilising comical elements aimed at entertaining the audience while at the same time providing listeners with religious instruction" (p. 70). Contemporary or ancient repertoires and narrative styles are combined by the artists on their way to entertain the audiences. Nevertheless this immense creativity and capacity to absorb new issues is somehow limited by patronage, since the artist must compose with the patron in mind. Although bonded by patronage, the verses were constantly used to alleviate social and religious tensions through comical and innovative performances.

   Although *Chitrakars* origin is difficult to be precisely determined, historical and mythological memories point to their existence as traceable, at least, to the thirteenth century. Different mythological accounts try to explain their genesis and positioning within the Indian caste

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system and religious division. They are mentioned both in Hindu (*Puranas*), Buddhist or Islamic classic or historical literature, as they "oscillated back and forth from Hinduism and Buddhism to Islam in their perpetual quest for equity and patronage" (p. 40). Actually, there is a frequent accusation that *Patuas* paid little attention to faith, looking for patronage, on their way to save their skin. However, collective caste (tactical) conversion is not new nor uncommon in India, as was the case of the southern Tamil Nadu *Paravas* during sixteenth century,[1] or that of the *Baul* singers who have been moving between faiths. *Chitrakars* themselves might have converted to Islam as a pragmatic strategy to avoid the oppression by a rigid ranked hierarchy of subcastes, established by the *Kulin* system, created during Sen Dynasty (c. 1160-78). Some scholars argue that the *Patuas*, originally Hindus, were cast out of the Hindu society for not following canonical proceedings in pursuing their trade, particularly for not conforming to standards regarding the repertoires of the paintings, put forth in *Shilpashastra* Codes of Art.

Indeed there has always been a tension between *orthodoxy* and *change* within *Patuas'* art and life, and "Modernity" (and its sores) has always been a drive on stressing this tension. The introduction of coloured and affordable lithographs and oleograph prints, cinema talkies and later on the TV (not to talk of the latest spread of DVD players, cable TV and internet) really represented threats to the *Patuas*, by accelerating the erosion of their patronage base[2] that has always been the economic backbone and justification for this genre. Consequently, some Bengali intellectuals see the *Patuas* as a dying tradition.[3] One of the most interesting issues raised by Korom is precisely related to this tension and movement of the *Chitrakars* between conversion and reconversion, orthodoxy and change. If their lower caste status justified this oscillation and eternal quest for patronage and protection, it also helped their mobility within this rigid hierarchical structure.

Although *Patua* painting is largely diffused all over South Asia, *Naya* village artists developed

their own idiosyncratic explanations about their origins and have been clever on finding new directions for their art, perhaps the most remarkable effect of their widespread artistic success. They struggle to incorporate this menacing "modernity", into their lives and art reinforced the only permanent characteristic they have: *Changing*. The possibility of absorbing distinct issues into their art also enlarged enormously their patronage base, from the local audiences into global ones. Their paintings can be found in several museums across Europe and US, documentaries were shot at their village, some of the artists travel abroad very frequently to attend festivals and exhibitions and they have been called by governments or NGOs to work on campaigns for HIV-AIDS prevention, dowry deaths, the importance of literacy and education, rural hygiene, tsunami relief and a variety of other pressing social issues. It did not come without significant changes in their art. Once the paintings are sold abroad the poetry and songs performance has been losing its importance, "and some painters do not bother composing new songs, just new scrolls" (p. 80). *Naya Patuas* have been as successful in distinguishing their art as in globalising their caste.

The attentive reader can perceive Korom's durable (2001-5) fieldwork research and deeply committed investments on the *Naya Patuas*. So that to those who have particular interest on West Bengal or on folk art in India, would like to ask Frank for a monographic volume on the subject.
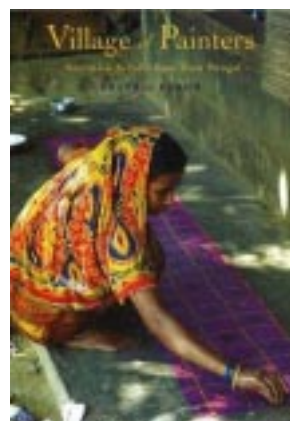
1. S. B. Kauffmann, "A Christian Caste in Hindu Society: Religious Leadership and Social Conflict among the Paravas of Southern Tamilnadu", *Modern Asian Studies,* 15, 2, 1981, pp. 203-234.
2. Christopher Piney, *Photos of the Gods: the printed image and political struggle in India,* Reaktion, London, 2004.
3. Actually a recurrent argument among some anthropologists dealing with folk art, like those that consider the Portuguese "fado" songs or "samba" as dying popular traditions. See the work of Joaquim Pais de Brito on this issue. See also, David McCutchion, "Recent Developments in Patua Style and Presentation", in, Alliance Francaise, *Patua Art: Development of the Scroll Paintings of Bengal Commemorating the Bicentennary of the French Revolution,* Alliance Fracaise of Calcutta and Crafts Council of West Bengal, Calcutta, 1989, pp. 16-22.

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Linking Women through Music, Migration and Mobilisation

Jerome is a Lecturer in the Department of History at the University of the West Indies, Trinidad. He has also served as a part-time Lecturer at the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies and the University of Trinidad and Tobago. He was the first recipient of the Eric Williams Memorial Scholarship for postgraduate research.

Jerome Teelucksingh

Mobilizing India is a unique study with remarkable fluidity that transcends ethnic, geographical and cultural barriers. It embodies the perspectives of a scholar from India, Tejaswini Niranjana, who attempts to understand the East Indian presence in the Caribbean whilst defining and comparing the intricate linkages between females in India and Trinidad.

In chapter 1: '"The Indian in Me": Studying the Subaltern Diaspora', the author comes to terms with Indians residing in Trinidad who viewed her as similar to themselves. She claimed to be initially "deeply disturbed" by this association, however admits, "I am what I am *because of* who the East Indian woman in Trinidad is" (p. 20). A minor flaw of this chapter is the extensive rehashing of the historical information on indentureship and the status of Indians in the early twentieth century. Nevertheless, in focusing on these early years of the Indian presence, Niranjana is able to reconstruct a unique discourse of the formation of normative Indian femininity.

In chapter 3 there is an attempt to seek answers to the controversy surrounding chutney-soca and the provocative chutney dancing. Some individuals and groups of the East Indian community have publicly condemned chutney dancing as vulgar and obscene, and criticised songs with sexual connotations such as "Lick Down Mih Nani" by Drupatee Ramgoonai. Additionally, Niranjana claimed that one of the common beliefs associated with chutney-soca is "the rampant sexuality of the Indian woman" and contended that it could have originated during the indentureship era with perceptions of the "promiscuous woman" (p. 119). Furthermore, the author believed this musical form is "an attempt to reconstitute East Indian patriarchy" (p. 123). Unfortunately, she did not provide any credible evidence to support these claims. Nevertheless, the chapter provides refreshing insight into the commercialisation and structure of chutney and chutney-soca, and the composition of the audience. Undoubtedly, the introduction of the Chutney Monarch and Chutney-Soca Monarch Competitions allowed more of the public to be exposed to this musical genre and also served to partially legitimise the artform.

Niranjana drew attention to the racist lyrics of some calypsos and its impact not only in Trinidad but also Guyana. These controversial songs will make the reader aware that calypso and chutney often seemed to be unofficial arenas of a hostile ethnic battle. The issue of ethnicity in the cultural artform of calypso and chutney in chapter 4 examined the representation of Indo-Trinidadians in calypsos. One of the interesting perspectives is that singing of calypso and other musical genres are no longer seen as excluding Indians. This would include the flexible Rikki Jai who has dabbled in calypso, reggae, parang, chutney and Hindi film songs. The chapter's sub-section 'The "Indian" Calypso' revealed that the lyrics of some songs, from the 1930s to 1980s, negatively depicted Indian females.

The contribution of India's music to the evolution of chutney and chutney-soca is acknowledged, particularly that of husband and wife team– Kanchan (Indian playback singer) and Babla (arranger of film music) from Bombay. The inclusion of Remo Fernandes, an India-born rock-popstar, in the musical conversations unfolding in Trinidad was not a new dimension but a continuation of the musical interaction between India Indians and Trinidad Indians.

One of the interesting features explored by the author is the intersection between visual images and music in chapter 5 '"Suku Suku What Shall I Do?" Hindi Cinema and the Politics of Music.' It is undisputed that from the 1930s to the 1970s, Hindi cinema influenced culture and the music played by orchestras in Trinidad. In this chapter there is the tenuous claim that in India "…normative Indianness comes to be associated in part with the Hindi language films and their constructions of modern femininity and masculinity" (p. 173). This seems to be a flawed generalisation because other factors such as

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religion, caste, family upbringing and class would be determinants of gender identities. Furthermore, the powerful Americanisation process would certainly contribute to constructing cultural identity in both countries. In this regard Niranjana might have exaggerated the influence of Hindi cinema on India and Trinidad.

One of the strengths of *Mobilizing India* is the inclusion of diverse views from musicologists, activists, newspaper columnists and academics, in attempting to understand adverse public reactions to certain songs. Some of these personalities included Satnarine Balkaransingh, Gordon Rohlehr, Kim Johnson and Narsaloo Ramaya. Furthermore, there is a wealth of interviews culled from Indo- and Afro-Trinidadian artistes such as Rikki Jai and David Rudder. This dialogue illuminated current discussions and added a vital element of objectivity to the historical arguments.

A possible addition of *Mobilizing India* could

have been a sub-section suggesting remedies to solve or reduce ethnic problems and overcome the gender stereotypes. Perhaps the absence of solutions suggests that there is a difficulty in limiting the boundary between freedom of speech, artistic expressions and offensive lyrics or dancing. Probably the book's sub-title could have included "politics" since there is considerable emphasis on this topic in chapters 4 and 5.

There is overwhelming evidence indicating that the author has achieved the goal of successfully illustrating the manner in which sexuality and cultural identity of East Indians are represented in Trinidad's popular music. Undoubtedly, *Mobilizing India* will be essential reading for persons seeking to understand the challenges facing the Indian diaspora. The findings will be particularly useful for those persons venturing into the relatively new domain of Cultural Studies.

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