

**COMPARATIST'S PERSPECTIVES ON NEW COMPARATIVE
AND WORLD LITERATURE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
SOUTH ASIAN LITERATURES AND CULTURE**

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Till recently such dialogues and exchanges of strategic questions had unfortunately been exclusive Western monopoly. The perceptions of our scholars, journalists and others tended to be influenced largely by the vast quantities of literature produced by western strategic sources. Academicians from the non-aligned world very often met each other in Conferences organized under Western auspices. There are very few fields in which our academic dependence has been as great as in the field of strategic studies. Indonesia has developed the concept of national resilience. In India we have a philosophy of self-reliance. Both these approaches require that on strategic and international security issues we should develop our own independent perceptions unfettered by the biased strategic doctrines of Western countries....

- Y.B. Chavan, Speech in *India's Foreign Policy*, 224.

This lead quotation, from the speech of the Central Minister for Foreign Affairs, voracious reader, and pioneer nativist leader- writer and orator, may serve as a good **manifesto** of the present the International Seminar **on South Asian Literature and culture**. These prophetic statements are more relevant to explain our **post-independence dependence complex**. A dozen books, based on Seminars and Conferences on Indian literature and culture held in Europe

and America, edited jointly by one Euro-American and the other NRI scholar to produce “new” knowledge, are being marketed from the beginning of the new millennium. This is the continuation of the colonial cultural contact, for example, S. Nagrajan edited William Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* for the British Press and publication in the twentieth century. These “strategic sources” in Chavan’s words, are always exploited by the comprador class of intellectuals in all former colonies to maintain Western as well as their own indigenous traditional cultural hegemony. Further, Chavan presents the blueprint of the indigenous strategies based on collection of data. His deep insights and comparative perspectives provide a good model for the new compararists and culturalists. Innate nativists should read *The Origin and Development of Religion in Vedic Literature* (OUP 1933) by the first Minister of Agriculture at the Center, Dr Panjabrao Shamrao Deshmukh, Barrister, erudite scholar and member of the Constitution Draft Committee. This pioneering comparative study of religion and culture remained neglected for 70 years. Such scientific comparative approach was elbowed by the fundamentalist Vedic Shastris and Pundits. Our hierarchical social structures and Vedic culture are less congenial to free comparativism. On the contrary, the Egyptian comparatist has recently proved that Comparative Literature (hereafter CL, Comparative Literature and Culture-CLC, World Literature-WL, South Asian Literature- SAL etc.) was neither born in Europe nor in America but in Egypt after its contact with France at the beginning of the nineteenth century (See *Comparative Literature Studies*, 2010). Moreover, they claim that all literature is comparative when it takes birth along with culture. Thus, a new cultural literacy of Orientals might lead us to new comparative perspectives on South Asian literatures and cultures. Every literary text is not only a product of one language but also of intertexts of culture and language. For tracing such transformations we have to take a new road from literature to comparative culture criticism. There is diversity in unity of SAARC’s literatures, but Western cultural imperialism spreading in the name of globalization is a real threat to our rich linguistic and cultural inheritance. It is better to call it “Anglocalization (see Anand Patil 2013) and plan a project for preservation of cultural heritage, stimulating creativity and new

comparativism with awareness of politics of Western aesthetics.

The term South Asian Literature refers to the literatures produced primarily by writers in Indian subcontinent, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal. Sometimes works from Bhutan, Myanmar, Tibet and Maldives are also included in this list, but the online encyclopedias hardly provide detailed information about them. Their Diaspora writings are also more privileged than literatures in several indigenous languages and dialects. India is richer than Europe in this respect; but literature in English in South Asia neocolonial situation exhibits literary hegemony of the westernized elites. English translations of works in “vernaculars”- modern indigenous languages are labeled as “shadow literatures.” The national borders and disputed maps make our critical works one-sided representations. For Example Farzana S. Ali has edited the collection of critical essays titled: *Glimpses of Partition in South Asian Fiction: A Critical Reinterpretation* (2013); Although there are essays on fiction by Paul Scott, Taslima Nasrin and Jhumpa Lahiri almost all critics are Indians, especially from Maharashtra and these are mono-perspective/text-literary studies sans comparison. They make us feel that we are standing on one side of the Baga Border in Punjab. A few articles on the same theme from Tibet, Pakistan and other neighboring countries might have added richer dimensions of comparative cultural criticism to the same anthology.

Two cold blooded murders, first of the secular anti-blind faith progressive leader Dr Narendra Dabholkar in Pune/India and anti-Taliban courageous journalist and writer of the novel/film “Escape from Taliban” Sunita Banarji in Afghanistan in August 2013 ,exhibit salient features of fundamentalism in South Asia. Laxmikant Deshmukh’s *Inquilab virudh Jihad-* a Marathi novel on conflict with Taliban in Afghanistan, received the award from the State Government., but it has remained local. On the contrary, Ahmed Rashid, a journalist of the highest narrative and analytic gifts wrote in English: *Descent into Chaos: Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Threat to Global Security* (Penguin books 2008) has become global. This prose reportage, which reads as an enthralling tale, was shortlisted for the Orwell Prize. But these gripping works from India and Pakistan are rarely textbooks in the SAARC countries. Their comparative studies are unheard of. Veteran Reporter

Rashid's scholarly devastating book shows that the crisis zone now lies in central Asia. Here he documents how closely Pakistan's US-backed regime is linked with extremists; how broken promises in Afghanistan have led to a resurgent Taliban fed by drug money; and how the largest landmass in the world is now a breeding ground for terrorism. "Literature and Terrorism" is a paper taught in the advanced countries. Rashid's text "pinpoints with chilling accuracy where the true threat to our global security comes from". He concludes:

Solutions do not come easily in today's embattled world, especially in a region that was traumatized well before 9/11. The peoples and regimes of this region have to understand that they themselves move their nations toward greater economic development and democracy, the chaos that presently surrounds them will, in time, overwhelm them... Obama has generated enormous expectations in the Muslim world, especially in Pakistan and Afghanistan... If we can better understand what has happened before, what has gone wrong, and what needs to go right, as this book attempts to do, then we can better face up to the cooperation desperately needed to guarantee our collective future(418).

This is not only the proof of Anglo-American presence in Asian culture but also of the new avatar of the "white man's burden." One is reminded of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Jotiba Phule who welcomed the white rulers instead of native kings and lords in the nineteenth century. A comparative cultural study of literature on partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 and 9/11 in America is the need of the time. There innumerable historical books, fiction and poetry on partition in English, Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu and Bengali. It was the victory of British machination and communal policy that has left permanent psychic wound. The list of creative writers, who have written fiction and poetry on Hindu-Muslim conflict, is not very long. To name the few, Khuswant Singh, Bhisham Sahni, Manohar Malgaonkar, Raj Gill, Intizar Husan, Jogindar Paul, Attia Hussain, Rahi Masoom Raza, Bhalchandra Rajan, Qurratulin Hyder, Amrita Pritam, Krishna Sobati, Bapsi Sidhwa, Kamleswar etc, have depicted that traumatic experience. We have to theorize it as central European theorists have been theorizing post-colonial and post-communist

writing as literature of traumatic experiences. But, as mentioned above, we have to include in this list Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Afghastani and other writers, who have written on the same theme. The writers from other states which were far away from this area of conflict cannot imagine that traumatic experience. Yet a single Marathi novel-*Indhan* (fuel) by Hamid Dalwai that depicts the local Hindu Muslim riots in a single town has become a mile stone in that regional literature. Rahi Masoom Raza's *Adha Gao* is of different kind. There might be some other works in Indian and other languages. It is the responsibility of a comparatist teacher of English to link them in culture studies. Lambert Mascharahenas's *Sorrowing Lies my Land* (1955), which portrays the plight of the nationalist Christian peasant family in Goa's freedom struggle, is a forgotten classic. Like fall of the Babri Mosque, the 9/11 bombing of the World Trade Center in the U.S. A. as a result of America's arrogance and double talk as a super power, has given rise to lot of books. The first event was confined to the boundaries of two countries and only Hindu-Muslim communities; but the latter raised the pertinent questions related to questions on religion and nationality, power structures and globalization, migration and identity and so on. The notions, terms and theories in social sciences and literature have come under scrutiny of non-white perspective. In will be an innovative comparative study to juxtapose post -9/11 immigrant literature produced by Pakistani/Afghani Muslims and Indian Hindus- especially Brahmins who are in majority among migrants. The Hindu response to the harrowing 9/11 experience seems to be rather neutral and the sympathies went with Americans in general. Except few journalistic articles and poems it did not become the theme of a novel. Reactions of Naipaul and Rushdie are representative of two culture condition imaginations.

Recent example of Hispanic, Latin American, or Asian American, Pakistani writer Mohasin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (Delhi: Penguin, 2008) is discussed by Gopica Sankaru in isolation. It is set in Lahore and New York. The narrator, protagonist Changez, born in Gulmerg- the largest city in Pakistan, is educated on scholarship in New Jersey at Princeton University. This talented Muslim, proud of his elite culture and home country is "invited into the ranks of meritocracy" but ... "in return ... expected to

contribute (his) talents" to the host society (Hamid 4). While reading this monologue one is reminded of Jean Paul Sartre's provoking "Preface" to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* which theorized the process of colonization by the European white man. Here the same role is being played by American Big Brother. The protagonist becomes the valued professional New Yorker within four and half years. He struggles to construct an American identity by speaking like an American. But everything is shattered after 9/11. He faces acute immigrant identity crisis. His hybrid assumed identity in flux cannot hold for a long time. It is very important for the regional language scholars to study the concept of "culture shock" and identify five stages theorized by anthropologists like Paul Peterson (1995). Gopika has based her discussion on them: **1. Honeymoon Stage, 2. Disorientation, 3. Irritability and Hostility, 4. Adjustment and Integration 5. biculturalism.** Hamid had minutely portrayed these stages in Changez's identity as an individual and also as an immigrant. In the hostile environ after the fall of the World Trade Center he leaves America for ever. He experiences "reverse culture shock" and soon gets reacclimatized in his homeland-Lahore. The first generation Marathi migrants to America have returned to Pune and Mumbai, but hardly any fictional work of Hamid's kind has rarely appeared in Marathi; why? Here steps in the pertinent question of the caste based role of comprador intellectual, un-changing static given idea of identity in rigid frame of caste and intra-cultural imperialism which needs to be explored comparatively. Our Marathi Global Literary Meets (sanmelan) held in the First World display features of "honeymoon Stage" and opportunistic biculturalism rather than resistance like Changez, An elite Hindu reader of this novel is likely to remember S. T. Coleridge's Kubla Khan as well as Chengiz Khan the aggressor, who conquered parts of India once upon a time. Cultural politics in reader response to literary text in South Asia cannot be interpreted fully with the help of Euro-American theories.

Reading of one more multicultural novel *The World We Found* by a Parsi Diaspora woman writer-Thirty Umrgir takes us into a more complex vortex of identity. The Hindu-Muslim conflict nurtured by British in the colonial period has not subsided in the post- independence period in India. Her novel

delineates the same on the backdrop of political upheaval in the 1970s. Iqbal, like his "secular humanist" college Hindu friends Amrita, Nishta, Kavita and Adish does not believe in religion. His father and other relatives warn him how Hindus want to massacre all Muslims in India. Still he marries high caste rich Hindu Nishta albeit he comes from a poor Muslim family. They firmly believe in secular socialism. Before marriage he was willing to convert himself to Hindu religion. But after marriage he forces Nishta to become Muslim Zoha and himself an atheist into religious bigot and ardent fundamentalist. During the Bombay riots of 1993 they get shelter in the Sharma House; but Sharma's son rapes Iqbal's young sister. They are compelled to sell their flat at cheap rate and move to the Muslim neighbourhood. After ten years the Gujarat genocide takes Iqbal's hatred of Hindus to the zenith point. He decides to be childless for not having the Hindoo blood in their children. He considers it "as an act of love of heroic self-sacrifice... without children (46). Iqbal suffers for having a Hindu wife and Nishta is left in limbo for her parents have severed all relations with her. Iqbal's parents never accept her whole-heartedly. The divide is unbridgeable. She is forced to wear burkha and read Koran. After 9/11 the contempt and distrust toward Muslims reaches the international level of, in Huntington's terms "clash of civilization." Iqbal receives the final blow to his identity as a Muslim from his own friend Adish calls him a "terrorist." Adish does so to facilitate the escape of Nishta (Zoha). The novel does not suggest any solution as such, but hints at humanitarian approach in acceptance of plurality of identities. It seems that Diaspora writers distanced from their homeland can take more objective view of such sensitive issues and depict reality more neutrally and critically. Such literary works need to be compared with similar works in regional languages in SAARC countries.

Even our folk arts and cultures are better studied by Western scholars than us. The history of the missionary's contribution to South Asian languages, literatures and arts began with the works of anthropologists and it continues in different categories till today. For example, the British engineer Henry Parker compiled *Ancient Ceylon* (1909) and *Village Folk Tales from Ceylon*. A comparative study of *Tamasha* in British Bombay and *Tiatra* in Portuguese Goa are two distinct folk dramas of Hindus and Christians in two neighboring

States in India but hardly studied comparatively. A tourist in Bangkok watching the folk play depicting Hanuman's tale from the *Ramayana* notices many similarities between it and *Tamasha*, *Bhavi*, *Yakshagana* and other Indian folk plays. Sri Lankan *Hathbambura* is just like a farce or satirical skit in *Tamasha*. The music and structure of *Tiatra* is better understood if it is compared with Western music Hall mixtures and Sri Lankan folk plays. Its music and structure are dissimilar and too westernized to incorporate any Indian especially Hindu element. Western imperialists looked down upon everything that is Indian. It is an irony of post-colonial situation that Anglo-America sponsored knowledge of our culture and literature is being marketed by them all over the world today. To name few, Tevia Abraham's doctoral work is titled: *Tamasha: People's Theatre of Maharashtra State in India* (Michigan State University, America, 1984), NRI Pramod Kale's Project on *Tiatra* and various International Seminars organized by Euro –American Universities on Literature and culture in South Asian countries and their "proceedings" enter our libraries. Foreign things are always attractive. I had participated in International Seminar held by Leiden University in Holland on "Indian Character of Indian Literature." Thus, it a time to show the world what we have and how we are able to market it in the world literary culture.

South Asian folk literature and culture is a rich powerhouse of creative energy rarely to be found in Europe and America today. That is why excellent creative writing is being done in the formerly colonized countries at the margin and critical theories are more developed by the theorists in the center of America and Europe to control periphery. Netizens may dream that dichotomy of margin and periphery and center has disappeared from World Literature in the digital space; but SAARC citizens are conditioned by their national culture, languages and boundaries. Since it is an ordeal to master these hundreds of languages, SAARC comparative literature has remained at a very preliminary level. We know much about American, British or Canadian literature in English (nourished through scholarships and comprador class) but nothing about writings in Sinhala or Tamil in Sri Lanka, Parsian or Pushtu- the language of the Pushtu tribe in Pakistan, 24 four constitutionally recognized languages and hundreds of dialects in India or Bangla in

Bangladesh. We cannot claim any mastery of all SA languages. However SAARK fellowships for comparative studies should not be considered inferior to those given by Anglo-America, Canada and other Western countries. Money makes culture and literature flow. Yet the performance of Vijay Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal* and Girish Karnad's *Haywadan* in Bangla in Dhaka, and English Translation of Sri Lankan short stories had shown me, in Emily Apter's words, some "zones of new comparative literature". Unfortunately, owing to visa restrictions, I could not visit Karachi, albeit invited to participate in the International Seminar on William Shakespeare! Such neo-colonial paradoxes are many. The "Food Festival of SAARC Literatures" and comparative cultural criticism of vegetarian Hindu/ Buddhist and non-veg Muslim or remixed non-veg Hindu- Muslim-convert's and Buddhist texts will be a new brand in World literature. It is not a co-incidence that Marathi rural novels such as *Bangarwadi*, *Dhag* etc appeared in Marathi in India and K. Jayatilake's masterpiece *Charitha Thunak* (1963) in Sinhala in Sri Lanka in the same decade. The later begins with the scene of peasants working in the field. It was the pioneer in the Sinhalese realistic novel. They can be reinterpreted with reference to John Crowe's famous essay "Aesthetics of Reasonalism" much discussed in the 1920s.

What Bruce King writes in the beginning of the Chapter One of his edited book titled *New National and Post-colonial Literatures: An Introduction* (1996) contains half truth. He writes:

The Age of Postcolonialism was brought about by the new political and economic importance of former colonies after the Second World War and the rapid spread of communications and international business during the last third of the twentieth century. Local cultures in the process of modernization and undergoing crisis of identity that accompanies hasty transformation were increasingly, if uneasily, in direct contact with an expanding Western culture and economy themselves undergoing mercuric changes including their relationship to former colonies and their own crisis of identity. The results were liberating, energizing, at times contradictory, as traditions crumbled and were reconstructed (3).

The well informed comparatist will challenge these statements by revealing the hidden agenda of the Big Aesthetic Project and Reading of World literature designed by the Anglo-American scholars immediately after the First World War. In the 1930s they framed the cultural and literary policy to control remotely the former colonies soon to be liberated. Their contemporary correspondence and Reports throw a flood of light on their plan to spread cultural imperialism, which Meenakshi Mukherjee calls "imperishable empire" and Salman Rushdie "writes back "to it. A single illustration will reveal several structural and aesthetic similarities in the SALs and Anglo-American literatures (See Anand Patil 1993, 1999, 2013) in mid twentieth century. Francis Shoemaker's *Aesthetic Experience and the Humanities: Modern Ideas of Aesthetic Experience in the Reading of World Literature* (1943) demonstrates how this project was intended to maintain the Euro-American cultural hegemony in neo-colonial situation in the Third World. At the outset of his "introduction" he explains how World Literature (means at that time reading of European and American Classics only) was "a means of preparation for our world responsibilities". This big brother's "gaze" and cultural policing continues to dominate in the present "war on terror" today. Hence 'a common aesthetic drive' resulted in propaganda of formalism and psycho-analysis in the name of extreme individualism .U.S.S. R countered it. This "cold war," influenced new SA literatures and cultures very deeply. Shoemaker further observes:

The modern ideas of aesthetic experience are very different from the "aestheticism" of the late nineteenth century, for chief among these ideas, apparently, are modern anthropology and psychology, which have been drawn on widely by workers in the field of comparative literature, philosophical aesthetics and others concerned with the criticism of arts and letters in this context.... We will deal chiefly with the direct bearing of these ideas of aesthetic experience on the study of world literature as expression of human values, and with the currency which these ideas have gained among modern teachers of various schools of thought (7).

The deep impact of this aesthetic project can be traced in the SAARC writers' works in the 1second half of the previous century. It was called a

theory revolution in Europe; and SA literatures were labeled “new” literatures everywhere. The progressive writers’ movement was patronized by Russia. This politics of Anglo-American aesthetics and Russian historicism has been making all the difference in SALs literary culture till today. Elsewhere, I (2011) have argued how India needs the comparatist like Gareth Griffiths to design the Post-colonial Project of aesthetics of resistance to Anglo-American Big Project discussed by Shoemaker. “Dedaffodilization”, as in Black Literature, of SALs and cultures is the need of the time; but the main hurdles will be thrown by the elite non-resident migrants and comprador mediators of the West. The death of an author and theories was announced in the West, we started the period of mourning ritual as if mourners are hired to weep. Traditional analogy, parallel and influence studies are out of fashion. Later we will discuss tremendous changes in the concepts of CL and WL in the Age of “Globalization.”

Let me clarify my position in the debate on the “death of CL”. I am a creative writer first and then post-colonial culturalist and comparatist who firmly believes in comparison as an integral part of knowledge and creativity. There is a need to demystify the creative process by introducing terms such as remolding, reworking, redoing, faking, influencing, plagiarizing, grafting, repairing, re- tailoring, remixing and other concepts used by K.K. Ruthven in *Faking Literature*. In the first decade of the present century the First World Conference on “Comparative Racialization” opened new cultural vistas in culture criticism. Indian scholars compartmentalized and conditioned by castes and creeds, sects and regions, have hardly coined the verb “caste” and ever theorized seriously the process of “castealization” of Indian literature. Pakistan, Bangladesh, and other SAARC countries are also fragmented by sects and color, size of nose and shape, race and dress, languages and gestures. This is the time to study dalit self- narrative not only by juxtaposing it with the American -African Black narratives sponsored by Fulbright and other scholarships, but also with the French Buer, Caribbean black, Australian bush, Indonesian mixed blood of Barack Obama’s *From My Father’s Dream*, Bhutani subaltern, Bangla below poverty line pauper and other bio-texts which are products of sub-cultures. Moreover, the search for South Asian

literary identity should be essentially grounded in comparative cultural criticism. For us Shu-Meh-Shih's "introduction" to the special issue of *PMLA* (2008) on "Comparative Racialization" will be an eye-opener. It was an attempt "to assess the state of the study of race in literary studies". As she pointed out the unwillingness of scholars "to acknowledge the significance of race even as they strive to update their discipline and expand into new areas", our scholars are hesitant to theorize the issues related to caste conditioned imagination and poisoned cultural politics of reservation policy which gives rise to caste based literary movements, curriculums and research. This reality can be compared with Shu-Mei Shih's comparative observations that it is "premature" to talk of arrival of race in literary studies and though the "South-Asia based post-colonial theory has geared us to the study of colonialism and its consequent postcolonial complexities, it *has also long held a strongly ambivalent attitude to race studies*" (italic added,1347). We need new comparative caste/race literacy because such racial/ caste based discourse was strictly banned due to domination of American formalist "New criticism" in South Asia where Russian communism could not strike deep roots due to caste /sect/ religion and other fragmentations in South Asia. A comparative cultural study of fellowships and scholarships allotted by Europe and America on caste/sect/religious basis to South Asians will also reveal the politics of Western aesthetics in South Asian literary culture.

If her whole "introduction" is read again by replacing the word "race" by "caste" and "sect", the myth of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's Anglo-America-centric "Death of Discipline" theories, which suffer from "amnesia" of Indian caste-based cultural imperialism and colonialism, is exposed. Of course, her "leftist" contribution to Ranjit Guha's illuminous volumes of *Subaltern Studies* cannot be ignored. In fact, the role of Gayatri, Arun Prabha Mukharjee or similar immigrants originally born in South Asian elite caste, sect/class in mediating Western theories needs to be needs to be reassessed comparatively. Although Homi K. Bhabha has ventured to trace "a location of culture," Indian caste -*varna* compartmentalized cultures are not at the centre of his theorization. Even leftist Aijaz Ahmad in his *In Theory: Classes, Nations* gives more emphasis on classes rather than castes and sects. None has

analyzed the twin process of Westernization and Indianization (Sanskritization- Brahmanization) of our literature and culture after colonial contacts since Rigvedic times. Moreover, a comparative sociological study of hybridization in literary acculturation after the colonial contact with the West has never been undertaken. Vinay Dharwadkar has scrutinized minutely the process of “internationalization” of Indian literature after India’s contact with Europe; but without any comparative reference to the role of castes-*varnas* in this literary acculturation (see Bruce King). The regional cultural politics of aesthetics has contributed much not only to amnesia but also to the production of ignorance. Now the time has come to compare not only many faces of modernism but also of postcolonialism in SAL and take the next step to compare them with, to use Frantz Fanon’s title with modification, several “black (brown, pink) skins and white masks” in Sri Lanka, Africa, Caribbean islands, and other formerly colonized countries. This might make us more aware of the “white man’s burden” and to borrow Immanuel Kant’s famous phrase “production of ignorance” in literary acculturation overshadowed by cultural imperialism. He had stated that in order to maintain the dominance of theory or thought equal amount of ignorance is always produced”. It is clear that the comprador class of intellectuals including Diaspora has always been Euro-America –centric. How can the SAARK countries, which enjoy, in Fanon’s words again “the flag freedom”, in Y.B. Chavan’s words, **“develop our own independent perceptions unfettered by the biased strategic doctrines of Western countries?”** “.Hence this Seminar should “bear the burden of mediating and negotiating between critical theory and race” and caste and religious sects in Asian contexts. Shih argues:

The case of Asian studies may be distinct-“Asia “has never been the domain of theory- but that does not prevent scholars in the United States and Asia from distancing themselves from what they consider to be *American* approach to race. The production of Asia as an object “area” for the extraction of strategically important information by cold war ideology dovetailed with recalcitrant orientalist scholarship in configuring Asian studies as the study of an area out there and far away. For some, studying Asia may be an escape from the uncomfortable racial realities of the United States, so that any

mention of critical race issue elicits the knee-jerk charge of being “too political.” These Asianists seem intent on protecting the purity of Asian studies from the invasion of race-informed perspectives. Liberal Third Worldism disavows race and often hides its racial avoidance behind a political correctness that does not allow the object of fetish to be internally fractured (1348).

Rereading of the above cited “introduction” by using “caste” and “religious sects” in place of “race,” one may understand the complexities involved in castealization of structures of our literary feelings and domination of American theories of autonomy, formalism and psychoanalysis instead of French, which Americans condemn as “poisonous theories.” A comparatist will find counter-parts of Rahi Masoom Raza’s *Adha Gaon* in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Indonesia, China and other countries where Sia and Suni Muslims are residents. Thus, South Asian literatures provide ample matter for comparison. With courtesy to Fanon (*Black Skin, White Masks*) we can say “any South Asian is comparison.” Here steps in the problem of representation of race/caste, sect/ religion in literature. My comparative study of literature in British Bombay and Portuguese Goa (1999) had highlighted their different “policies with regard to the assimilation or exclusion of dominated population”. For example, Portuguese colonialism differs from the British in that the first emphasized the process of acculturation by conversion to Christianity; while British policy tended to divide and rule on caste and creed basis and retain hegemony with the help of native elites. The history of “races” in SAARC under representation in literatures should be re-constructed. David Lloyd concluded his essay on “race under representation” as follows:

.....This entails, in Gramscian terms, the reconstruction of histories of subaltern classes, of those social groups, that is, whose practices fall outside the terms of official culture. To do so, is in effect, to decipher the history of the possible and to trace the contours of numerous alternatives to dominate modes of social formation. Without such a history, not only is the universal history of cultural development- the narrative of representation- all the more difficult

to displace but radical politics becomes all the more confined to issues of civil rights, that is to the expression of representation and implicit affirmation of assimilation (267).

Even the post- independence restructured syllabuses in South Asia have included caste/sect/religion based literary texts and separate papers, especially *dalit*, rural, tribal, and other divisive literary texts in India, The controversy over *The White Tiger* and *Slum Dog Millionaire* revealed that such literary texts are considered to be the sources of study of poverty and not literature in the West. Thus, the study of culture/contexture based on anthropology and literary studies will make our research more relevant. The novels on the themes of partition and films on terrorism produced in the SAARC should be compared with new perspectives. "Transformation"-the film in Bangla, based on the legend of Eklavya in *Mahabharata*, was produced in Bangladesh, and shown in the World Film Festival. Exo-cultural images of Eklavya in films, fiction and drama all over the world is an interesting topic for comparative culture studies. At the same time, it is necessary to examine how Latin American "magic realism" percolated through the immigrant writers such as Salman Rushdie, Kiran Desai and others to the regional literatures in these nations. While analyzing comparatively the theme of politics of home and interculturalism in the South Pacific literature, I (2012:1-15) have compared three Indo -Fiji writers' works: Satendra Nandan's *The Wounded Sea* (1991) collections of poems by Sudesh Mishra-Rahu (1987) and Mohit Prasad- *Eating Mangoes* (2001). It is interesting to trace the intertextuality of Indian literature and culture in their texts but it is more relevant to compare them with V.S. Naipaul's *The House for Mr Biswas* and *The Wounded Civilization*. Now globalization in the electronic Age has expedited the movements of what Edward Said describes as "travelling theories" all over the globe. It is a time to take the stock of theories which have travelled to SAARC regions and why? Exclusion of certain theories is also a crucial issue in inter as well as intra cultural politics of power and cultural capital. In some cases construction of anti theory Asian theory may be more fruitful rather than imposing borrowed theories on Asian texts. Familiarity breeds contempt in case of Asian texts. Theory always follows texts produced in the same

culture. If they do not go hand in hand, the dependency on foreign theories leads to the living in the borrowed cultures and thinking in alien language. Such alienation from roots leads to the death of that language and culture. For example; there is a translation boom now a day. But a cheap best-seller Anglo-American stuff rather than experimental innovative works in the SAARC countries are rendered into local languages, which are hardly eligible mediums of knowledge. What kind of enlightenment and renaissance will these translations bring about? Language, translation and comparative stylistics are closely connected. English is our major window to the world. Stylometers and studies in comparative stylistics related to the SALs and languages are badly needed for digging our own past. Monika Doherty believes that "the most essential contributions to a theory of translation ought to come from a theory of comparative stylistics". It is a paradox pointed out by the comparatists that most innovative creative works are being written by the writers in the formerly colonized countries and critical theories and critical works are being produced in the "advanced countries." So the selection of the text and quality of translation matters most now. Monika Doherty argues for stylistically correct translations and states:

Thus, if we want to raise the quality of translation and put an end to subjectivism in our views about how far the translation should or could deviate from the original. We need a theory of comparative stylistics....But those who are willing to participate in the elaboration of such a theory have to come to terms with the problem of subjectivity, too, as there has to be agreement on the reliability of the observational data they want to build their theory on (50).

In this way, SALs provide ample material for such theorization. After all, theory means the organized thoughts, and this Seminar has created a fine opportunity to organize our thoughts comparatively. SAARC cultures are more translational. The zones of translation studies are expanding. But it is a mockery of the doctoral research that a candidate receives the Ph.D. degree in Marathi from a very prestigious University in Maharashtra, the State in India for the dissertation on Marathi translations of Taslima Nasrin's novels without knowing Bangla or Bengali at all. Moreover, it does not show any awareness

of cultural conflicts, politics of translations and comparative zones related to India and Bangladesh. It is a mere summary of texts and cut and paste method used for reorganizing criticism available in News Paper files and periodicals. Such below average Indian research works make the academia in the whole country a laughing stock. Translation is also the product of culture conditioned imagination. Jaidev's much neglected *The Culture of Pastiche: Existential Aestheticism in the Contemporary Hindi Novel* (1993) is the most important comparative intervention in Indian comparativism. It is a major "strategic source" to examine SAL texts from comparative perspectives. To the other extreme, there is an extraordinary turning point in this area brought about by 9/11 in the United States. The research on translations by Emily Apter, a researcher in the City University of New York, was "shaped by the traumatic experience of September 11, 2001". SAARC countries are not free from internal strife and wars with neighboring countries. Have they given rise to the work that proves, like Apter, how "translation zone is the war zone" and "global translation is another name for comparative literature"?

Mimicry, stereotyping, imitations, faking, plagiarism, grafting etc, are colonial curses. It is a time to subvert them for constructing the counter-discourse. Multilingual hybridity and heteroglossia is a blessing in disguise. Whatever valuable indigenous cultural heritage that survives today needs to be protected in the tsunami of globalization. What matters most is our sincerity in shouldering responsibilities by accepting globalization as an opportunity.

Apter was moved to "rethink" translation studies in that traumatic political situation in America. Further she points out in her "Introduction":

Structuring my lines of inquiry has been an awareness of the contradictory process by which globally powerful languages such as English, Mandarin Chinese, Swahili, Spanish, Arabic, French simultaneously reduce linguistic diversity and spawn new forms of multilingual aesthetic practice....(4)

Language wars have also remained a central theme in my conceptualization of translation zones. In fastening on the term "zone" as a theoretical mainstay,

the intention has not been to imagine a broad intellectual topography that is the property of a single nation, nor an amorphous condition associated with post nationalism, but rather a zone of critical engagement that connects the “l” and the “n” of transLation and transNation. The common root “trans” operates as a connecting port of translational transnationalism (a term I use to emphasize translation among small nations or minority language communities), as well as the point of debarkation to a cultural caesura- a trans- ation- where transmission failure is marked (5).

In short, everything is translatable and it is the language of global market. We have to get ready to compete in this market. A new interdisciplinarity is necessary for considering socio-cultural dimensions of SALs and literary studies without probing them solely in ideological constructs. Comparatists have been struggling to offer alternatives to framework presently available in the discipline of CL. Stevn Totosy de Zepetnek (1998) has offered the framework of The Systemic and Empirical Approach to Literature and Culture for developing “new” CL which merges two distinct disciplines: CL and CS. Especially, his fourth Chapter “Cultures, Peripherality and Comparative Literature”, which analyzes literatures and cultures in Central and Eastern Europe, provides a very useful model for our study of SALs and cultures. A dialogic comparative imagination and aesthetics of regionalism are necessary for connecting his “reference frames of systems theory, literary theory, the literary system, and the information sciences for the purpose of generating discussion about a macrotheory” (249). Unless we place ourselves in such “comparative situation,” the study of SALs is bound to remain in the confinement of Euro-America-centric as well as traditional national boundaries. The anthology such as *Post-independence Voices in South Asian Writings* Eds. Alamgir Hashmi et al (2001) does the lip service by juxtaposing very few works. In the hour of need Internet also provides preliminary information which opens doors to World Literature. Free Online encyclopedia and few texts fall short in imparting adequate knowledge and mistranslation, just like “*naro va kunjro va*” (either man or animal, god knows!) in the *Mahabharata* ,leads to chaos and defeat in war. Terrorists’ messages in the coded scripts pose a threat to the nations. Multicultural co-existence is the

newly shaping structure of society. As a result multicultural conceptions of World Literature might help South Asian culturalists, critics and comparatists more than the humanists, Universalist, humanist and moralist stances taken from German Goethe to Indian Rabindranath Tagore.

Both the concepts of CL and WL are not static. Gautam Buddha's concept of "anithyabodh-knowledge of uncertainty and temporality of everything in the world" is as enlightening as Jacques Derrida's "advanced" theories of deconstruction based on Buddhist philosophy of *dhama*. "Culture" is the most inflammatory term in the world today and in Samuel Huntington's terms "clash of civilizations" will lead to the learning ideology of co-exist with others. The dominance of Western master narrative and concepts of inter-cultural transfer is subverted in the aesthetics of resistance, which is more useful to South Asian writers. Hence a comparative cultural and political perspective is necessary for redoing CL and WL. Goethe's culture conditioned concept of WL and European monopoly of world literature is unacceptable today. It is Euro-centric and Tagore's WL and "*vasudhaivo kutumbak*- whole world is a home" is more metaphysical. The imbalance of power enabled west to declare its aesthetic norms as universal. As discussed above, with reference to Shoemaker's book, their Aesthetic Project shaped and governed our post-independence literature in SAARC countries. But much water has flown after media related international connections have "wired" almost all countries on the globe. Earlier concepts of "cultural assimilation, standardization and inter-cultural dialogue" are distorted by Western supremacy. The pendulum has swung in the opposite direction of marginal cultures, languages and literatures. In this respect SALs can attribute communicative and creative function to the new concept of WL. Building the bridges and inter-cultural dialogue in anti-dialogic communities and educational systems should be the major role of WL. Hence there is a dire need of altered perspective as has been done by post-colonial theories.

For redoing World literature it must be separated from the traditional canon formation which emphasized difference of national cultures. Edward Said had discussed the dichotomy of Western and non-Western, Europe and Orient etc, in his trend setter work *Orientalism*. Recent comparatists have been

challenging this West-centric hierarchical view. This new approach is process-oriented rather than canon-oriented. We have to take into consideration our conditions of literary production whose counterparts may be found in colonialism and imperialism. This might reveal how far K.S.Iyengar, B.S. Mardhekar and M.K. Naik are double colonized critics and mediators of Western cultural imperialism. In this way, we must go in search of very different mode of expression nourished by both native and foreign elements. To be brief, a new perspective on SALs also demands emancipation of these new literatures beyond the Western frames and forms. For instance there are alternatives to European novel such as Latin American *testimonio*, and Black Jaz novel but SALs have not yet hybridized indigenous traditions of storytelling due to inter and intra-colonial amnesia. Doris Bachmann-Medich concludes his unpublished paper "Cultural Misunderstanding in Translation: Multicultural Coexistence and Multicultural Conceptions of World Literature":

New concepts and new examples of world literature call attention to new horizons of language and text: to the explicitly ambiguous and negotiable cultural symbolizations. Contrary to the languages of global internationalization, which express and support a growing assimilation of life circumstances, the decentralized literatures of the world are an important medium of difference. They go beyond the scope of traditional views of a pre-defined (Western) common language of a universal culture and literature. They require permanent mutual processes of translation by way of negotiation of cultural differences, as they are carried out in and are provoked by the literatures themselves (n.p.).

The impact of globalization and media on the notion of world literature needs to be studied separately in the context of SALs. The SAARC Diaspora writings, for instance, of Indian origins: V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, Arundhati Adiga, of Sri Lankan roots: Michal Ondaatje, Sharmila Jayashinge Niriella, of Bangladesh: Humayun Ahmed, Jagadish Chandra, of Pakistan Mohasin Hamid, Kamila Shamsie and others show greater affinities to Western experimentation and canon formation. Rushdie in his "preface" to *Vintage book of Indian Writing in English* had

underrated Indian language literatures and raised the controversy. Naipaul had ironically stated that Indians need foreigner's certificates for recognition. Under such circumstances we need new comparative poetics and world literature should be discussed with reference to the impact of media. Globalization has intensified global literary and social interrelations, flattened the earth, changed the traditional concepts of time and space and in short intensified literary relations and technology of producing literature. Ernest Grabovszki (1999) has listed these transformations in copy rights, literary institutions, literary market, problematic of control and censorship, the monopoly of media grants, use and misuse of the cyberspace and computer literature in the "third space," collective authorship, varieties of web texts, digital literacy and death of the reader, network structure of hypertext and other features. The major consequence of this impact is democratization of literary products. Such decentralization has removed the barriers of "national literature" and made it more hybridized. A netizen of digital space is able to travel in any realm of gold. Grabovszki observes that decentralization of literary system has changed many paradigms of world literature. For example, it has removed the tension between center and periphery which constituted postcolonial discourse. Further he argues:

I will use the example of Salman Rushdie and the fate(s) of his novels to elucidate my point. His example shows that on the one hand we have the implicit and explicit differentiation between a "home" culture and a culture of the "Other". On the other hand, Rushdie's novels have made us realize a certain loosening of the said tension between "home" and "Other" on an institutional level, namely via the appreciation of a (mitigated) Third World writer in the West's literary system. In new media and its digital space, there are no reasons for such tensions (on the surface?) except maybe between the digital and the "real" or non-virtual space in the sense of a systems theoretical understanding of social interaction. In other words, within the digital space there is no location of a center or centers of a cultural or social kind. Consequently, world literature loses its determinable locations ((4).

It will be more interesting to study comparatively the Family Romance and sibling relations of the South Asian writers in such International Conferences.

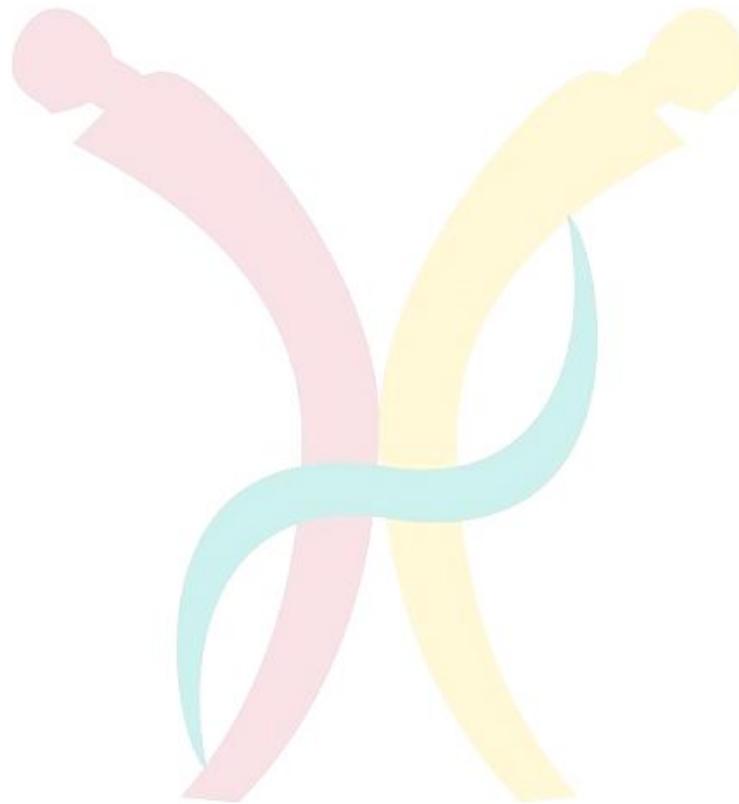
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