

**MULLAHS, SEX, AND BUREAUCRATS:
PAKISTAN'S CONFRONTATIONS WITH THE MODERN WORLD**

by

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Deepika Petraglia-Bahri and Mary Vasudeva, eds., *Between the Lines: South Asians In/On Postcoloniality* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1996), 121-136.

IDENTITY OR IDENTITIES

Pakistan's attempts to enter modernity on its terms have been fraught with obstacles and contradictions. Caught between the globalization of the West², undone by leakages through the tenuous membrane of national sovereignty (the rise of ethnic nationalism and sectarianism), and yet vulnerable to the reemergence of Islamic and pre-Islamic myths long forgotten, Pakistan remains both traditional and modern.

For Pakistanis there is an obvious dissonance between the claims of the West that civilization means Western civilization and Pakistani claims that Pakistan represents the land of the pure, the home of Muslims, with Islam representing the alternative to amoral capitalism and godless communism. The dissonance is even stronger when Pakistanis confront their own behavior in light of official utterances of who we are. The following story is all too typical.

A businessman I met at a music party said to me, his eyes piercing mine. "We are rotten people. I am a very prosperous man. My business does well. But I have no peace of mind. I

have to bribe everyone to get anything done," he said. "Peace of mind is everything." After giving him a bit of my history, he responded. "I too have lived overseas. But in a rotten country. Saudi Arabia. They are all uncivilized sorts there." He gave me his card and invited me to visit him, anytime.

In addition to a grand cynicism, a commitment to the idea that all dreams will be betrayed, the dissonance between what is said and actions has created a society where tolerance continues to decline, where the Other is less pure than oneself.³ There is no middle ground, either one is sinner or saint. Inasmuch as most of us occupy space in a continuum, what results is civilizational neurosis. Thus, even as Pakistan lays claim to a universal future, the univocal category of "Pakistan" itself is constantly being undone by movements and ethnicities within Pakistan, who also lay claim to the mantle of One God, One People, One State--Mohajirs⁴ and Pukhtoons to mention two who have a different vision than the current Punjabi Statist formulation. Moreover as with Iran⁵ where the populace rejected Western technocratic elites and their claim for a secular Iran, Pakistan's future hangs perilously between authoritarian mullahist nominations of social reality--only real Muslims should rule and live in Pakistan!--and accomodatist views of leaders such as Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Shariff, who are far more concerned with bourgeois revolutions, even as they use the language of Islam to bolster themselves, to assure citizens that they are not selling their souls to the devils of the West or the militaristic polytheists of the East--the Other of Pakistan: India.

National sovereignty for Pakistanis in a world of CNN, Star

TV, of the diasporic Pakistani community, of Paktoons traveling in and out of Afghanistan and Pakistan, of Pakistan's own efforts to destabilize India through intervention in Kashmir, and India's in Karachi are thus increasingly problematic. Only the enemy of India holds Pakistan together, with the worst case scenario for the Pakistani that of friendship with India. Friendship with India would lead to the final battle of sectarianism with each sub-group of Islam calling the other, Kafir, non-believer.⁶ Already certain Sunni groups in Lahore have declared that they will not allow shias to worship Muharram. The Pakistan police force can do nothing but watch the militarization of various Muslim groups as well as other political parties. Karachi already is moving towards Beirutization, the criminalization of politics is already deeply entrenched in Pakistan and India. This realpolitik frame stands in contrast to the original vision of Pakistan, as the land of pure, as the homeland of Muslims.

PERFECTION AND DESPOTISM

Pakistan desires to escape traditional feudalistic society yet recover the utopia of original Islam. The search for perfection and its unattainability is of course the central problem of Islamic political theory. Classical Islamic theory is a search for the "khalifa," the "righteous" representation of God while the Shia approach is the search for the perfect representative of God, the Mahdi. Western political theorists such as Hobbes and Montesquieu assumed that since we are all

sinners, safeguards to the accumulation of power need to be built into governance structures, the federalist political design. But Islamic civilization, believe Muslims, did have a perfect leader (a perfect representation of the laws of God) and a perfect constitution (The Medina constitution) and State. With the decline and breakdown of Islam, the structure of one-person rule remained even as rulers no longer could match the wisdom of the Prophet's successors. The community was now no longer voluntary but based on coercion, on trying to restrain dynastic, ethnic and personal histories. Faced with the breakdown of unity in the Islamic empire, Muslims opted for authoritarian often brutal leaders. The choice was chaos or authoritarian leadership with only the Medina State to look backward in hope for. The mistake was that no social structures, no institutions were created to tame power lest the saint quickly become sinner. This remains the problem in Pakistan. Once one leader has been found to be unpure, a new perfect leader is sought, who of course, as well disappoints, as we might expect in a search for an impossible morality. Thus it is this quest for idealism then that has been the betrayal of Islam. According to Al-Effendi⁷ by setting unattainable standards, it was easy to pass from the conclusion that perfection was impossible to the claim that all imperfect situations were equal. The present imperfect situation was therefore the best possible solution ... Classical theory then gave advice on how to tolerate tyranny. ... Classical theory did not offer any recommendation on how to deal with such tyrants and

dislodge them, which was the kind of guidance the pious needed, not advice about the limit to which they should tolerate tyranny.

The original State then in Islam became the representation of heaven with the original leader the representative of God. According to El-Affendi, the insistence on perfection in the khalifa automatically removed from the community the right to criticize him, for everyone is by definition less pious, less learned and less wise than he is. In the end, the fate of the ummah hung on the arrival of an individual who would unite in his personal charisma, saintliness and power. The waiting for this impossible arrival was bound to relegate Muslim thinking to the realm of mythology and passive ineptitude.⁸

Modernity has added to this paradox by making cynicism pervasive. Because of colonialism, the State cannot be trusted even as all attempt to claim it. Politics has come to mean staying in power as opposed to meeting basic needs or governmental responsiveness. Whatever the leader does is not enough: leaders who rise to greatness and attempt to transform social conditions become the victims of their own mythologies, believing they are the perfect leader, as with Zulfikar Bhutto.

Furthermore, the conflation of Islam with nation-state (as defined in Western secular terms) instead of as ummah, the larger global community, forces individuals to fit into the straitjacket of One Nation and One people who are Muslims. Plurality is destroyed as the tightening of the definition of what constitutes being Muslim increase. But defining Islam has always been in the hands of the few, the ulema, the keepers of the word. As Islam transformed from an oral tradition to a written to a mass written

tradition through the printing press, each step was opposed by the ulema, and each new technology was captured by them, keeping Islam, a tradition committed to ilm, knowledge, controlled by the few. Hopefully when CD-ROM becomes widespread then the text of Islam will cease to be in the hands of a few, more open to interpretation, with inner guidance and metaphorical spiritual understanding far more important than the fundament of the text, potentially, returning Islam to the egalitarian revolution it once promised to be.⁹ In the meantime, the Other is not allowed in Pakistani politics and social life and the text remains both hegemonic and fractured.

THE POLITICS OF THE FUTURE

To survive the future, we need to move to a new equation of identity that balances localness and globalness, one wherein the idea of Pakistan can exist within a theory of governance where many Pakistans exist in the context of a culture of tolerance. However this is not the concern of policymakers. The great battle and question in Pakistan is the issue of national integration. Indeed writing the real is associated with understanding both the successes and failures of national integration, with some even arguing that Pakistan has always existed, eternally. The trauma of Partition remains the defining moment in Pakistani history. It has created a knowledge discourse in which only nations and its functionaries are real. Those outside this discourse are

considered unimportant, thus social movements who are less concerned with State power are unable to function. The model of politics in Pakistan gives them little space. However, as NGO's flourish, the State quickly creates its own NGO's as depositories of foreign funds. Neo-realist or International Relations focused on realpolitik, on the real as primarily Statist with the goal the accumulation of power and territory is far more real than unselfish acts of kindness, of generosity, of peace. It is Zulfikar Bhutto's vision that Pakistanis will even eat grass so as to attain nuclear status that has made the region a spy novel, with the operators from the CIA, ISI, KGB, CBI all searching for the evasive Islamic bomb. Every action is blamed on a foreign element, on the grand plan to undo Pakistan being hatched in board and war rooms in Delhi and Washington, or Moscow and Delhi. The net result has been the strengthening of the Pakistani State and the further erosion of human rights and social welfare programs. Recent news that a Christian boy was to be hanged for blasphemy against the Prophet merely finalizes the surveillance State.¹⁰ But more than the problematique of an interventionist State, is the State that does not protect basic human rights. A man recently converted to an illegal Muslim sect, he was arrested and his relatives, who attempted to bail him out, were beaten and one of them lynched.¹¹ It is the politics of suspicion that results from a commitment to an abstract purity. And yet, Pakistanis know when they are being misled. Even with former President Zia al-Haq, the consciousness raising of the mass had

begun. This consciousness insists that Pakistan is not so pure. One way to understand the critical edge citizens have is by popular humor. The following joke, told to me in the late 1980's, best illustrated the political psyche of the nation at the time.

In the first, the President is in Paris for a conference where he sees a Pakistani woman dressed in Parisian attire. He asks one of his men to tell her that the President wants to see her. At the hotel, the President invites her to his room where he chastises her for wearing foreign clothes. He tells her to take off her french coat. She does. "As a Muslim woman, how dare you wear a skirt. Take it off," he says. She does. "Don't you know about Islamization in Pakistan, how dare you wear such frilly underclothes. Take them off." She does and stands there naked in front of the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. "Now come embrace Islam," he says with his arms outstretched.

This story tells of the frustration among many with Islamization in its statist and mullah forms, of the obvious sense among the wealthy and the poor of the hypocrisy of Islam within and without the nation. But this is an understandable situation. How to face the onrush of modernity, how to react to one's history, when one's culture is being cannibalized by the ideas of Western materialism, technology and history; how to bear the pain of traditional culture being vanquished by the problems of heroin addiction? How to deal with one's sons and daughters leaving the homeland for London and then coming back, but detesting Pakistan except as a place to nostalgically remember the comfort of the family? And how to deal with the family suddenly being threatened by divorce, by feminism? The battle has been for moral space in a country where this space has shrunk, thus furthering tightening the definition of the moral.

Islam as a social control ideology has been the mullah's answer. It hopes to reduce uncertainty, to reduce future shock, culture shock; to make the world more predictable, less chaotic--to remind us Pakistanis of the rules and regulations of the agricultural and medieval era. Unfortunately this type of Islam has not sufficed and Pakistan remains without an image of the future that includes the past yet develops a compelling image of the future.

THE PAST AS FUTURE

Pakistan does not have a vision of the future,¹² only an imagined ideal past, either as the ideal Islamic Polity or the nostalgia of postpartition. Zulifkar Bhutto's State socialism was a catastrophic failure and Zia's Islamic Republic will be known for declining literacy and education under the guise of Islam, forgetting that Islam is the religion of literacy, of knowledge accumulation instead of only about an essentialist identity construction.¹³ Islam after all is an information system, its development a testament to the dissemination and classification of knowledge. This was necessary as it was crucial to define what the Prophet said, who heard it said, and what the criteria for accepting the sayings of the Prophet were.

However visions of the future are difficult to engineer in colonized lands. Defiance of the State is considered the mark of honor since the State was always corrupt. The State is both to be gained, since it promises privilege and power, and to be

resisted since it represents official corrupt power.

At another level, in a world where there are few spaces for Muslims, where Muslims see not themselves though their own categories,¹⁴ their own myths, but see themselves as a defeated civilization, Pakistan as a revolution can but fail. Witness the movie Alladin, in the opening scene we are told that this is a movie about culture and religion, Alladin after all means the servant of God. But by the end of the movie, Alladin forsakes his history and says, "just call me Al." In a world where only Al's exist, Alladin has no home. But the Islamic response in Pakistan has not only to rid Islam of Al, but to rid Pakistan of of the plurality that was South Asia.

While in Europe the search for purity comes out in the oppression of color, in Pakistan it comes out in the oppression of sexual behavior, since color is transparent. Understanding sexual relations in Pakistan, for example, has as much to do with the continuation of feudal relations as it does with the mythic significance of the battle between the men of Medina and the wives of the Prophet. While the women of Islam were pressing for revelation that would give women more rights, the men wanted to keep women as slaves, as was the case in pre-Islamic Arabia. The growth of Islam hinged on how Muhammad and God would respond.

It was the veil that constituted the compromise between these two forces, argues Fatima Mernissi.¹⁵ The veil gave women personhood: rights of inheritance, the right to engage in battles against the enemies of Islam, and the right to freedom from the

male. Those women who wore the veil could not be leered at or treated as slaves. But those who didn't could be molested in the streets of Medina. This classic division remains. In modern Pakistan it is now the dapata, not the veil, that serves the same function of signaling virtue. Foreign non-Muslim women in this sense do not have personhood. They are outside the circle of Islamic purity.

SEX

Gender relations remain defining of all cosmologies, as do human-nature and human-other. But it is in Pakistan where the streets are full of only men, where men leer at any women who can walk, where the religious class use every legal effort to legitimize, rationalize and legalize their deep fear and distaste of women. Historically, it is legitimated by the story of Eve and Adam; for she did eat the fruit that threw them out of the Kingdom of God. Women for the men of Islam are the temptresses, a weakness; a weakness best to leave covered up. Their sole purpose is to produce more sons: sons who eventually will provide security, wealth and status by becoming landlords, army officers, physicians, writers, politicians and businessmen.

As the modern world electronically speeds into Pakistan's traditional culture--allowing for new types of choice--men have opted for legal remedies to resist change. President Zia-ul Haq began the process of the brutalization of the Pakistani self by enacting the Hudood Ordinance, explicitly meant to punish those involved in extramarital affairs but implicitly to remind all of

the will of Male-State. One man who was found having an affair responded like this when asked if he would marry the woman with whom he had just consummated a relationship with (and who was willing to do anything to be by his side). "Never, she is a loose immoral woman." After all, she has had sex outside the structure of marriage, hasn't she. Enter the State. If individual men are not strong enough not to be tempted by these "harlots", then the State must interfere; the collectivity of men is there to make certain that the apple is not bitten. Recently a young man shot his sister dead. What was her crime? She had been charged with having sexual relations with a man. Her brother in utter disgust of her decided that the family had been shamed enough. It was time to regain their honor.

Sexual relations have also become big business. In the "City Diary" column of The Muslim, a daily newspaper, the writer advises couples to keep a 50 rupee bill with them at all times. Police have been going to lonely quiet corners of parks and asking for marriage licenses. Without a copy, you and your wife are brisked over to the police station for some public embarrassment. However, a 50 rupee bill avoids this journey, in case one has forgotten the license. And if one is with someone other than one's wife or husband, then be prepared for the worst.

Of course, at the same time as the moral majority attempt to police sexuality, the vast populace of youth remain sexuality unsatisfied. While previously one dreamed of becoming a Pakistani James Bond, now the goal is to become an Asian VTV VJ

or to make one's own videocassette and have Star TV play it through out the known universe. But the young who do not have a vocation--and thus no money and no social standing--are unable to marry, that is, to find sex. Their only standing comes from their family, who will not allow marriage until the male has done something with his life--a something that is increasingly problematic as unemployment continues to soar.

Furthermore, for men and women, status is nearly impossible without wedding vows, for Pakistan is a societies of familes, not individuals. Thus, the marriage of Benazir Bhutto and her eternal motherhood. Whatever her personal reasons, she knew that to be elected she had to become a mother. As a single woman, critics could always situate her in the land of Western whoredom. Although she had initially tried to define herself by locating herself at the other end of female archetypes, that of the Amazon or hero, and later as the daughter of a Great Man, her father Zulfikar Bhutto, it was as a mother that she finally found political success. This was because in a nation afraid of female sexuality, of sexuality in toto, an Amazon could never last. The Goddess image was unavailable to her for she had lived outside the Muslim world. Moreover, she wanted political power, not eternal religious bliss.

Our next door neighbor, a former UN official who had lived in Italy, but now local pundit, whose mind lost its moorings somewhere between Rome and Verona, commented once that Benazir could not become President unless she submitted to a test of

virginity. If she was not chaste, she did not deserve to rule a nation. It is only now that she is married that her virginity is no longer an issue. But her womaness still is! My uncle from the village; a man with a large waxed mustache, a tendency toward womanizing--"it is not my fault, they just like me," he says when asked about his wives and mistresses--does not believe a woman can rule the country. They have their place and it certainly is not in the capital in Islamabad. His reasons are familiar. Largely, genetic. And yet the discourse is not external to us, we are all intimate with it, patriarchy resides within each of us. After Benazir Bhutto's removal from office by the Bureaucracy and the Military on charges of family corruption, she was asked why she didn't contain the activities of her husband. She commented that "he is a man, my husband, why should he."

SEARCH FOR HOME

Those of us who tire of such contradictions search for freedom in lands far from Pakistan. But home always calls. Home is not only an imagined nostalgia it is an attempt to return to culture, to that which has become fugitive in the capitalist relations of the West.¹⁶ Within third world theory, culture is believed to be the last unified discourse,¹⁷ the last remnant of the past not infiltrated by technocratic market relations. But those living in culture, as my village relatives tell me, are not so convinced of its benefits. True they want a world in which all of us read the Quran, but at the same time, they desire to

live in a world where their own status as women is not dependent on the nearest male relative or on the exhortations of the neighborhood mullah. Furthermore, culture (particularly the culture of the north within the south, of the elite in the periphery) has begun to unravel. Global Television, travel, e-mail, and other encounters with those different than us--whether the Afghani freedom fighter or the daughter who returns home from London despondent that the overseas Pakistani she had just married still had a British girlfriend he had told no one about, or with those that are not the traditional Goaras (the British), for example, the refugee Bosnian muslims, the industrialist Koreans and others--have all made problematic the idea of a Pakistani self. Of course developing a post-national self or arguing for a south asian confederation where the categories of Pakistan and India no longer exist is easier to do when one lives outside of "home" where the scars of partition are not penetrating. Within Pakistan, the project of sovereignty takes on a desperate tone, wherein without national integration life would cease to exist. As I have heard it argued, giving up Kashmir for Indians is merely amputation, for Pakistanis it is death, since the conflict of Kashmir serves as a way to keep the nation integrated. Kashmir is the lifeblood, the heart and soul of the great Islamic republic. While nationalism is easy to deconstruct but without the confidence of collective sovereignty is a post-national post-ethnic identity based on spiritual humanism even remotely possible.¹⁸

Thus, while local traditional culture has been strong at providing identity, it has not been able to compete with Westernization in providing capital and ideational mobility. Local culture has been based on land, on an imagined ethnicity, and a situated caste and class. Center culture can make inroads because it provides the entrance into modernity. Instead of the logos of Allah and ummah (the Islamic attempt to reconcile the local and global), it is now Coca-Cola and Marlboro that stand benevolently above the skies. By participating in these symbols the Pakistani middle class--those who cannot afford to send their sons to London or Iowa or Sidney--can enter the universalizing project of the moderns. This is pseudo-culture, neither here nor there, commodifying, secularizing and destroying traditional culture. Pseudo-culture is also the ammunition of the mullah in visioning an alternative Pakistan based on a idealized past (where they had space to stand, where they had power and respect, and all social configurations sprung from them). Is this what we yearn for? Or is it the new Pakistan that our bureaucrats promise us: bright city lights, big highways from Islamabad to Lahore, a protective military, and free education for our children. Or is there some other Pakistan? Clearly we need an imagined self and community that both answers our need for identity (land not real estate)¹⁹ with respect to territory but also with respect to a transcendental community, a global community. Unfortunately modernity has not created the global village but in fact the alienated global city, as every Karachite can well tell you.

Modernity has also destroyed local immunity against mental illness. The Pakistani self is particularly susceptible, as it is caught between conflicting cultural demands (tradition, colonialism, nationalism and globalism), between rapid economic growth and rapid impoverishment, between the breakdown of the traditional Asian self and the lack of a new self.²⁰

A postmodern self--speaking to our need for mobility: physical, labor and capital; identity; and wellbeing; has yet to emerge. Modernity has provided the first and last (at least for the Center) but not the second. Socialism and third worldism have made all three problematic. Creating a sovereign community that has space for many social configurations with mobility in-between them is not easy. The universal project of Islam at one time promised that type of polity, but that is not how the story turned out. Instead power has gone to either the mullahs or the modernizers. Those in search of other spaces, some metaphorical, some indigenous but universal, others eclectic, have not fared so well. While the social movements have begun to recover the social service demensions of Islam--as borrowed from Christianity--it is the State that returns to monitor social movements, to appropriate them. But this is not to say there is only one Pakistan as much as the national anthem would want us to identify with, instead there are many Pakistans. Understanding our differences might be the first step in developing a post-national identity and economy aligned neither with mullah nor bureaucrat, neither modernity nor tradition, and especially not

with the vacuity of postmodernity. But it is postmodernity that beckons. But when all is said and done, while postmodernity recreates Western man into many persons, both consumer and producer, lover and loved, and can therapeutically rid Western man of the grand narratives of sin (central to Judaism, Christianity and Marxism) as well as create mini-localisms, it has little promise to those in the third space of third world civilization.²¹ Grand narratives are cosmological and historical as in the case of Islam for Pakistan. Their removal only promises Western modernism or Western postmodernism. The alternative is clearly a search for diversity but in the context of an Islamic science or alternative modernity. This vision, possible, perhaps, because of the diaspora has yet to become persuasive. Pakistan is either a caricature of the European West or the Arab West or the negation of India, a not-India, it has yet to come into its own. But can it then make the jump into something else, when it has not discovered its own sovereignty?

My own understanding of these Pakistans has been based on many voyages home.²² Each one has been more than an airline schedule but a flight of the self, in search of some real or imagined or historical or yet to be space; a space where I hope to find a home that is neither commodified West nor feudal Pakistan, an alternative space that is interpretative not literal, negotiable not fixed; a space that allows for an Islam that can coexist with Buddha's middle way or Shiva's Tantra: a place with 1001 names of God (including the secular). But as we

theorize about what can be from far away, it is still home that calls.

Home as yet to have the same level of identity as it does for Indians and Chinese, Pakistanis are not a primordial tribe.²³ When outside, Pakistanis can become India, and conversely in England south asians as a whole are seen as Paki, in the negative sense of the word. But the myth of Pakistan the pure land remains inside and outside, as opposed to Indians who have settled elsewhere, for Pakistanis the return home is the project.

Political scientist Zeenia Satti divides Pakistanis into three categories. Those who want to leave Pakistan at any cost; those who live outside but claim they will one day return; and, those who live outside and make no pretense of desiring to return to inefficiency, poverty, and feudal social relations. It is the second that those inside have little respect for, it is a cry to be accepted as local, as desi, as Imran Khan has been. But the gaze of the nation does not just beckon home, it searches for fidelity outside. Does he drink, eat pork, have girlfriends? These questions becoming indicators of Pakistaniness. Those outside too internalize these values. Others return home seemingly not for themselves but for their children. Our next door neighbor in Shalimar 7/2 sold their prosperous business in Texas once their two daughters reached a marriageable age. Back home in Pakistan, they quickly began their search for a suitable groom. In their desire to find a Pakistani who lived overseas--but whose family lived in Islamabad--their oldest daughter was

engaged to a Pakistani in London. Tragically, he turned out to be a wife beater. After her divorce, the family decided to return to try their luck back in the US.

At the right age, the mythic significance of the battle between the wives of Muhammed and the men of Medina continues. At a certain age, all Pakistani families return home lest their daughters marry outside. For as with Mother India, while the male can become foreign, that is, concerned with issues of Statecraft, technology, accumulation of capital, it is the women who represents tradition, and thus must be moral, chaste, virginal, duty-bound, respectful of vertical relations.²⁴ But modernity does not allow that distinction between male for female, all become commodified. Thus the contradiction, how to become modern and retain tradition. By dividing this conundrum into male and female, Pakistan hopes to have solved the problem. But, women equally desire wealth, individual freedom, on their own terms, but they cannot. The cost is cultural schizophrenia, for then there will be no home, one will have to become, at worst, Indian, since Pakistaniness inside and outside Pakistan are no longer available. For men, Westernization is about wealth and sex. For mullahs, Westernization is about losing identity and integrity. The only solution is to attack the modernizers and when the West, when modernity, has ceased to being a thought, but a way of thinking, as Ashis Nandy has argued about Coca-Cola, then the only course is the politics of suspicion.²⁵ Tolerance gives way and signifiers of fidelity remain. For women these

signifiers are far more restrictive than men, since it is women who must maintain culture, history and morality.

One signifier that betrays my identity is my passport. Over the years, passport control officers have diligently and repeatedly maneuvered their eyes over my passport; hoping to find something; touching each visa, gently, then rapidly, hoping perhaps that a visa stamp would come off into their hands, and I could be found guilty of fraud, of the foreign spy I obviously was. This and other similar experiences finally forced me to relinquish my Pakistani passport acceding to an instrumentalist view of national identity, that is, taking any passport that allowed one unrestricted travel. Traveling with an American passport has made journeys easier but identity far more problematic. Have I sold out? Betrayed my third world status by entering into a pact with the American government? Or has my self become mobile, residing nowhere, roots appearing nonsensical, even timid. Or is "nowhere" actually code for the rich West where one can afford rootlessness. An American passport thus begins the completion of a cultural route which starts with a t-shirt from the United States. That shirt or pair of jeans represents not tradition but identity as mobility. It represents a rejection of State power, of religious power and of military power. That t-shirts represents the ability to choose lifestyle.

The modern then continues the long term process of breaking down tradition. It is the breakdown of the community and the self not a new arrangement that characterizes Pakistani social space.

My uncle characterizes this shift from traditional society to modern society in this way.

While in boarding school, he and his friends heard the news that the father one of their classmates had died. They immediately started the 15 mile walk to his house. There they consoled him and did what they could to help arrange the funeral. The friend told my uncle that he was eternally grateful. Many years later when my uncle returned from the war he met up with that friend again. The friend told him that he had heard that my uncle had some enemies in the village. The friend brought out a pistol and said that he would be happy to shoot his political adversaries. My uncle said that would not be necessary, they were not really enemies, they just held political differences. The friend reminded him of his debt. My uncle again told him to forget it.

The point of the story is not only the willingness to kill others, but the sense of loyalty, of friendship that existed then.

He lamented that in today's world of "mullacracy," while people spoke of spiritual values, their actions were empty, utterly void of any moral strength.

We have thus not yet localized Modernity nor have we created an alternative modernity; one that breaks with feudal relations but reevokes ancient cultural myths that give selves coherence. Our reaction to modernity has been to attempt to escape its exchange based political-economy (through nationalizing industries) while all the time reproducing it but in distorted forms, such as the village child who insists on wearing Michael Jackson's white gloves, what Majid Tehranian has referred to as identity and technology fetishism.²⁶ Just as the West has fabricated the East as the land of the fantastic, we have constructed the West as the great shopping center in the sky; everything is for sale and

consumption. But when we are filled, we go back home and live the moral life.

TIME AND TECHNOLOGY

The car best represents this fetishism. For Americans, the car represents freedom. For Pakistanis it represents modernity. I am always surprised how calm we Pakistanis are at tea. Yet the minute we get into our cars, we drive ever urgently, honking madly if anyone ever slows down, even at a red light. Everyone is rushing somewhere; yet once we get there, we return to our agricultural roots and wait. We rest. Forever. But in the car, Pakistan moves at the pace of the Modern world. Even quicker. Miles per hour is the guiding metaphor not as an indicator that one is going too fast but as a challenge to go even faster. This of course is the problematic relationship with technocracy. Going fast means catching up, entering a linear theory of history, Going fast means playing the game of the West, of trying to catch up, to becoming technocratic as the West. Miles per hour means economic and cultural stages. However, while individuals cars may speed, the infrastructure as a whole causes speed to slow down. Under Nawaz Shariff the plan was to build a superhighway throughout the country so as to create one of the requisities of a nation-state. However, given that spatial travel remained plural--donkeys, tongas, bicycles, trucks, cars, individuals--that plan was abandoned, since it would only serve the needs of the rich, argued then out of power Benazir Bhutto.

The Post Office too has attempted to modernize and enter into different temporal spaces. While waiting in line, I noticed that at the stamp counter there were twenty of us jostling for the attention of two employees. Besides the stamp counter, there were other counters with modern titles: fax, electronic mail, and so forth with employees behind each one. There were, however, no takers for those lines. Finally after having mailed my postcards, I asked to see the manager. The assistant manager heard my analysis but instead of changing the modern structure of the office, he immediately sent a clerk over to help me purchase more stamps. It was a modern post office and each counter had to have an attendant, so what if only the stamp counter had a mob of people waiting, clawing to get the attention of the attendant. Without fax and electronic mail where would Pakistan be? Later I realized that I was the only person who was not a lowly clerk. Time and power had been structured around class such that the rich and government officials never waited in line. They sent their bearers to. Thus from the view of the postal service, it did not matter if there was mayhem to get to the counter, no real people, no saabs were waiting. If a saab did come to the Post Office it would be to use some of the modern conveniences not purchase stamps.

In a visit to Pakistan in September 1993, I returned to the Central Post Office and was surprised to see all the postal functions being used. There were now many stamp counters spaced throughout the Post Office. Has the World Bank rationalized us?

Has the Lee Kuan Yew view that we need to argue and think about God less; work harder, and respect authority more, actually set in?²⁷

And yet behind the fetishism, tradition remains, strengthening the social bond, creating an authenticity that is almost Orientalist in description. While waiting in a line to have my ticket reconfirmed, I saw a man walk through the line and call out to the PIA reservations officer. They embraced and began to tell stories to each other about their relatives. At first I was angered and wanted to complain to the management, but then I saw that theirs' was a critique of modernity. The world of deadlines, of planes to catch was far less important than the affection they felt for each other. It did not matter that the line lengthened as they talked, they had entered an alternative time. Affection not efficiency had become a way of knowing. And yet it is this affection that the military is critical off, leading to comments that only the military has the right to rule in Pakistan.²⁸

But this does not mean that linear time is fugitive. Once while "waiting" in a car I saw two men meet and embrace. They obviously had not seen each other for a long time. After a few moments of conversation, one asked the other to show him his watch. They both compared watches for the next ten minutes. In a poor country, where fashion for men is non-existent, a watch then becomes a symbol of status, a representation of difference. A watch becomes entry into modern space even as time remains embedded in the traditional social space of the family, of the

seasons, of meetings with loved ones, of life and death.

Pakistan then in many ways exists out of time, or perhaps more appropriate, it still uses the seasonal model of time: there is spring and there is fall; winter and summer. Relax and let God take care of everything. There is no rush. Everything is God's will (or God in the form of the State). And government functionaries use time for their own status, thus dividing Pakistan into those who have to wait and those who do not. Time becomes currency but not money.

SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

Caught between the modern and the traditional, Zia's Pakistan attempted to close its mental borders to the rush of telecommunications and global travel.²⁹ Unsuccessful in this effort, the authoritarian past emerged constituting the Western world as the site of accessible sex and degeneration. Privatization and the resurgence of a new globally linked bourgeois have once again shifted the pendulum back closer to Western modern space. While the feudal lord and military officer will quickly adapt to changing times, the mullah might have a rougher transition period. As will the bureaucrat. But the lines of battle will continue to revolve around class location, access to sex, and temporal situation.

Our search is both for pathways out of modernist categories of understanding and of traditionalist reaction to the modern. Modernity forces us to the secular, to the nation, to homogeneity,

even as it brakes the feudal class creating safe spaces for the bourgeois. Modernity's effort to transform time from seasonal (agricultural) and biological (women's time) to fast, commodified and scarce time has both succeeded and failed.³⁰

While new political and scientific technologies force us into the postmodern, the cyclical nature of history and culture return us to an unending present. Still, we have not learned how to make social and physical technologies that are endogenous, based on the multiplicity of our histories. We borrow knowledge paradigms from outside or develop models which use empiricist modernist methodologies, such as attempts to develop indigenous models of the modern have either been silly (using angels to levitate Pakistani astronauts to Mars) or have reinforced feudal social relations, as in Islamic fundamentalism. Moving to a space of understanding where we exist in many layers of social reality and ways of knowing, for example, those that are inclusive of empirical (literal) and metaphorical (mythic and postmodern) and cultural (Islamic epistemology) have remained elusive.

Through CNN and Star TV: PIA and global capital, Pakistan--even as many wish for a mythical sovereignty, whether national or Islamic--finds itself increasingly modern. With urdu music on Asian VTV recreating time and space (speeding time and making Pakistani cultural space appear attractively modern), fair elections reigniting hope, and with CD-ROM in the horizon (and genetic engineering and virtual reality) potentially transforming Islam, perhaps we should be anticipating not more confrontations

with the modern but the creation of a uniquely Pakistani post-modern. The epistemologically richness, the cultural complexity, and a desire for a new vision are there, even if the the betrayal of the dream of partition remains. Something different may indeed be possible. But if this is too positive or pollyana of an image, we can focus on my friend Akbar, who was last seen driving around Islamabad chasing the few available Western women and the even fewer Westernized Pakistani women, with his mother swiftly chasing after him hoping that he will find a job as a state bureaucrat and quickly get married before it is too late and a mullah finds him.

Notes

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