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BETWEEN SOUTH ASIANS AND POSTCOLONIALITY THE LINES

EDITED BY

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AND

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Kilimanjaro is to me the most beautiful (as I recently confirmed when I visited Tanzania); when I hear the South African anthem "Nkosi Sikelele" during these days when the country is much in the news, my mind automatically says the identical words in Swahili: "Mungu Ibariki Afrika"—the Tanzanian anthem, sung to the identical tune.

And so I have come to accept a condition that my ancestors found quite natural: that of agglomerating all one's experiences, not denying anything in the interest of "purity" but always being wary of the purifiers—religious, national, or ethnic "fundamentalists."

Life at the margins has its comforts, and in multiplicity there is creativity and acceptance.

NOTES

1. Bronwyn Drainre, *Globe and Mail*, 15 January 1994.
2. Bronwyn Drainre, *Globe and Mail*, 1 January 1994.
3. *Prime Time News*, CBC, Toronto, 29 March 1994 (transcript).

CHAPTER 7

Mullahs, Sex, and Bureaucrats

Pakistan's Confrontations with the Modern World

Sohail Inayatullah

Identity or Identities

Pakistan's attempts to enter modernity on its own terms have been fraught with obstacles and contradictions. Caught between East and West by globalization, 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.¹

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 we Pakistanis confront our own behavior in light of official utterances as to who we are.²

In addition to a grand cynicism—the sense that all dreams will be betrayed—the dissonance between what is said and what is done has created a society where tolerance continues to decline and where the Other is less pure than oneself.³ There is no middle ground; one is either sinner or saint. Inasmuch as most of us occupy space in a continuum, what results is civilizational neurosis. The univocal category "Pakistan" is itself constantly being undone by movements and ethnicities which, like the state, also lay claim to the mantle of One God, One People, One State—the Mohajirs and Pukhtoons, to mention but two such that have a vision different from the current Punjabi statist formulation.⁴ Moreover, as in Iran, where the populace rejected Western technocratic elites and

their claim for a secular Iran,⁵ Pakistan's future hangs perilously between authoritarian mullahist nominations of social reality (only real Muslims should rule and live in Pakistan) and the accommodationist 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 is thus increasingly problematic in a world of CNN and Star TV, the diasporic Pakistani community, Pukhtoons traveling in and out of Afghanistan and Pakistan, Pakistan's own efforts to destabilize India through intervention in Kashmir, and India's similar efforts in Karachi. 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 subgroup of Islam calling the other Kafir, nonbeliever. Already certain Sunni groups in Lahore have declared that they will not allow the Shia to worship Muharram (the ten days of mourning for the tragic events of Karbala, where in the seventh century the problem of the appropriate succession of the Prophet was violently "resolved").⁶ The Pakistan police force can do nothing but watch the militarization and criminalization of various Muslim groups as well as political parties. This realpolitik frame stands in contrast to the original vision of Pakistan as the land of the pure, the homeland of Muslims.

Perfection and Despotism

Pakistan wants to escape traditional feudalistic society yet recover the utopia of original Islam. The search for perfection and its unattainability constitute, of course, the central problem of Islamic political theory. Classical Islamic theory is a search for the *khalifa*, the "righteous" representation of God; 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 needed to be built into governance structures—the federalist political design. But Islamic civilization, Muslims believe, 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 could no longer match the wisdom of the Prophet's successors. The community was no longer voluntary but based on coercion, on trying to restrain dynastic, ethnic, and personal histories. Faced with the break-

down of unity in the Islamic empire, Muslims opted for authoritarian and often brutal leaders. The choice was chaos or authoritarian leadership, with only the Medina state to look backward to. No social structures or institutions were created to tame power, lest the saint quickly become sinner. This remains the problem in Pakistan. Once a leader has been found to be impure, a new perfect leader is sought, who in turn disappoints, as we might expect in a search for an impossible morality.

This quest for idealism has been the betrayal of Islam. According to El-Affendi,

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 in Islam, then, became the representation of heaven and the original leader the representative of God. El-Affendi says 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* [the larger global community] 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."⁷

Modernity has added to this paradox by making cynicism pervasive. Because of colonialism, the state cannot be trusted, yet all attempt to claim it. Politics has come to mean staying in power as opposed to meeting basic needs. 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, each believing, as did Zulfikar Bhutto, that he or she is the perfect leader.

Furthermore, the conflation of Islam with a nation-state (as defined in Western secular terms) instead of with *ummah* forces individuals to fit into the straitjacket of One Nation and One People who are Muslims. Plurality is destroyed as the definition of "Muslim" becomes more and more restrictive. 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 captured by them, keeping Islam a tradition committed to *ilm*, knowledge, controlled by the few. Perhaps when CD-ROM is widespread, the text of Islam will cease to be in the hands of a few and become 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.⁸ 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, a theory of governance wherein the idea of Pakistan permits many Pakistans to exist in the context of a culture of tolerance. This is not the concern of policymakers, however. The great battle in Pakistan is over the question of national integration. Indeed, "writing the real" is associated with understanding both the successes and failures of national integration, 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 their functionaries are real. Those outside this discourse are considered unimportant; thus, social movements less concerned with state power are unable to function. The model of politics in Pakistan gives them little space. As nongovernmental organizations flourish, however, the state quickly creates its own NGOs as depositories of foreign funds. Neorealist or international relations focus on *realpolitik*, on the real as primarily statist and its goal, the accumulation of power and territory, far more real than unselfish acts of kindness, of generosity, of peace. Zulfikar Bhutto's vision that Pakistanis will even eat grass so as to attain nuclear status has made the region a spy novel, with the operators from the CIA, KGB, ISI, 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 the board and war rooms of 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.⁹

But more problematic than an interventionist state is the state that does not protect basic human rights. A man who recently converted to an illegal Muslim

sect, for instance, was arrested, and the relatives who attempted to bail him out were beaten and one of them lynched.¹⁰ This politics of suspicion results from a commitment to an abstract purity. And yet Pakistanis know when they are being misled. Even under former President Mohammed Zia-ul-Haq, the consciousness-raising of the masses had begun, a consciousness insisting that Pakistan is not so pure. One way to understand the critical edge citizens have is through popular humor. A joke told to me in the late 1980s best illustrates the political psyche of the nation at that time.

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.¹¹

This story reveals the frustration among many with Islamization in its statist and mullahist forms, the obvious sense among the wealthy and the poor of the hypocrisy of Islam inside and outside the nation. But this is an understandable situation in the face of many dilemmas: 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's being vanquished by the problems of heroin addiction; how to deal with one's sons and daughters who leave the homeland for London, and then come back but detest Pakistan except as a place to remember nostalgically the comfort of the family; and how to withstand the threats to family of divorce, of feminism. The battle is one for moral space in a country where this space has shrunk, thus furthering tightening the definition of the moral.

An Islam built on social control ideology has been the mullah's answer. It hopes to alleviate uncertainty, to reduce future shock and culture shock, to make the world more predictable and less chaotic—to remind us Pakistanis of the rules and regulations of the agricultural and medieval era. Unfortunately, this kind of Islam has not sufficed, and Pakistan remains without a vision that would include the past yet develop a compelling image of the future.

The Past as Future

Pakistan does not have a vision of the future, only an imagined past either as the ideal Islamic polity or as the nostalgia of postpartition.¹² Zulfikar Bhutto's state socialism was a catastrophic failure, and Zia's Islamic Republic will be remembered for declining literacy and education under the guise of Islam, notwithstanding that Islam is the religion of literacy and knowledge accumulation, rather than being 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 emphasis on information was necessary because it was crucial to define what the Prophet said, who heard it said, and what the criteria were for accepting the sayings of the Prophet. Visions of the future are difficult to engineer in colonized lands, where defiance of the state is considered a mark of honor because the state is 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 themselves not through their own categories, their own myths, but as a defeated civilization, Pakistan as a revolution can but fail.¹⁴ Witness Disney's *Aladdin*: In the opening scene we are told that this is a movie about culture and religion; "Aladdin" after all means the servant of God. But by the end of the movie he forsakes his history and says, "Just call me Al." In a world where only Als exist, Aladdin has no home. But the Islamic response in Pakistan has been not only to rid Islam of Al but to rid Pakistan of the plurality that was South Asia.

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 in pre-Islamic Arabia. The growth of Islam hinged on how Muhammad and God would respond. The veil 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 the *dapata* (a long scarf that covers the chest and, during prayer, the head) rather than the veil serves the 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 continue to define all cosmologies, as do human nature and human other. But in Pakistan where the streets are full of only men; men leer at any woman who can walk; members of the religious class use every legal effort to legitimize, rationalize, and legalize their deep fear of and distaste for women. Historically, it is legitimated by the story of Adam and Eve, for she ate the fruit that drove them out of the Kingdom of God. For the men of Islam, woman is the temptress, a weakness it is best to leave covered up. Her 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, meant explicitly to punish those involved in extramarital affairs but implicitly to remind all of the will of the male state. Masud Ahmad's column "The Roving Eye" in Pakistan's national newspaper, *The Nation*, provides these examples. When asked if he would marry the woman with whom he had just consummated a relationship (and who was willing to do anything to be by his side), one man who was found having an affair said, "Never. She is a loose, immoral woman." 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 accused of having sexual relations with a man. Her brother in utter disgust decided that the family had been shamed enough. It was time to regain their honor.¹⁶

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 fifty-rupee bill with them at all times. Police have been going to quiet corners of parks and asking for marriage licenses. Without a copy, the couple is whisked to the police station for some public embarrassment. If one has forgotten the license, however, a fifty-rupee bill avoids this journey. But one who is found with someone other than his or her own spouse is advised to 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 sexually unsatisfied. Those 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 young 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 families, not individuals—hence the marriage of Benazir Bhutto and her dramatic entry into motherhood. Whatever her personal reasons, she knew that to be elected she had to become a mother. As a single woman, she would always be situated by critics in the land of Western whoredom. Although she had initially tried to locate 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 as such, 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.

Search for Home

Those of us who tire of such contradictions search for freedom in lands far from Pakistan. But home always calls, not only as an imagined nostalgia but as an attempt to return to culture, to that which has become fugitive in the capitalist relations of the West.¹⁷ Within Third World theory, culture is believed to be the last unified discourse, the last remnant of the past not infiltrated by technocratic market relations.¹⁸ But those living in such a culture, as my female 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 would like 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 from us—the Afghani freedom fighter; the daughter returning from London despondent that the overseas Pakistani she had just married still had a British girlfriend he had told no one about; or those who are not traditional *Gorās* (the British), such as refugee Bosnian Muslims or industrialist Koreans—have all made problematic the idea of a Pakistani self. Of course, developing a postnational 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 away from “home,” someplace where the scars of par-

tition have faded. Within Pakistan, the project of sovereignty takes on a desperate tone, suggesting that without national integration life would cease to exist. I have heard it argued that for Indians, giving up Kashmir 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. Nationalism is easy to deconstruct, but without the confidence of collective sovereignty, is a postnational, postethnic identity based on spiritual humanism even remotely possible?¹⁹

Thus, although 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 in the skies. By participating in these symbols the Pakistani middle class—those who cannot afford to send their sons to London or Iowa or Sydney—can enter the universalizing project of the moderns. This is pseudoculture, neither here nor there, commodifying, secularizing, and destroying traditional culture. Pseudoculture is also the ammunition of the mullahs in visioning an alternative Pakistan based on a idealized past (where they had space to stand, where they had power and respect, where all social configurations sprang 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 answers our need for identity with respect to territory (land, not real estate) and also with respect to a transcendental community, a global community.²⁰ Unfortunately, modernity has created not the global village but in fact the alienated global city, as every Karachi-ite 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, globalism), between rapid economic growth and rapid impoverishment, between the breakdown of the traditional Asian self and the lack of a new self.²¹

A postmodern self speaking to our need for mobility (whether physical or of labor and capital), identity, and well-being 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 and allows mobility between them is not easy. The universal project of Islam at one time promised

that sort 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. Although social movements have begun to recover the social service dimensions of Islam—as borrowed from Christianity—it is the state that returns to monitor and appropriate social movements. There is not one Pakistan; there are many. Understanding our differences might be the first step in developing a postnational identity and economy aligned with neither mullah nor bureaucrat, neither modernity nor tradition, and especially not with the vacuity of postmodernity. But it is postmodernity that beckons. When all is said and done, though postmodernity recreates the Westerner into many persons—both consumer and producer, lover and loved—and can therapeutically rid the Westerner of the grand narratives of sin (central to Judaism, Christianity, and Marxism) as well as create mini-localisms, it holds little promise for those in the third space of Third World civilization.²² Grand narratives are cosmological and historical, as in the case of Islam for Pakistan. Their removal promises only 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 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.²³ Each one has been more than an airline schedule; it has been 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 interpretive, not literal, and 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 1,001 names of God (including the secular). But as we theorize from far away about what can be, it is still home that calls.

Home has yet to have the same level of identity as it does for Indians and Chinese; Pakistanis are not a primordial tribe.²⁴ Abroad, "Pakistani" is often conflated with "Indian"; conversely, South Asians in England are as a whole seen as "Paki," in the negative sense of the word. But the myth of Pakistan the pure land remains, at home and abroad. Political scientist Zeenia Satti divides "Westernized" 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 ineffi-

ciency, poverty, and feudal social relations.²⁵ But the gaze of the nation does not just beckon home, it searches for fidelity outside. Does the expatriate drink, eat pork, have girlfriends? The answers to these questions become indicators of Pakistaniness. Those outside too internalize these values. Others return home seemingly not for themselves but for their children. Some friends sold their prosperous business in Texas once their two daughters reached a marriageable age. Back home in Pakistan, they quickly began their search for suitable grooms. In their desire to find a Pakistani who lived overseas but whose family lived in Islamabad, their older daughter was engaged to a Pakistani in London. Tragically, he turned out to be a wife beater. After her divorce, the family came back to try their luck in the United States.

At the right age, the mythic significance of the battle between the wives of Muhammad and the men of Medina continues. At a certain time all Pakistani families return home lest their daughters marry outside. For as with Mother India, the male can become foreign—that is, concerned with issues of statecraft, technology, accumulation of capital—but the woman represents tradition and thus must be moral, chaste, virginal, dutybound, respectful of vertical relations.²⁶ But modernity does not allow that distinction between male and female; both become commodified. Thus the contradiction: how to become modern and retain tradition. By dividing this conundrum between male and female, Pakistan hopes to have solved the problem. But women also desire wealth and individual freedom. The cost of these contradictions is cultural schizophrenia. For men, Westernization is about wealth and sex. For mullahs, Westernization is about losing identity and integrity; their only solution is to attack the modernizers. And when the West and modernity have evolved from an idea to a way of thinking, as Ashis Nandy has argued about Coca-Cola, then the only course is the politics of suspicion.²⁷ Tolerance gives way and signifiers of fidelity remain. For women, these signifiers are far more restrictive than for 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 diligently and repeatedly searched my passport, hoping to find something, touching each visa gently, then rapidly, hoping perhaps that a visa stamp would come off in their hands and I could be found guilty of fraud, of being 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 betrayed my Third World status by entering into a pact with the American government?²⁸ Or has my self become mobile, residing nowhere, seeing roots as 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 that 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-shirt represents the ability to choose life-style.

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 speaks of a fifteen-mile walk to a friend's house to console him for the loss of his father, and of the friend's subsequent offer to shoot his enemies. The point of telling the story is to remember the sense of loyalty and friendship that is disappearing. He laments that in today's world of "mullacracy," though people speak of spiritual values, their actions are 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 retains ancient cultural myths that give selves coherence. Our reaction to modernity has been an attempt to escape its exchange-based political economy (through nationalizing industries) while all the time reproducing it in distorted forms, as in the case of the village child who insists on wearing Michael Jackson's white gloves. Majid Tehranian has referred to this fracture as identity and technology fetishism.²⁹ 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 where 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 exemplifies 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 enter our cars, we drive urgently, honking madly if anyone 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, it seems. But in the car, Pakistan moves at the pace of the modern world, or 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 the linear time of history. Going fast means playing the game of the West, of becoming technocratic like the West. Miles-per-hour equates with economic and cultural stages. Yet although individual

cars may speed, the infrastructure as a whole causes them to slow down. Under Nawaz Shariff the plan was to build a superhighway throughout the country as one of the requisites of a modern nation-state; however, given that spatial travel remained plural—donkeys, tongas, bicycles, trucks, cars, individuals—that plan was abandoned, since it would serve only the needs of the rich, argued then out-of-power Benazir Bhutto.

The post office too has attempted to modernize and to enter different temporal spaces. Waiting in line at the stamp counter, I counted twenty of us jostling for the attention of two employees. There were other counters with modern titles—fax, electronic mail, and so forth—with an employee behind each one, but there were no takers for those services. Finally, after having mailed my postcards, I asked to see the manager. The assistant manager heard my analysis, but instead of making changes he immediately sent a clerk to help me purchase more stamps. It was a modern post office, and each counter had to have an attendant, even if the stamp counter had a mob of people waiting, clawing for attention. His sense clearly was that without fax and electronic mail, where would Pakistan be? Later I realized that I was the only person there who was not a lowly clerk. Time and power had been structured around class so that the rich and government officials never waited in line; they sent their bearers to do it. Thus, from the perspective of the postal service, it did not matter if there was mayhem to get to the counter; no real people, no sahibs, were waiting. If a sahib did come to the post office, it would be to use some of the modern conveniences, not purchase stamps.

Yet behind all attempts at modernity, 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 Pakistani International Airlines reservations officer. They embraced and began to tell stories about their relatives. At first I was angered and wanted to complain to the management, but then I saw that theirs was an implicit critique of modernity. The world of deadlines, of planes to catch, was far less important than the affection they felt. It did not matter that the line lengthened as they talked, they had entered an alternative time. Friendship, not efficiency, had become a way of knowing.

But this does not mean that linear time is fugitive. I once watched two men meet and embrace who 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 compared watches for the next ten minutes. In a poor country where fashion for men is nonexistent, a watch 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.

In many ways, then, Pakistan exists out of time or, perhaps more appropriately, still uses the seasonal model of time: There is spring, fall, winter, and summer. The philosophy still is, 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 threat of telecommunications and global travel.³⁰ When this effort was unsuccessful, the authoritarian past emerged, constituting the Western world as the site of accessible sex and degeneration. Privatization and the rise of a new, globally linked bourgeois have once again swung the pendulum closer to Western modern space, where the feudal lord and military officer will quickly adapt to changing times; the mullah may have a rougher transition period, as will the bureaucrat. But the lines of battle will continue to revolve around class, access to sex, and temporal location.

Our search is for pathways both out of modernist categories of understanding and away from traditionalist reaction to the modern. Modernity forces us to the secular, to the nation, to homogeneity, even as it breaks the feudal class and creates safe spaces for the bourgeois. Modernity's effort to transform time from seasonal (agricultural time) and biological (women's time) to fast, commodified, and scarce time has both succeeded and failed.³¹ While new political and scientific technologies force us into the postmodern, the cyclical nature of history and culture return us to an unending present. We have not learned how to make social and physical technologies that are endogenous, based on the multiplicity of our histories. Our attempts to develop indigenous models of the modern have either been silly (using angels to levitate Pakistani astronauts to Mars) or reinforced feudal social relations, as in Islamic fundamentalism.³² A way of moving to a space of understanding where we exist in many layers of social reality—and where ways of knowing include, for example, the empirical (literal), metaphorical (mythic and postmodern), and cultural (Islamic epistemology)—has remained elusive.

Through CNN and Star TV, PIA and global capital, Pakistan finds itself increasingly porous, even as many wish for a mythical sovereignty, whether national or Islamic. With Urdu music on Asian VTV—the counterpart of American MTV—recreating time and space (speeding time and making Pakistani cultural space appear attractively modern); with fair elections reigniting hope;

with genetic engineering, telecommunication, and virtual reality and CD-ROM on the horizon and their potential to transform Islam, perhaps we should be anticipating not more confrontations with the modern but the creation of a uniquely Pakistani postmodern. The epistemological richness, the cultural complexity, and a desire for a new vision are there, even if the betrayal of the dream of partition remains. Something different may indeed be possible. But if this seems too positive or Pollyannaish, 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

1. For a general discussion of global culture, see Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Economy," *Public Culture* 2.2 (1992): 441–29; Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992).
2. 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. Peace of mind is everything." After hearing 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.
3. See Zia Mian, "A Pakistan Pakistanis Won't Buy," *The News* (Islamabad/Rawalpindi), 16 April 1995, 6.
4. Mohajirs are an Urdu-speaking group that migrated from India at partition; much of the recent violence in Karachi is attributed to them. Pukhtoons are from the north of Pakistan (the North West Frontier Province); considered tribal and traditional, they move freely in and out of Pakistan and Afghanistan, and have frequently called for their own nation.
5. Majid Tehranian, "Communication and Revolution in Iran: The Passing of a Paradigm," *Iranian Studies* 13.104 (1980): 5–30.
6. Abuzer Abbas, "Sectarian Extremists Hold Punjab to Ransom," *Friday Times* (Lahore), 25 January 1995, 5.
7. Abdelwahab El-Affendi, *Who Needs an Islamic State?* (London: Grey Seal, 1991), 37, 39.
8. Zia Sardar, "Paper, Printing and Compact Disks: The Making and Unmaking of Islamic Culture," *Media, Culture and Society* 15 (1992): 43–59.
9. "A Christian in Islam," *The Economist*, 5 October 1994, 36. ISI stands for Inter Services Intelligence; it is Pakistan's intelligence agency. The CBI, Central Bureau of Investigation, is India's domestic intelligence agency.
10. Abdullah Jan, "Supporter of 'Infidel' Stoned to Death," *The News*, 10 April 1995, 5.
11. This joke was told to me by Syed Abidi, May 1987, in Honolulu. See also Syed Abidi, "Social Change and the Politics of Religion" (diss., University of Hawaii, 1988), esp. 218–21, in the section "Political Jokes and Sarcasm."
12. Sohail Inayatullah, "Images of Pakistan's Future," *Futures* 24.9 (1992): 867–78.

13. Zia Sardar, *How We Know: Ilm and the Revival of Knowledge* (London: Grey Seal, 1991).
14. Zia Sardar and Meryl Wyn Davies, *Distorted Imagination* (London: Grey Seal, 1990).
15. Fatima Mernissi, *Women and Islam* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).
16. For a complete file of Masud Ahmad's weekly columns, one may write 25, St. 61, F.8/4, Islamabad, Pakistan.
17. See Arjun Appadurai, "Patriotism and Its Futures," *Public Culture* 5 (1993): 411–29.
18. Ashis Nandy, *Tradition, Tyranny, and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987).
19. P. R. Sarkar, *The Liberation of Intellect* (Calcutta: Ananda Marga, 1982).
20. I am indebted to Chitta Unni of Chaminade University in Honolulu, Hawaii, for this distinction. See his "It Is Only in a Present That There Is a Past" (paper presented at the Eleventh Annual Spring Symposium, Center for South Asian Studies, Honolulu, 14 March 1994).
21. See Sohail Inayatullah, "Frames of Reference, the Breakdown of the Self, and the Search for Reintegration," in *The Futures of Asian Cultures*, ed. Yogesh Atal and Eleonora Masini (Bangkok: Unesco, 1993), 95–130.
22. See Merryl Wyn Davies, Ashis Nandy, and Zia Sardar, *Barbaric Other: A Manifesto on Western Racism* (London: Pluto Press, 1993).
23. See Sohail Inayatullah, "Painfully beyond East and West: The Futures of Cultures," *In Context* 19 (1988): 50–53.
24. See Joel Kotkin, *Tribes: How Race, Religion, and Identity Determine Success in the New Global Economy* (New York: Random House, 1993).
25. Personal conversation with Zeena Satti, January 1990, Islamabad.
26. See Uma Narayan, "Eating Cultures: Incorporation, Identity, and Indian Food," *Social Identities* 1.1 (1995): 63–87.
27. Ashis Nandy, "The Philosophy of Coca-Cola," e-mail transmission, 24 January 1995.
28. Fortunately, I now have dual citizenship, Pakistani and American.
29. Majid Tehranian, "Dependency and Dialogue" (paper presented at the Twenty-fourth Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, Mexico, April 5–9, 1983).
17. See also Majid Tehranian, *Technologies of Power* (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1990).
30. This was also President Zia's political strategy, to use Islam to buttress the state by playing off different political parties against each other.
31. See Sohail Inayatullah, "From Who Am I to When Am I: Framing the Time and Shape of the Future," *Futures* 25.3 (1993): 235–53.
32. See Sohail Inayatullah, "Islamic Responses to Scientific, Technological, and Epistemological Transformations," *Islamic Thought and Scientific Creativity* 6.2 (1995): 47–68.

CHAPTER 8

Coming to Terms with the "Postcolonial"

Deepika Bahri

Some fifteen years after the term "postcolonial" began to circulate in the Western academy, the question "What is the postcolonial?"—raised by Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge in 1991—continues to tax the imagination of academicians.¹ Essays interrogating the term, its use and abuse, its pitfalls and dif-fuseness, abound in journals and conference meetings. Discontent in and about the field has not, however, limited the scholarship in this area. Through an ex-ploration of the term's history, usage, and definition in light of multiple criti-cisms and inadequacies, I attempt to evaluate what is lost and what might yet be gained by continuing to deploy it.

In a very literal sense, of course, the "postcolonial" is that which has been pre-ceded by colonization. The second college edition of the *American Heritage Dictionary* defines it as "of, relating to, or being the time following the establishment of in-dependence in a colony." In fact, however, the term is used much more loosely than this definition would suggest, sometimes yoking a very diverse range of ex-periences, cultures, and problems.² Thus is it used not merely to characterize that which succeeds the colonial but the chapter of history following World War II, whether or not such a period accommodates the still colonized, the neocolonized, or the always colonized. In their introduction to *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predica-ment*, Carol Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer suggest that "'post' implies that which is behind us, and the past implies periodization. We can therefore speak of the *postcolonial period* as a framing device to characterize the second half of the twen-tieth century. The term 'postcolonial' displaces the focus on 'postwar' as a his-torical marker for the last fifty years."³ Meanwhile, Gauri Viswanathan concedes that although "postcolonial" can be broadly defined as "a study of the cultural