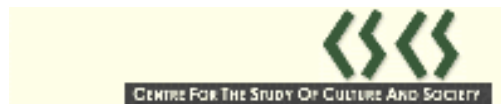# FEMINIST STANDPOINT THEORY AND THE QUESTION OF EXPERIENCE

Ph.D. Thesis submitted

to

MANIPAL UNIVERSITY

ASHA ACHUTHAN
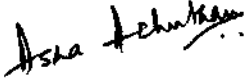
Bangalore
6 June 2009

Declaration

I, Asha Achuthan, do hereby declare that this thesis entitled **Feminist Standpoint Theory and the Question of Experience** contains original research work done by me in fulfillment of the requirements for my PhD Degree in Cultural Studies from the Centre for the Study of Culture and Society and that this report has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree or diploma in this or any other institution. This work has not been sent anywhere for publication or presentation purpose.

Asha Achuthan

Bangalore
6 June 2009

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Certificate

Certified that this thesis entitled **Feminist Standpoint Theory and the Question of Experience** is a record of bonafide study and research carried out by Ms. Asha Achuthan under my supervision and guidance. The report has not been submitted by her for any award of degree or diploma in this or in any other university.

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

INTRODUCTION: A ROADMAP TO THE THESIS

This thesis began work on the premise that a feminist critique of science is possible, and necessary. It moved into an ambivalence, although not apology, regarding the conditions of such a possibility. It is this movement which I wish to mark in this introduction, with a stress on the contours of the *possibility* - neither a fiction nor a truth - that I have explored in the thesis.[1]

Concentrating as I did on the actual world of the Indian situation, I was aware that a feminist response to science in India, as relative to the large volume of such a response elsewhere, was marked more by an absence, or at any rate a paralysis, than a presence or significant debate. Without getting into the 'failure' model here, or slipping into an easy reading of 'difference', I knew, however, that I needed to find an explanation for this too, if I were to contribute to the debate in any significant way. It is with this in mind that I made my formulations regarding the problem.

The original hypothesis was for a model of knowledge as situated and perspectival, where the perspectival is not equivalent to the conjectural. It had, as it stood, three claims – one about the validity of contextual criteria for knowledge-making, one about critique, and one about the relation between critique and knowledge-making. I proposed to use as allegorical resource the lived experiences of women, that had been dismissed in dominant understandings of scientific knowledge-making as inchoate, conjectural, and limited, to ask the question of what constituted valid criteria of knowledge, and to suggest a model of knowledge-making based on and beginning from such a place. Such a place would be, then, both a critique of

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[1] Statements or propositions can be either necessary, possible, or contingent.

dominant models and a different model of knowledge-making. The formulation also anticipated a separation from dominant feminist turns to experience that spoke of bringing back the fully subjective, of recognizing the embodied woman as knower, and that, in so doing, either proposed relativist epistemologies or took an anti-epistemological turn. A feminist standpoint epistemology as proposed by the thesis would offer such a different contour of critique.

The hypothesis ran into two difficulties. For one, what was this 'place to begin from', this originary point for perspectival knowledge? What was the claim of the lived experiences of women as an originary point, if not intended as a one-among-many relativist claim? I will come back to this later, to try and sift through the various strands of feminism that talk of women's experiences, or of experience as feminine. The other difficulty was – why critique? In proposing a feminist, or any critical response to science, the first task would be to understand why or whether such a response might be necessary or valid in the first place. I found that existing critiques of science in the Indian context, including postcolonial work,[2] liberal historiographies, eco-feminist positions, and non-feminist gender work, posed such a necessity in their reading of Western science as a hegemonic entity that precluded experience. Experience has meant, in these critiques, one of the following – the experiences of an empirically excluded community or category of people, the excluded (disavowed) experience, or sometimes experience as a category excluded from knowledge-making, most often the first. There is a theory of exclusion here that informs the need for critique. The theory works with pre-existing categories, of subjects *before* knowledge,

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[2] I use the term postcolonial frequently throughout the thesis, and will therefore flag at the outset what I mean by the term. I refer to Indian histories of science, scientific controversies, biographies of scientists, that operate within an understanding of science as western, as inflected by modernity and the colonial impulse in its passage in India, and reading this passage through an understanding of colonial domination in the hybridity framework. I elaborate on this framework later in the introduction, and in detail in Chapter 3 of the thesis.

as it were, although, again and again, the exclusion is defined or described as "constitutive". Postcolonial critiques of Western science, for instance, have described scientific knowledge as authoritarian, uninformed by ethico-political considerations, and as therefore putting outside or excluding, through its authoritarian character, those uninvolved in knowledge-making. The mechanism of exclusion is here understood as one of "At my heel, or outside" of subjects of knowledge, as Michelle Le Doueff puts it. Giving voice, or bringing to light, thus producing a politics of, by and for the experiences of such excluded actors, then, has largely constituted the task of critique, and subsequently, of resistance. Obviously, easiest to pin down in this exercise have been scientific institutions, where power and hierarchies are visible and can be mapped onto actors. The intellectual Left in India after the reflexive turn in the 1980s has most often been the active agent in these moves.

I have stated that my formulations regarding a possible feminist response to science would attempt to address the existing poverty of debate. My explorations led me to two critical pillars on which feminist, and other gender critique, of science in India stood. One has to do with the legacies of feminism itself. By the time science critique enters feminist work in India, hierarchies between political standpoints have been established, and it is in this light that we might also look at the ways in which feminism in India turned to experience as a tool to resist the authoritarianism of knowledge. The turn to experience, for parts of feminism in India, was already a reactive response to the exclusionary character of first-order theories, like Marxism, whose central organizing category – class – failed to take into account other axes of inequality, or other entry points from which to view the world.[3] Put this way, it also

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[3] This is true of all the varieties of Marxism that have populated Indian politics – whether class be understood in terms of property (ownership), power (authority), or the performance, appropriation, distribution and receipt of surplus labor. The first two are generally seen as flowing from the relations

became a general anti-theoretical stance, a stance against conventional forms of theorizing, often expressed as a polemic of anti-epistemology. As the foundational premise of women's studies courses and publications was the statement – "Women's studies is a perspective, not a discipline." While in part a resistance to the institutionalization and associated rigidities of the disciplines, this also reflected, in overwhelmingly Left environments[4] that used class as the solely valid analytic tool to understand oppression, a solidarity with women's movements outside of the space, as also perhaps a desire to carve a unique, and uniquely political, core for feminism in India – one different from the political core of Marxism, and one that could transform theory, including theory enshrined in the disciplines. Therefore, the strongest theoretical location would be inter-disciplinary. Another route was the attempt at "feminist knowledge production", usually posited as an alternative knowledge drawing from "the well of women's knowing (both experiential and intellectual), their collective *gyana* ..." (Jain 2007). I will return to this latter strand of feminist theorizing in a while, meanwhile flagging it as one other, usually less vocal, way in which the debate swung.

My exploration of this set of questions in Bengal complicated the premises of these general impressions somewhat, this exploration also following my own passage through the scientific institution, the conventional Marxist political space, and the spaces of institutionalized feminism in Bengal. These complications were – one,

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of production. The last mentioned is, however, seen as Marx's own focus on class (Resnick and Wolff [1987, 2004]). See Chakrabarti, Cullenberg, Dhar (2007), for a detailed discussion on class as entry point in Marxian frameworks.

[4] I use, in the thesis, the case of Bengal to provide a window into the problems both with theorizations in the Marxist space, as well as an attitude that I call the Left attitude – a practice leaning on these theorizations. The particular case of Bengal, as I explain in Chapter 2, is however more than an illustration in this thesis. It is peculiarly positioned both vis-à-vis the West, and the rest of Indian politics. A women's movement, as also a feminism growing in this space had both the advantage and the difficulty of a unique relationship with the West, with Western feminism, and with the women's movement in the rest of the country therefore, but the added difficulty of critically reflecting on the dynamics of these relationships as well.

about the nature of Marxism and Left practice, the other about the 'failure' theory of feminism in Bengal, the third about the turn to experience as a uniquely feminist move. Looking at histories of the women's movement, women's organizations, women's studies departments, while trying to trace a contemporary collective journey of women and men "breaking out" of Marxism and Left practice in Bengal,[5] and looking through the lens of the second wave, radical feminist slogan – the personal is the political – I found that the very possibility of "feminism" was not there. This statement, vis-à-vis the Bengal scenario, was already a familiar one. What I began to sense, however, was that the 'failure' model that was in place to explain this, needed perhaps to be complicated. Feminism, *as we knew it*, had connections, of whatever tenuous sort, with women. In somewhat straightforward extensions of this connection, women's movements – or women in a movement – were somehow classified feminist in the failure theory. Issues – rape, domestic violence, dowry, water and fuel availability, *sati* – that merited the naming feminist on somewhat the same count, seemed to provide corroborative evidence of failure since they were not taken up in any serious sense in Bengal. These were not issues picked at random, but issues that referred to the possibility of (sexual) difference; issues that, in the raging debates in the autonomous women's movements of the 80s, pointed to the non-acknowledgement of difference by dominant patriarchies. Nonetheless, to say that the absence of such issues in the Bengal context merited a demotion in the ranks of feminism meant, for one, a non-perusal of the combination of contingent circumstances that produced these debates in other parts of India in the first place. For another, it ignored the different contexts within which politics in Bengal operated.

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[5] I make, as I explain in Chapters 2 and 4, a distinction between Marx, Marxism, and what I have called Left practice. The burden of Chapter 2 has been to look at Left practice, as the phenomenon that shapes the political. Inasmuch as Marxism enters this discussion, and this activity, it has been flagged. Marx rarely figures in the activity, and therefore in my description of the actual worlds.

This statement is not only about the heavy-handedness of Left practice in Bengal or the Marxist analytic that disallowed difference, but also about global feminism – that constituted a different, and perhaps more significant kind of outside consciousness[6] for "breaking out"[7] than did the autonomous women's movement in India or even Marxist theorizing.

Did that mean that feminism of a different kind could perhaps be found in these Left spaces? What was at stake in making such a claim? And what was the point in exploring, in ways that seemed local, to the extent of being isolated and parochial (confined to Bengal), this claim?

I will begin with the last question, since it has a bearing on my methodology; also in order to clarify the perhaps undue significance I otherwise seem to attribute to my familiarity with the Bengal space. Feminism as we knew it in India, in all its resistances to theory, including Marxism, needed to break out through an attention to difference, which had reportedly been singularly missing in Left and Marxist practice. Marxism, in the ways in which it has been indicted, has been considered guilty of not offering a place to women, of not taking into account women's perspectives. To that end, the second wave slogan – the personal is the political – enacted the *reversal*; it insisted on an attention to the everyday, the lived experience. It may have also helped name the forgetting of knowledge of oppression in everyday sites like the domestic sphere. In this mode, feminism needed to be perspectival, attuned to experience, which was deemed the only form that could 'get at' the difference enshrined in the

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[6] Lenin's concept of the "outside consciousness" that might put the match to revolution has been charged with vanguardist tendencies, as the 'elite' domain, and so on, in different critiques of Marxism. Ajit Chaudhury, in *Subaltern Studies V*, takes up this articulation, demonstrating that it is not an empirical category where the elite may be seen as having power over the subaltern (1987).

[7] I am metaphorically referring here to the title of the feminist text *Breaking out: feminist consciousness and feminist research* that, in both its avatars, talked about breaking out of various affiliations that feminism had been urged to keep, including that to Marxism.

domestic, or the everyday.[8] Put this way, it would seem that feminism in Bengal had 'failed' to appear. But a closer look at what was being talked about as Marxism created difficulties for this understanding. Marxist practice − in cultural work, in organizational dynamics, in party manifestos − seemed, in its ubiquity, a different order of beast. Here we might shift to another, more relevant naming for this ubiquity − masculinist Marxism − to reference an *attitude* leaning on and shored up by Marxism as theory, and not just Left practice as separate from or as a contaminated version of Marxist theory. Rather than pursuing equality in Leninist frames, masculinist Marxism seemed to require a complementary feminine perspective − that inchoate, limited, inner voice *that made the impossible case for difference*, the impossible case for the ethical within politics. In this sense, the feminine − as the sign of the ethical difference within the political − was constitutive of masculinist Marxism, and I suggest, in the thesis, that this was the form of Marxism that resides in Left spaces in Bengal. What comprised a Marxist standpoint for Left politics in Bengal, then, was such an attitude, and such an attitude was emphatically premised on difference.

There was also an epistemological claim in this case made for difference, one that was voiced with far greater ambivalence, but voiced nonetheless, in feminist positions. As I have mentioned in detailing the feminist attempt to transform disciplinary knowledges through a reference to 'women's ways of knowing', a feminism that spoke for the feminine as perspectival also spoke for an organic community of women as representing this feminine. The "feminine perspective" here took on a deeper ontological status, producing for feminism a starting point, as it

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[8] This also had resonances with other feminist theorizing that, sometimes using psychoanalytic imagery, concentrated on the overlaps between the domestic and the "imaginary", as sites of resistance to the patriarchal Symbolic.

were, to produce an "alternative knowledge *system*" that might be called "feminist knowledge". Although the work done did not necessarily consolidate this position, it was one that definitely occupied the rhetorical practice of some strands of feminism.

It is in this context that I ask both questions – one of feminism as we knew it, the other of the possibility of feminism. As the powerful inner voice to the masculine political, as making the impossible case for difference, the feminine as perspectival was constitutive of masculinist Marxism. This Marxism was therefore already a placeholder for a version of feminism – a feminism that spoke for the feminine as perspectival, and for an organic community of women as representing this feminine. Although feminism in Left spaces was arguing for a place for women in the political on grounds usually approved therein, and that also agreed with notions of wholesome agency – the experience of oppression, of marginalization, of extreme adversity that produced resistance,[9] there was also the epistemological claim. Both positions, however, continued to function in a frame of hierarchical sexual difference, wherein knowledge remained propositional and unmarked, and the alternatives – whether political or for a different system of knowledge – attempted either a reversal or an inclusion. My point is not to draw a homogenous picture of feminism in India, but merely to challenge the failure model, by suggesting that feminism as we knew it was certainly not absent in Bengal, despite regional and political specificities. The place in masculinist Marxism for the experienced but non-knowledgeable woman, then, served as adequate placeholder for feminist impulses as well.

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[9] This notion of the political harked back to Lukacs' notions of proletarian standpoints.

This would further suggest that the turn to experience, here, was a Marxist rather than a uniquely feminist legacy. [10]

What of my other question, of the possibility of feminism? For some of the women and men breaking out of Left frames in Bengal, positioned peculiarly between anti-theoretical political stances on the one hand and ontological questions about 'woman' on the other, global, universalist feminism served as the 'outside' consciousness after masculinist Marxism had caught its hem on the spur of the aporetic[11] perspective that haunted these women and men.[12] Such a perspective was not tied simply to women, seeking for them inclusion, nor ontologically to 'woman', seeking through her a reversal. It was perhaps a moment of possession, a haunting that afforded not new insights but a different, bizarre view of Marxism in Bengal from that available either to the autonomous women's movement in other parts of India or to Marxist practitioners in Bengal. Such a fleeting moment, *constituted in the presence of global, universalist feminism* (that was hegemonic for feminism in general but an obvious interloper for Marxist spaces in Bengal – all the accusations of middle-classness and class enemies come to mind), offered a feminist possibility – the possibility of a feminist standpoint. This was not another variant of Marxist feminism, nor another radical or socialist feminism (all of which had been attempts at breaking out for Western feminism). This was a turning from within masculinist Marxism outward, building a story from that aporetic perspective shared by women-and-men-

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[10] Did this turn to experience work only for women? I have examined, in the thesis, the images of the 'comrade communist man' which, according to Rajarshi Dasgupta, moved from the warrior stereotype to one of ascetic masculinity, which was "constitutive of the very way one became a communist in Bengal" (Dasgupta 2005: 3). Complementary to the experienced but non-knowledgeable woman, then, was such a man.

[11] I use the word aporetic here and throughout the thesis to speak of the logically insoluble theoretical difficulty, the impasse. The French word *aporie* is ultimately derived from the Greek aporia, meaning difficulty, that which is impassable, especially "a radical contradiction in the import of a text or theory that is seen in deconstruction as inevitable" (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online*).

[12] I am using, here, a different meaning for perspective. I have highlighted these meanings in Chapter 2.

in-and-out-of-Left-organisations as I have flagged in Chapter 2, a turning from attachment toward separation – attachment both to the dominant discourse – masculinist Marxism, and to the category of resistance – feminism. It was such an interpretation of perspective that was a possible feminist standpoint. It was such a possible world that was absent in Left spaces in Bengal.

I have indicated that it was this intensely local exploration that helped make such a connection. It also helped make clear that the presence of global feminism did not create, for those breaking out, yet another variant of a western feminist school. It is in this set of observations that I place my understanding of region, context, locality, or even parochialism – a complication of specificities and generalities. For continuing to articulate a feminism in Indian contexts, I have found this a useful approach.

I took this detour in order to describe one of the two arguments on which feminist critique of science in India, such as it is, stands – that of feminism as perspective. The other argument has to do with the framework of hybridity articulated by Homi Bhabha, engaged with in postcolonial theorizing, and taken up in nearly every document of resistance thereafter, including critiques of western science.

The two most influential effects of the work of postcolonial scholars, perhaps, were a commitment to difference and resistance, and an understanding of the ways in which both were related and occupied the heart of colonial dominance. Western science was clearly seen as an offshoot of colonialism, and the encounter with it in the colonial period therefore involved a similar process of articulating both difference and resistance. In sum, difference – anterior to the encounter – was seen as the vantage point of separation from and resistance to a powerful western science, and the basis of

critique. I will elaborate on the use of the hybridity framework in postcolonial analyses in order to understand the ways in which it inflected this work on science.

The separation postcolonial scholars working on histories of science made from earlier accounts of colonialism – accessing the term 'post' thereby – was to resist the earlier reading of colonialism as a triumphant narrative of domination or suppression, suggesting instead a resistance that lived at the very heart of domination. Drawing primarily on the work of Said, Spivak, and Bhabha, the postcolonial school fine-tuned a framework of hybridity that seemed to offer better explanations of domination as hegemony, where, just as the dominant never achieved full control, the resistance offered was overdetermined by the same.

I have mentioned earlier that the intellectual Left in the 80s was responsible for much of the activity in this field. This is not to say that the methodologies employed were always Marxist. In fact, the framework of hybridity worked against the Marxist theme of revolution, against any notion of full domination, against a notion of simple coercion. Resistance itself was an ambivalent category, not empirically resoluble into a figure like the subaltern that the later Marxists employed, nor explicable in terms of full agency. It was this framework that postcolonial scholars adopted, as an explanation of colonialism, and of resistances thereto. Such a framework, however, with all its embedded resistances, had no possibilities for articulating a politics in a form even remotely familiar to the Marxist landscape. Here arose the difficulties with various forms of critique that the postcolonial scholars were also trying to voice vis-à-vis colonial rule and practices. With respect to the science space, it was clear that western science was not being defined as a homogenous entity by postcolonial scholars even as they referred to its centralized character; on the other

hand, the engagement with the nature of exclusion or dominance that might characterize western science in India was a slippery exercise at best. Was western science a tool of dominance, like education? Were its philosophical tenets so at odds with indigenous epistemes that dominance following on exclusion was an inevitability? Did its institutional practices produce a violent system that disallowed free learning? While each of these investigations were followed up to varying degrees in the postcolonial engagements with the science question, and while each might or might not have yielded a theory of exclusion that worked with the hybridity framework, the impulse of 'resistance' proved to be the knot in the investigations.

Articulations of the political, therefore, fell back upon the wishful language of Marxist politics. Such a politics wishes to take on the task of revolution, i.e., a *qualitative reversal* of the fortunes of the hegemonic. It may be successfully argued that postcolonial theorizing in fact turned around the concept of the political, so that from centering around revolution, it now centered around resistance. In practice, it concentrated largely on the perceived "at my heel" authoritarianism of hegemonic structures, including western science, to demand inclusion for categories hitherto uninvolved, or to enact a physical reversal. In doing so, it achieved resistance – by which we may mean a physical reaction by the empirically excluded, the negotiations it makes with the powers-that-be, the indifference, even, that sometimes characterizes refusal. And it associated the empirically excluded as embedded, carrying the referent of, a past that, through repetition, carried the essence of difference.

In practice, the postcolonial school worked with the very empirical category of resistance and full agency developed and nuanced by the Subaltern Studies School of historians – the later Marxists. For postcolonial scholars and other work drawing from

them, this usually meant a resort to descriptions of micro-power and contingent negotiations with it as a means of marrying the two languages – the Marxist language of subalternity and the psychoanalytic one of hybridity. In this strange and somewhat incompatible admixture of resistance and revolution resided the postcolonial response to science. This was one of the chief questions that came out of my examination of existing scholarship on science in the Indian context.

What did this mean for the critique of science mounted by postcolonial scholars? The first thing to be noted is that Western science had, by this time, become equated with Western dominance, in this case colonialism. The thrust of the postcolonial promise was in questioning the history of colonialism's triumphant progress, and this inhered in the historiographies of science, the history of the establishment of science institutions, or the trajectories of individual scientists, that demonstrated the 'failure' of western science in the colony. Alongside social histories of science in India that moved away from economic cause-effect analyses of colonialism and concentrated instead on the peculiarities of the transmission and journey of European science in the colony, and alongside liberal historiographies that underlined the value of inflecting history-writing with the socio-political, or of recognizing idea hybridizations at the periphery, thus bringing in context to produce a situated universality for science, this impulse in postcolonial thinking helped produce, through the hybridity exercise, a picture of resistance that challenged neat binaries of colonizer and colonized. As it stood, it primarily sought to change the parameters of *history writing*. Some of the stress on radicalizing history writing was also in accessing the past in ways different from the conventional. Thus social histories tried to access it as antiquity (presence of science in the past) rather than originality (presence of science in our past prior to the West), while postcolonial scholars tried to

access it as repetition, therefore saying something about the commonalities inherent in a culture across time, as also presenting a ruptured and discontinuous history rather than a straight narrative. At stake in this mode of history-writing therefore was a claim to anterior difference.

It is at this point that the postcolonial take on difference runs afoul of its avowed conceptual structure. Most of the scholarship on the science question in India concentrates on a difference that can be drawn upon to resist the hegemony of western science; while the psychoanalytic frame it operates within would make it possible to *anticipate the production of* such a difference, in practice, most of the work falls back on a difference that pre-dates the colonial encounter, and that produces an opposition, as it were, to the framework of modern western scientific knowledge. Such an anterior difference draws on multi-perspectival ways of knowing that are referred to in numerous historiographies of ancient science and medicine in India. To impute to these the classical oppositional stance, however, is what often characterized the postcolonial impulse, an impulse well challenged by Ashis Nandy in his observation of "the chaotic perspectives" that constituted Indian resistance – perspectives that would disallow any organized response.

What of science? For one, the "at my heel" authoritarianism that was at the heart of the critique of science allowed resistance in the shape of full agency for the subaltern. Some of this critique was directed at scientific institutions, positing the 'nationalist' impulses of scientists in India as a response to western science. Detailed biographies of these scientists were produced to reveal the ambivalences that resistance presented as a mode of response. Later, in the shift to post-development can be seen most evidently the subaltern resistance argument, where even Gandhi is

drawn upon to pose a different knowledge system to the western, as I demonstrate in Chapter 4. It is in this frame that we have what I call the "terrors of technology" argument where science is equated with technology, technology is seen as the problem with science, modern technology is seen as instrumental to western dominance, such instrumentalism is seen as separate from the unique quality of humanness, and 'everydayness' or 'pre-technology' are seen as metaphors of subaltern resistance to technology. This is also where the case for a multi-perspectival form of knowing is brought in in the Indian context, as seen in early historiographies of science like that of D. Chattopadhyaya.[13]

It is in this scenario, of the legacies of postcolonialism, Marxism, and global feminism, that we see a feminist response to science in the Indian context.

In the work on gender and science, or women and science, in the Indian context, we might identify several strands. Broadly, there is feminist work, and gender work that separates itself from feminist impulses clearly or implicitly. I have talked about the feminist turn to experience that must be seen, I submit, partly in the light of orthodox Marxist legacies. Such a turn soon took up the task of building an alternative narrative of experience, following the maxims of global feminism as much as its own

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[13] "A survey of Indian philosophy, in the way in which European philosophy is usually surveyed by its historians, is difficult if possible at all. This is largely because of the characteristic peculiarity of its development. In Europe, thinkers succeeded one another, often evolving a philosophy from a radically new standpoint, criticizing and rejecting their predecessors energetically. In India, however, the basis for a number of alternative philosophical views had their origin in a considerable antiquity and the subsequent philosophical activities had been - at least in intention - only the development of these original perspectives. … There was, in short, the simultaneous development of a number of alternative philosophies ..." (Chattopadhyaya 1975: 1). This is of course part of the debate that came up in the context of whether or not Indian philosophies could be several or parts of one; historians like Chattopadhyaya himself would say that "the types remained the same", while more rigid Marxist historians might read the suppression of materialist traditions by Vedantic philosophies. The same questions came up in the 1960s regarding the standardization of Ayurveda as a system, and as an alternative to western medicine.

legacies of Marxist and postcolonial work. The stances here had shifted from the classical women-in-science positions that influenced policy, and that espoused a politics of access (to the fruits of science and technology), inclusion (amendments to such technology in order to make it friendly to special constituencies, like women), presence (of greater numbers of women scientists), to a politics of third world women's experience – a women-and-science position. It was clear by now that there needed to be an understanding of exclusion to which inclusion in terms of numbers could not be the answer. The 'cause' of women in the 'third world' was taken up on all fronts, including in global feminism, which, through the capabilities approach,[14] asked for 'an inclusion of women's voices in their own development'. The slogan had changed, from the classical 'I know, you do' approach of so-called western prepositional models of scientific knowledge, to 'We all know, together'. This was challenged easily enough, however, on the count of the universalist impulse of global feminism in articulating commonalities of experience for women everywhere, and feminists in the third world pointed to the absolute heterogeneity of experiences of women in the third world, where coalition could be achieved only on the basis of a commonality of struggle, not the nature of the 'third world woman' as had been stereotyped in global feminism. In opposition, the epistemological attempt at reversal took place but a certain stereotype continued to be perpetuated, especially in ecofeminist positions that attempted to recover the local. This kind of approach not only put together nature and women in the third world as 'natural' allies, it re-made the 'third world woman' as the embodied insider who could have knowledge. Such an embodiment was the classical oppositional stance – one of 'I know mine, you know

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[14] An approach elucidated in the work of Martha C. Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, the capabilities approach talks about looking at each individual as an *end* in her own right, and endeavours towards promoting "central human functional capabilities", that is, capabilities that deliver readiness to make (certain) choices regarding functioning in 'multiply realizable' ways that are "truly human" (Nussbaum 2000: 72). I go into the details of the capabilities approach in Chapter 5.

yours, there can be no dialogue'. For those rethinking Marxism,[15] this had enough resonances with 'epistemologies of the oppressed' to allow marginality – third-worldness – to act as a point of origin for knowledge-making, and post-development positions took this up in earnest. Thus far, the battle had been about ideology. In later, other analyses that I have called global gender work, however, the 'problem of ideology' seems to have been dealt with. Avowedly drawing upon hybridity frameworks, and at the same time distancing itself from feminism as an ideology, global gender work talks of the multiple negotiations women in the third world make with scientific institutions. Power here is disaggregated, and must be negotiated as such. Science too is not necessarily a dominant entity that can entirely efface resistance; in fact, it is negotiated and accessed alongside other knowledges in ways that are influenced more by economic considerations than those of resistance to knowledge forms. This is also work that purportedly steps away from all essentialisms, including cultural, by a reading that accesses culture-in-the-making – a reading of women's practices that follow no set norms, nor are constrained by them. Another question – of whether such a description of science did justice to the object of critique – inspires the attempt both at profiling science in India as a disaggregated entity, and talk of micro-negotiations – work in the interstices – that can help attack its power. The new anthropologies of childbirth starting in the 1990s, like that of Cecilia Van Hollen (2003), are a case in point. Avowedly hybridity is being accessed here as the mode of understanding dominance – a putting together of options, a coming together of worlds, that produces a different reality from something pure or original. The framework of hybridity, however, is not about these empirical negotiations, or the multi-faceted reality they produce. In that sense, global gender

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[15] I refer to the near-global phenomenon of rejuvenated versions of Marxist practice, and sometimes theory.

work not only dilutes the framework, it actually steps away from it into an expanded liberalism that might do better to be called by its proper name.

It was clear, therefore, that the turn to experience as has been voiced in existing critiques of science did not suggest a satisfactory answer. Apart from the fact that they seemed to persist in promoting the language of revolution while working on resistance, they had not explored accurately the role of experience in Western scientific knowledge-making itself. I had to return, therefore, to what might be the fundamental questions of critique. If hybridity, inclusion, resistance, did not constitute satisfactory answers, what might be the more satisfactory ones? What might critique mean? What might be a need for critique? Is it an element of knowledge-making itself, and if so, what would be the contours of such a model of knowledge-making? And what could be the contours of a possible critique that took into account or had a theory of exclusion to which inclusion in simple terms could not be the answer?

This thesis therefore moves through the following steps. It tries to trace a genealogy of critique and its particular use of experience as has populated feminist and postcolonial responses to science largely in the Indian context. It finds, through a use of perspective, its own tools of critique that offer a better picture, perhaps, of the hegemonic. In doing so, it proposes a turn to experience that is not, cannot be, an anti-epistemological turn, as also a turn to epistemology that cannot be an anti-political stance.

In proposing a better picture of the hegemonic, I am acutely aware that I need to understand here science, or western science, in a manner better than has been posited so far in critiques of science. To that extent, I attempt, in the first chapter, to look at the object that is in question, as also to re-examine the *need* for critique.

Finally, I attempt to give a clearer picture of my own model of critique. In such a model, inversion is the act that offers a view of the hegemonic, a model of critique, a link between politics and epistemology. This inversion is made possible through a perspective that is neither information – the seeing of that which had not been seen before, nor testimony – the voicing of that which had not been voiced before, but the seeing, differently, of that which was already visible, already in sight. In the light of the four turns to experience that I see in feminist and gender moves, that challenge the epistemological,[16] I propose a re-turn, not to a narrative *or* to the chaos of experience, but to its aporeticity, and further an interpretation of such an aporetic perspective that will constitute a standpoint. This is a small contribution the thesis attempts to make to feminism. To science, as also to its critique, I proffer a far more ambivalent response.

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[16] The four turns to experience are – The global universalist approach that concerns itself with gender and the local, believes in development logic but is concerned with its accurate rendition, and actually names the 'third world woman' as allegory of the local; the political reproach to universalist feminism that is in absolute opposition to such a position, relies on the absolute heterogeneity of experiences of women in the third world that disallow any naming of 'third world woman', points to the exclusions inherent in such a naming, and takes instead the commonality of struggle that might offer the only basis for coalition; the local, soliloquous approach which is also in opposition to the global position, and, in an act of recovering the local, takes modern science to be by definition violent, reductionist, capitalist, with an exclusionary attitude to the experiences of women in the third world, and therefore advocates a return to the women-nature combine as a response; global gender work disdaining the universalist approach that works toward identifying contingent moments of resistance in women's lives. This work is in alignment with postcolonial approaches that propose a framework of hybridity-in-process. The turn from experience identifies, correctly, the problems of the turns towards it, but prefers to keep alive the disjunction between politics and epistemology, suggesting instead either a recognition of fresh epistemological content for feminism, or a recognition of its irrelevance as a philosophy. I have flagged the turns to experience in Chapters 4 and 5.

CHAPTER 1

SCIENCE AND ITS CRITIQUES: OVERLAPS, GAPS, AND SOME QUESTIONS TO THE FUNCTION OF CRITIQUE

Introduction

This chapter seeks to pose a first question to the critiques of science, and in so doing, introduce questions about the function and foundation of critique itself. This first question concerns the 'nature of science' that various critiques of science in Indian and other contexts have set up for criticism. This thesis will also address the latter questions, relating to the foundation of the critique.

I raise this question in the context of the following. This is a time when strongly positive and dynamic images of scientific knowledge and practice (to be found in the Indian scientific and medical establishments) as well as strongly critical positions (anti-development stances, feminist movements, theorizing around the colonial question) reside side-by-side in the discourse around science in India, in a manner that appears to be the particular characteristic of 'postcolonial societies' today. While on the one hand there seems to be a fundamental meconnaissance on the part of the critiques to access or describe accurately what it is they seek to critique (be they institutional practices of science, the models of knowledge inherent therein, the pedagogy, or the different function of science in different spaces), there also prevails a slipperiness on the part of science itself to retain and project a coherent image. There is, on the one hand, the research institution where a dynamic, self-correcting image of science is most in evidence; there is the image of the scientist as critical thinker who is always verifying, discarding, refashioning concepts and formulae; there is the policy maker who works with finite definitions; there is the 'Know-how'

science supplement to the daily newspaper where new developments on the scientific horizon are described with authority, as information to be shared with the laity. There is also the appearance of horizontality between cutting-edge research in Indian contexts and in the West, with 'indigenous' scientists challenging Nobel-winning models of DNA structure, for instance. Does a view of science as homogenous, hegemonic (Western), singular, as most critiques have suggested, then stand? What is it that supports this view of science? On the other hand, does the notion/idea/representation/conception of science as an inherently neutral, valueless, disaggregated, and dynamic enterprise, stand?

I will begin my entry into these questions by laying out (for now in the form of assertions), the common minimum programme of the critiques of science in India that I seek to put under scrutiny, leaving for later chapters the task of examining them more thoroughly. First, all the positions identify *science as Western*, and they are clear that *Western science* is the object of their critique, though they do not all agree on a synonymity of the two – science as Western and Western science. Second, it is Western science in its *travel and reception in the colonized space* that is their point of investigation. The conclusion drawn is either that Western science has succeeded, resulting in the death of other knowledges that must now be revived as viable alternatives, or has 'failed', resulting in mutated, unintended variations of the knowledge that arrived in the colony – hybrid knowledges. The critiques inhabit the spaces of the political, the popular, the academic, and the esoteric. The thinking and rethinking in Marxist intellectual circles, the refurbishments in Left political practice, the turn to 'organic alternative' therapies, the methodological critiques of Positivism that occupy the reflexive turn in the social sciences today, as well as Indic studies conducted under the aegis of the various branches of The Asiatic Society come to

mind. These critiques also lay claim to an anti-colonial position when they identify the Western philosophical and political hegemony of science.

Given these issues, it would be fruitful to look at the object – Western science – that is in question, or at the interpretations of the object that have informed critique. Although I will start with the premise that an object such as 'Western science' is actually conceptualized differently in each of the critiques,[1] it is not a question of 'misrepresentation' that I seek to raise. My ambition in this chapter is to chart the overlap between the origin of the object and the origin of the 'critique'. In so doing, I seek to make a point about the relation between the foundation of critique and that of knowledge-making. This would further support my proposal for an epistemology that carries the impulse of politics, as against a *political critique of epistemology* that assumes a separation between the two registers and that has been our legacy in science critiques, or a politics of contingent negotiations that occupies the present terrain. In order to do this, I look at internal histories of the scientific enterprise, at what are called mainstream philosophies of science that talk of scientific method, at the 'sociology of scientific knowledge', which may be seen as a critical appraisal of the programme of science, and which has taken on the status of single largest interlocutor in the field of science studies. I attempt, through a pointer at certain moments in these fields, to identify the origins, hosts, and somewhat jerky contours of the critique of science.

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[1] I will clarify that it is the images of science that are at issue here. I follow Losee's account of the various ways of doing philosophy of science that bring these images into being. These are (1) realizing the broader implications of science for a world-view (2) examining the predispositions and presuppositions of scientists – a sort of sociology of scientific knowledge (3) clarification of the concepts and theories of the sciences (4) a prescriptive account of how science should be done. The critiques have implicitly engaged with most of these ways, in articulating their dissatisfactions concerning what may be 'wrong' with science. As my charting of the journey of critiques will show, they have traveled from prescribing what science should be, to describing what science is.

I will add some further caveats here. This thesis deals with the critiques of scientific knowledge, not with knowledge per se. Nor does it deal with the history of the separation of science from knowledge, although it does note the significance of remembering this separation in a climate of critique that conflates the two.[2] It is also not intended as a historical survey of the changes in the addressal of science, or of the history of its branching, but is interested rather in what have been the analytic nodes for its critiques, as well as in an examination of the ways in which the social sciences served, in their inception and career, as hosts of such a critique. I will not, therefore, attempt to stretch the discussion back to earliest known histories of 'pre', 'proto', or 'other' sciences in order to fault the critiques, but will start around the question of representations of the scientific enterprise as we know it today, specifically those that have had an impact on thinking science in India.

Writing science, writing about science

Standard histories of science have definitionally been internalist, i.e. seen from the inside, and encyclopaedic – putting out science as a cumulative enterprise. First practiced as a historian's exercise in nineteenth century Europe, they served a notion of the scientific enterprise as one, whole, and linear. The 'history of science' as an autonomous discipline launched by George Sarton in 1912 continued to propose such a progressivist notion of science, but this notion was soon out of its depth in a world challenged by two world wars. Other work, such as Duhem's on Galilean-Newtonian origins of medieval science, or Koyre's opposing claim of a rupture between medieval

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[2] The separation referred to here would be the separation of *sophia* (wisdom) from *scientia* (science), the fight to declare usefulness for science, and the inclusion in scientific knowledge of intuition (Descartes) as against only reason (Aristotle).

and modern science, produced greater effects, by mooting a notion of conceptual revolutions. Koyre's reading of the history of science as a history of ideas unaffected by social, technical or experimental considerations posited a challenge to prior histories. (Dekosky 1979: 371-8). Following Koyre, standard histories of science became histories of revolutions. This was a change from a continuous history to a ruptured one, but remained an internalist history nonetheless.[3]

These modes of historiography may be seen as part of the origins of science itself, in the sense that they created a separate entity to write about. Going back a little, however, into the eighteenth century, we see that science was not then the exclusive enterprise that these later histories undertook to describe. In the eighteenth century, in the European world – the world where science as an entity took shape – science was visible only through its writing. And in that writing, science was a form of *literature*, that *spirit* that was later to also host its most trenchant critique as the counter-Enlightenment. Writing science, as exemplified in Count Buffon's *Histoire Naturalle* (1799), was an (often individual) art, and the practitioner of the art someone who was not a professional or part of a community, but rather a visionary who broke with the times. This feature also presented eighteenth century European science as already a model of ruptures, or rather a model for the foundation of new continuities rather than the extension of old ones. The scientist was a 'type' where the form of

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[3] The notion of rupture was robustly taken up by Thomas Kuhn in his *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970), where he also challenged the notion of internalism that pervaded earlier histories. Kuhn suggested that scientific knowledge moves through paradigm shifts, progress therefore being anything but cumulative and linear, as Popper may have suggested. What constitutes these shifts may have nothing to do with internal coherences in scientific theory but completely arbitrary factors, sometimes identifiable as social. It is important to note here that such appropriations of Kuhn as pervaded later sociological accounts, however, converted this understanding into a firm externalist account, which was not Kuhn's brief. Nor was his a relativist account of the world.

scientific writing was as or more important than the content, as Buffon's example shows. Writing science was, in other words, not a profession but a calling.[4]

However, clearly definable methods were beginning to emerge that could qualify as science, and as *not literature*, and as therefore independent of form. In different disciplines and different national formations within Europe, this production of literature and science as different domains was established at different paces, as Lepenies (1988) shows through the changing reception accorded to Count Buffon; also, the tension surfaced in varied forms as the social sciences also began to be established in the early third of the nineteenth century. Balzac (the great inspiration for Marx), seeking to establish for society in 1842 an analysis akin to Buffon's, clearly adapted both natural science methods of collecting facts, and the sociological task of interpreting them, thus positioning himself squarely in between eighteenth century science and nineteenth century sociology. What this did was to intensify the social sciences' struggle for an academic reputation by imitating the natural sciences as best as they could, and by moving as far away as possible from their earlier literary associations. The founding dogmas of the social sciences included the assumptions that society, in the image of nature, was fully amenable to investigation, and that the exercise of human reason would be the path to the same. Their separations from literature too, therefore, were becoming more pronounced.

We see here, in this moment of separation between *writing* literature and science, the beginnings of science in its present form, as well as the beginnings of its critique. Literature had been the space for critiques of scientific method as product of

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[4] It might be useful to also remember that the eighteenth century was the period dubbed as the non-happening century in science, following as it did on the massive revolutions of the seventeenth century. Attempts have been made to show how it was the century of consolidation and classification; for my purposes, it is the advent of *science as science* in this century that is significant.

Enlightenment Reason, reacting, for instance, to the use of technology that destroyed the 'naturalness' of 'man'. Sociology, that emerged between literature and science, became in its founding moments a questioner of science both in terms of its applicability to society as well as its superiority as method; it also became a questioner of the separation between science and literature that had spawned the counter-Enlightenment. This suggests a skepticism *of the vantage point of critique* – a vantage point expressed in the language of Romanticism as a counter-Enlightenment stance that was in circulation at the time. Lepenies tells us of the reactions of De Bonald, one of the founding fathers of sociology and a prominent counter-Enlightenment thinker, to the science-literature divide:

> De Bonald saw in the widening divorce between science and literature a sign of modernity and thus a symptom of decadence. Even in an age as recent as that of Louis XIV no distinction had been made between *sciences* and *lettres*, and the dictionary of the Academie Francaise was consistent when under the rubric *science* it referred the reader to *littérature* and defined *lettres* in the plural … De Bonald mourned for an age in which the sciences were related to literature as content is to form: to him Massillon was a representative of a theological, Montesquieu of a political, Bossuet of a historical and La Bruyère of a moral *literature* – they spoke on behalf of the disciplines the outcome of whose researches could in no way be separated from the form in which it was presented. Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle* demonstrated the extent to which even the natural sciences could be at one with literature.

(Lepenies 1988:9)

For De Bonald, *both* the earlier overly scientistic scholarship and the later over-emphasis on literary form or style were the responsibility of a new class produced by the Enlightenment, and under the aegis of this class, literary and scientific decadence had set in together. As an extension of Enlightenment triumphalism, the physical sciences had pronounced themselves exact and superior,

but it was clear to De Bonald that this very exactitude – that was completely reproducible through machines *without the agency of man* – declared their inferiority; further, according to him, current scientific practice relied unmistakably on 'affect', was unable to substantiate its claim to herald progress, and the 'age of discovery' in the natural sciences was over, having given over to the '*le petit esprit*'. The social sciences, on the other hand, performed both the moral function of making sense of human action in the age of refutation of religion, and the analytical one of understanding society; it was obvious then that they were superior. For De Bonald, therefore, "[i]f modern society were to abandon the natural sciences no noticeable disorder would ensue; if the propagation of the principles of Christian morality with the aid of the social sciences were to cease, however, society would be plunged into moral and political chaos" (Lepenies 1988). The task therefore was the reversal of the hierarchy of the disciplines set up by the Enlightenment, to accord the sciences of society first place, and engendering in this reversal neither a blind imitation of the natural sciences nor a falling back on the 'narrow wit' practiced in the literature of the Enlightenment. The career of a sociology caught between literature and the natural sciences was, for De Bonald, the story of a battle between "the Ancien Regime and the modern age, the Restoration and the Revolution, Enlightenment and counter-Enlightenment" (Lepenies 1988:12) – a battle that could not be resolved through the supremacy of either.

Lepenies goes on to chart the further development of this battle. De Bonald's words themselves are the greatest clue to the moral outrage against the loss, first of God, and then of 'man', that we will fully discuss later. For our purposes, it is useful to see how the formative moments of writing about the natural sciences as a separate field also became the formative moments of their critique, and how the hosting of this

critique in the humanities and social sciences became the source of their stated disciplinary difference from the object, as well as from each other. We begin to see, for instance, in the decisive language of De Bonald when he points to the problems with the critique of reason proposed in what he calls the decadent and narrow spirit of counter-Enlightenment literature, the difference in the way the critique was hosted in sociology and literature. It is also useful to see how this critique in its formative moments was driven by a stress on morality and the primacy of human involvement in the social sciences, such agency being used to declare their superiority. This was somewhat in contrast to the later critiques that complained about reasonable wisdom being arrived at *without* visible human agency in the natural sciences, but still retained a notion of the latter's superiority. We may see reflections of this later turn-around in the debates beginning with the "two cultures" thesis,[5] Weberian articulations of social science methodology,[6] Kuhnian notions of the 'immature social sciences', and more

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[5] A debate begun between C.P. Snow and F.R. Leavis in the 1960s in England engaged in the production of a difference between two domains. These domains were the space of literary interpretation on the one hand, and the space of scientific knowledge on the other; the difference may, in its more polemicized versions, be rendered as the battle between the "excesses", as also the staticity, of the literary culture (and here we recall the manner in which Snow addresses the literary culture as the traditional culture) and the exclusions of the scientific culture. This history has seen, as its chief moments, the emergence of certain keywords – science, scientist, nature, as also the vital separation between experiment and experience, so that each of these is now given over to one or the other of the two domains; there was a slight shifting of hierarchies here, the scientific culture coming out slightly superior during the Industrial Revolution, with the accompanying sharpening critiques of its exclusionary tendencies by the Romantic movement ("that stressed the importance of "nature" in art and language, in contrast to the 'monstrous' machines and factories. It was the voice of revolution at the beginning of the nineteenth century and the voice of the Establishment at the end of it"), as also the emergence of certain parallel activities – an age of categorization in both art and science, the implications of this in systems of education etc. It is also, however, notable in the ways in which it brought back the whole debate about *writing* science, a debate that has inflected even the most recent impulses in Sociology of Scientific Knowledge (hereafter SSK), as we will see later in this chapter.
[6] Weber talks of what constitutes objectivity in the social sciences being completely different from what is meant by it in the natural and physical sciences – cultural significance, laws, generality (Weber 2006).

recently in eloquent appeals to preserve the sanctity of the "essentially human" in criticisms of artificial intelligence projects in the late 1990s.[7]

We see here, then, through a very brief examination of some moments in the early careers of sociology and history, a way of *writing science*, in other words, a philosophy of science, which also hosted its critique. This became a way of writing science as a separate entity. In the separation from literature, we see the origins of the Romantic critiques of science as technology, and in the space between science and literature, where sociology begins, we see the criticisms of this separation. This early sociology has a critique of natural science that pronounces it redundant, and in our retrospective look at this position, we see the differences with later, present positions that return to the validity of natural science methodologies, but ask for the entry of human agency. For sociology, as we will see in our discussion on the sociologies of scientific knowledge in a later section, this latter position developed further into a field that hosted science critique in Anglo-America. Histories of science, on the other

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[7] This is a debate fairly well captured in Daniell Dennett's response to John Searle, for instance, regarding the question of human agency. In his critique of what he calls "a rather magical extra ingredient [that] was the only candidate for an explanation of consciousness" (1999), a position attributable to Searle, among others, who insists on the "intrinsic" human consciousness, as well as "his critique of Cartesian materialism - the idea that at some place (or places) in the brain, there is some set of information that directly corresponds to our conscious experience", Daniell Dennett points to the idea of the homunculus that pervades all these expectations of what consciousness is, or should be. Dennett makes the break lucidly and categorically when he explains Leibniz differently from all his inheritors – "is Leibniz's claim epistemological – we'll never understand the machinery of consciousness–or metaphysical – consciousness couldn't be a matter of "machinery"? His preamble and conclusion make it plain that he took himself to be demonstrating a metaphysical truth, but the only grounds he offers would–at best–support the more modest epistemological reading." The cognitive science enterprise attempts, through a 3rd-person perspective, the understanding of consciousness through the organization of the parts that work upon one another; we could call them the epistemological inheritors. Philosophers like Searle and Nagel, however, although they do not reject the Artificial Intelligence enterprise, insist on some 'extra', some remainder, that escapes computation – "essence" in Searle, the search for a likeness, in Nagel. As for the New Mysterians - Colin McGinn and David Chalmers, consciousness is still a problem, a mystery (as Chomsky puts it), not in the illusory sense, but in a methodological sense. Dennett, however, can be completely persuasive in his rejection of their arguments. I am grateful to Dr. Vivek Dhareswar for raising these questions with respect to the artificial intelligence debate. What I find relevant here is the insistence on preserving the "frail human" that pervades these arguments as well as the broad spectrum of social science critiques of science and technology today, and their separation from the functions of such critique as it may have been in its early histories.

hand, have had a rich career in postcolonial theorizations. We will examine both in greater detail as we go along.

The positivist movement and the critique of the sciences

> No sentence should be longer than two lines of manuscript … [n]o paragraph should contain more than seven sentences; any hiatus … to be strictly avoided. The same word should not occur twice either in the same sentence or in successive sentences – excepting only single-syllable auxiliary verbs.
>
> (Comte's rules of style, paraphrased in Lepenies 1988: 20)

In the previous section, we saw how, in the eighteenth century, science was talked about primarily through the ways in which it was written. In the nineteenth century, the Count Buffon, the stylized writer of science much derided in his time for his literary excesses, and much lauded by De Bonald for his admirable combination of form and content, served as the most worthy referent of Positivism for August Comte, the father of Positivism and sociology.[8] Positivism in France was rooted as much in the search for a new morality via the human and social sciences as in the anti-clerical sentiments of the eighteenth century. Comte, in his description of the stages of mind through which all civilizations pass owing to the 'very nature of the human mind', talks of the Three Stages – the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive – the last being the preferable stage, where the human mind "endeavours now to discover

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[8] This was of course the later Comte, a Comte that can be traced almost accurately to the year 1845. That year marked a break in Comte's thought between a Positivism that relied solely on the scientific to one that considered itself complete only in the coming together of the scientific and the artistic; a break between Positivism as a theory and Positivism as a religion against institutionalized forms; a break between knowledge systems that were confined to philosophy and one that required "philosophers, artists, women, and proletarians"; a break that divided positivist adherents of the early and late Comte. Although the more powerful inheritors were of the earlier Comte and they proposed a version of Positivism that retained scientificity and abhorred poetry, Comte himself considered his philosophy of Positivism correct and complete only in its later avatar.

by a well-combined use of reasoning and observation, the actual laws of phenomena
… that is to say, their invariable relations of succession and likeness" (Comte 1864,
quoted in Harre 2003: 11). Comte was clear that these stages are not successive, since
they often coexist, such being the nature of progress in human thought. Such
correlations of phenomena as those to be found in the natural sciences were to be
applied to the study of society as well, thus paving the way for a scientific sociology,
comprising observation, experiment, comparison, and history, where laws are of the
smallest number, final causes are rejected, and all knowledge is accepted as relational.
While Comte rejected the idea that it is possible to subsume all knowledge under one
law, however, his movement towards a unity of the sciences was visible enough.[9] The
Law of the Three Stages was being applied both to the individual and as a historical
and sociological principle to interpret Western society. The Theological Stage was
associated with a military form of society, the Metaphysical stage with a legal form,
and the Positive stage with industrial society. For Comte, the Law was a descriptive as
well as a prescriptive exercise; such an application was available only to those who
had attained the 'positive' stage of mind, and to this end, Comte proposed a religion
and a catechism to help attain the required attitude or stage. This religion, for Comte,
was Positivism. Based on his Law of the Three Stages, Comte proposes a
classification of the abstract sciences – those dealing with the general laws of natural
processes – each of which goes through the three stages, and where through an
interrelation, the more complex sciences like physics depend on the less complex, for
example physics on astronomy, or physiology on chemistry. The most complex of
these is social physics, or sociology, as Comte names it in the *Cours de Philosophie
Positive*. Being the most complex science, it would require historical method in

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[9] The conception of the unity of sciences accompanied positivist tendencies, considering method to be
common to all the physical sciences – a position that Helen Longino critically refers to as scientific
monism (1999).

addition to observation, experiment, and comparison. Each science makes use of the methods of its less complex predecessors, and adds its own, so that a study of the earlier sciences was necessary, although not sufficient. And yet, the method of historical sociology too had to be tested to see if its results conformed to laws of human physiology.

We see here a notion of sociology as a complex science, needing to build on rather than merely emulate sciences like physics. Overlaps with the earlier notion of the social sciences put out by De Bonald are very much in evidence, as are also the stress on Positivism as an *attitude* that inhered in *writing*.

While Comte (the pre-1845 Comte), and later Taine, in France set Positivism as a movement firmly within the empirical and anti-theoretical traditions, John Stuart Mill (in his *System of Logic*) and Whewell in England proposed a version of Positivism a little at odds with this. Mill, working with Bacon's *Novum Organon* (1620), expounded on an Inductive Logic, and was willing to grant Comte the historical method peculiar to sociology; he disagreed, however, on the Age of Positivism having arrived, and therefore on the possibility of a sociology being modeled on the "positive" attitude within the natural sciences. While drawing his legacy more from the empirical traditions of Hobbes, Locke, and Bentham, Mill continued to be interested however in associations and causes, and proposed a need for deductive principles for the same. As he suggests in Book 6 of his *System of Logic*:

> The Social Science, therefore … is a deductive science; not, indeed, after the model of geometry, but after that of the more complex physical sciences. It infers the law of each effect … not … from the law merely of one cause, as in

the geometrical method; but by considering all the causes which conjunctly
influence the effect, and compounding their laws with one another …

(Mill 1867: 561)

Later in the same chapter he discusses the prima facie value of the *a priori* method
despite its imperfections, as a general pointer to method, so that "[the] remedy [for
imperfections] consists in the process which, under the name of Verification, we have
characterised as the third essential constituent part of the Deductive Method … [t]he
ground of confidence in any concrete deductive science [being] … not the *à priori*
reasoning itself, but the accordance between its results and those of observation *à
posteriori*" (562-3). Mill goes on to state that despite "Sociology [being] … a system
of deductions *à priori*, [it] cannot be a science of positive predictions, but only of
tendencies … [it] must here be once more repeated, that knowledge insufficient for
prediction may be most valuable for guidance. … We must seek our objects by means
which may perhaps be defeated, and take precautions against dangers which possibly
may never be realised. The aim of practical politics is to surround any given society
with the greatest possible number of circumstances of which the tendencies are
beneficial, and to remove or counteract, as far as practicable, those of which the
tendencies are injurious. A knowledge of the tendencies only, though without the
power of accurately predicting their conjunct result, gives us to a considerable extent
this power" (564). Even through this detection of tendencies, however, we can hardly

arrive … at … propositions which will be true in all societies without
exception … circumstances [are] never the same, or even nearly the same, in
two different societies, or in two different periods of the same society. This
would not be so serious an obstacle if, though the causes acting upon society
in general are numerous, those which influence any one feature of society
were limited in number; for we might then insulate any particular social
phenomenon, and investigate its laws without disturbance from the rest, but

the truth is the very opposite of this … The mode of production of all social phenomena is one great case of Intermixture of Laws … There is … a *consensus*, similar to that existing among the various organs and functions of the physical frame of man and the more perfect animals, and constituting one of the many analogies which have rendered universal such expressions as the "body politic" and "body natural". It follows from this *consensus*, that unless two societies could be alike in all the circumstances which surround and influence them, (which would imply their being alike in their previous history), no portion whatever of the phenomena will, unless by accident, precisely correspond; no one cause will produce exactly the same effects in both … The deductive science of society [therefore] will not lay down a theorem … but will rather teach us how to frame the proper theorem for the circumstances of any given case … If we desire a nearer approach to concrete truth, we can only aim at it by taking … a greater number of individualising circumstances into the computation.

(564-5)

Neither the certainty popularly imputed to Positivism, nor the sole empirical content, nor the *possibility of* universal laws, are espoused here, just as they were not espoused in Comte. The mode of inquiry that could benefit by such laws or general propositions will perforce be limited, in Mill's schema, to abstract sciences, or certain kinds of social sciences like political economy. In other cases, "[t]he more highly the science of ethology is cultivated, and the better the diversities of individual and national character are understood, the smaller, probably, will the number of propositions become which it will be considered safe to build on as universal principles of human nature"(570). For this reason, no separate cross-culturally active *scientific* disciplines within the social sciences may be possible. As for "[t]his general Science of Society, as distinguished from the separate departments of the science … nothing of a really scientific character is here possible, except by the *inverse deductive method* … The experimental process is not here to be regarded as a distinct

road to the truth, but as a means (happening accidentally to be the only, or the best, available) for obtaining the necessary data for the deductive science" (570-1, italics mine).

The most powerful theorist in British philosophy of science at the time, William Whewell, had however argued that facts could only be discovered with the application of prior hypotheses to inchoate experience. It was through a dialectic of hypotheses and facts through experimental programmes that the former were refined. Nevertheless, in the debate between Whewell and Mill, it was the latter's proposal for Inductive Logic for the natural sciences that prevailed, although its applicability for the social world was beset with many qualifiers, as we have seen above.

Contemporary to Mill were the positivists in Germany struggling against German idealism. Ernst Mach and Avenarius held up the empiricist stream while physicists Hertz and Boltzmann looked to theory as better than experiment or observation. So far, empiricism remained the stronger stream in Positivism. With another key figure, however, this picture became more complicated. Helmholtz developed a strong Kantian account not only of the natural sciences, but of the possibility of perception. Although initially concerned with the generalization of mathematical principles from observable facts, his work on neurophysiology brought up the role of the perceptual organ in experiencing stimuli, and he proposed a strong causal theory, attributing the causal order in experience to the human mind. Faced with the problem of impersonal, collective knowledge where reliable knowledge was believed possible only through immediate sensory experience, Helmholtz invoked the a priori law of causality.

Mach, who was part of the empiricist stream, in his attempt to eliminate the zone of the unobservable from the natural sciences, showed particularly through his work in physics that all concepts in physics that referred to apparently unobservable properties could be defined in terms of observable properties. In short, the laws of nature were devices for the "communication of scientific knowledge … a mimetic reproduction of facts in thought…" (Mach 1894, quoted in Harre 2003: 21). The 'facts' were the "simple permanent elements of the mosaic". According to Mach, the only positive knowledge could be of sensations; here, he solved the problem of arriving at collective impersonal knowledge differently from Helmholtz by saying that the material world contains objects with common elements, which are sensations only in relation to the body. Error can be avoided by limiting science to a description of the sensations experienced *in terms of these elements*.

Reductive as it may sound, this was a powerful position to be held by a practising scientist in the general climate of anti-idealism in Germany, and thus it is that opposite positions like those of Hertz or Boltzmann failed to gain ground. The later logical positivists, as we will see, are well anticipated in Mach. Through the work cited so far, meanwhile, I hope to have shown the multiple currents – empirical, deductive, sensible – within early Positivism as it swept Europe; also, the emphasis on style so eloquently exemplified in Comte.

While some currents within Positivism promoted empiricism, movements in the biological sciences were contributing to the concomitant demotion of 'man'. Darwin and Huxley already had, in the late nineteenth century, dealt the body blow to creationism, supported by physiologists from Germany who emphasized the 'mechanicity' of human processes. In doing so, these physiologists went even beyond

the agnosticism of English biologists like Darwin or apologists like Spencer who reasoned that the function of science was to increase the realm of the unobservable, which space could perhaps be filled by the agency of some primordial Power.

So far we have been trying to draw the picture of a movement, namely Positivism, in all its complexities, its *vagaries*, and with special reference to the work of that movement in mooting the sciences of society. We have seen, in the attempt to situate that movement, the conditions under which 'man' was demoted in Enlightenment science; we have seen 'man' react by questioning the applicability of science to analyses of society; we have seen 'man' reshaped as the complex object of scientific inquiry. But what was it about the nineteenth century that could have produced a particular anxiety about 'man', an anxiety unknown in the earlier time, and an anxiety that, as we will see, returns to haunt practically every critique of the sciences since? It might be worthwhile to take a short detour here into this anxiety, to better understand the later shift in critiques – towards the primacy of the natural sciences and toward the fretfulness around human agency – that I mentioned in the previous section of this chapter.

> … no philosophy, no political or moral option, no analysis of sensation, imagination, or the passions, had ever encountered, in the seventeenth or eighteenth century, *anything like man*; for man did not exist (any more than life, or language, or labour); and the human sciences did not appear when, as a result of some pressing rationalism, some unresolved scientific problem, some practical concern, it was decided to include man … among the objects of science – among which it has perhaps not been proved even yet that it is absolutely possible to class him; they appeared when man constituted himself in Western culture as both that which must be conceived of and that which is to be known.

(Foucault 1970: 344-5, italics mine)

Foucault goes on to talk of the fragmentation of the field of epistemology in the nineteenth century that exploded the effort to mathematicize, to align all branches of knowledge to the basis of one. The stock reaction to the triumph of the exact sciences in and after the Enlightenment was the sometimes despairing, sometimes triumphant pointer at the 'amazing complexity' of 'man' that makes the task doubly difficult (or onerous?). 'Man' was hardly saved from himself by his decentering in Enlightenment science; his complexity now filled the space of critique, in the recourse to "psychologism, sociologism, or historicism" – which continued to haunt Comte's (historical sociological) and Mill's (ethological) positivist responses. Neither these recourses nor the apparent complexity of the object of inquiry, however, can account for the radical nature of the social and human sciences, according to Foucault, for the object of inquiry – empirical man – is here also the one – the knowing man – to whom the knowledge is to be made visible, and it is only in this "analytic of finitude" that the form of the human and social sciences can be defined. These sciences, then, cannot be an analysis of "what man is by nature" (353) or the 'man' who works, or the 'man' who has language; but occupy "the distance that separates (though not without connecting them) biology, economics, and philology from that which gives them possibility in the very being of man … In relation to biology, to economics, to the sciences of language, they are not, therefore, lacking in exactitude and rigor; they are rather like sciences of duplication … directed not at the establishment of a formalized discourse: on the contrary, they thrust man, whom they take as their object in the area of finitude, relativity, and perspective, down into the area of the endless erosion of time … to speak in their case of an 'ana-' or 'hypo-epistemological' position … [and this] would suggest how the invincible impression of haziness, inexactitude and imprecision left by almost all the human sciences is merely a surface

effect of what makes it possible to define them in their positivity" (355). Foucault re-articulates a separation between the physical and social sciences, then, that was constantly sought to be bridged or retained on the issue of scientificity, as a debate between the analytic of finitude and the work of history, for, "at a very deep level, there exists a historicity of man … itself its own history but also the radical dispersion that provides a foundation for all other histories … [that could] revise the … traditional way of writing history of History … the nineteenth century gives us a view of history from the standpoint of man envisaged as a living species, or from the standpoint of economic laws, or from that of cultural totalities" (403).

This, then, is one face of the debate regarding 'man' and his place in the scheme of things. In this chapter, it helps us see how 'man', and by extension the human sciences, get inserted into critique, and into its function. In the shape of the 'human', we will see, in chapters 4 and 5, how this concern re-asserts itself again and again.

To return from the detour, then, we have the picture of a movement, namely Positivism, which grew in the later soil of the Enlightenment,[10] positioning itself as anti-clerical in France, anti-idealist and sometimes anti-theoretical in Germany, and spanning the questions of scientific knowledge in England. It was a movement disaggregated geographically, historically as well as formulationally. The character, or the *form*, of the movement – the "austere attitude" in both epistemology and ontology – was perhaps more important than its content; a character best exemplified in the cerebral hygiene of Comte, in the prescriptions toward writing science, and perhaps pushed to its furthest limits in Mach. The movement itself shifted between

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[10] Involving the rehabilitation of the human sciences *along with* the establishment of their scientificity – in France this meant their repositioning as superior, in England and Germany in their following the natural sciences.

deductive and inductive schools of thought, the debate often standing in for the critiques of idealism, institutionalized religion, or of disciplines. The success or failure of the movement is not the point here. The original question put out by Mill and others – can the physical sciences serve as adequate model for the human and social sciences – although based on a fundamental meconnaissance, as Foucault suggests, turned, somewhat, as Positivism became a self-contained philosophy, indeed a religion, *to help articulate a scientific basis for the human and social sciences*. At the very least, it was a strong correlate of the latter. With the later logical Positivism of the Vienna Circle, the movement consolidated its chief tenets – of certainty as against speculative knowledge, with a skepticism of what exists (only that which is observable), and the limits of what is knowable (that given by the senses, therefore through experience). The word 'positivist' became at this time a natural associate of the natural sciences, and the perceived dismal failure of the social sciences to match up helped consolidate the divide between the two. Further, mainstream philosophies of science after the Vienna circle[11] (which integrated Russell's logic and Mach's empiricism) adopted an internal process of modification and alteration mostly internal to science and partly in response to critiques.[12] There was a line of critique that developed outside this stream, gathering momentum as the alternative, often referred to as the hermeneutic challenge. We are concerned here, however, with the critiques that shifted base from philosophy to sociology and history, those critiques that became, for liberal education projects, and disciplinary trajectories, the way to go.

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[11] The Vienna circle, earlier called the Earlier Ernst Mach circle, concentrated on the form of statements about science. Starting from Mach's sensationism, and going to physicism, it was concerned with what completed science should look like.

[12] Frederick Suppe proposes 5 phases in the development of philosophy of science – the first is the Vienna circle debates in the 1920s that limit science to observable regularities. The second began in the 1940s, expanding to include theoretical statements on non-observable entities. The third was a critique of logical Positivism, and the fourth proposed alternative systems based on an analysis of the history of science. The fifth phase accepted the influence of historical conditions on scientific inquiry. (Polkinghorne 1983: 59-60) For my purposes, these phases refer more to positions and arguments than a chronology.

What was the picture of science that these critiques of science built up as their source of dissatisfaction? How did these critiques of science respond to the complex picture that played itself out in the post-positivist phase of the physical sciences? What, if any, were their associations with the positivity of the human sciences that Foucault speaks of? Charting the critiques from sociology, and charting their responses to post-positivism, is the brief of the later sections of this chapter.

Writing the social in: from traditional sociology to a sociological critique of the sciences

The picture of internalist histories began to change in the 1960s-70s with the arrival of the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge (critically addressing mainstream philosophies of science and heralding what are called externalist histories of science. Already, in the 1930s, Robert K. Merton had suggested that external factors – namely religious and socio-economic – played a *constitutive* role in the rise of early modern science,[13] thus enacting a radical moment in a climate where hitherto only the reverse, i.e. the effects of science on society, had been studied. Histories of science in the United States, however, continued at this time to be influenced by the Koyre model of revolutions, concentrating on the Copernican-Newtonian and quantum revolutions in physics and astronomy, or on Lavoisier-Dalton in chemistry. External factors were granted a "role in influencing mental products", but scientific theory grew, as per this

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[13] The Merton thesis proposed a relationship between early ascetic Protestantism and the development of experimental science, and consequently suggested that science as a social institution will develop only if supported by the values of the group. It is not paradoxical, therefore, for Merton, to find that "even so rational an activity as scientific research is grounded on non-rational values." (Merton 1968: 589) For Merton, it is important to ask what "the determinants, other than wholly scientific, of the foci of research interest and the selection of problems" are, in the historical trajectory of a scientific discipline.

frame, through conceptual revolutions seen to be the result, primarily, of an internal intellectual dynamic.

This pattern of historiography, and the underlying philosophy of what science is, and what its effects are, came under scrutiny in the SSK approach. The founding moment may be seen in Merton who proposed science as a legitimate object of study for sociology (Shapin 2003), and was concerned with the historical study of the "ethos of modern science", which he identified as carrying the institutional imperatives of 'communism' (knowledge as a product collectively held), universalism,[14] disinteredness, and organized skepticism. Merton stayed away from a study of method. Winch's later (1958) critique of the impulse of applying natural science methodology to social action opened up the sanctity of scientific method to scrutiny using questions other than its own, allowing the entry of questions such as context, collectivity, and interest, as constitutive rather than contaminating of scientific knowledge, and this proved critical for later SSK practitioners. SSK thus moved from the sociological study of *scientific error* – the weak rendition of social influence native to traditional sociology of knowledge – to the social constitutivity of *scientific knowledge* – the strong program of SSK. In this program of social constitutivity, SSK also moved away from philosophical a-priorisms, sometimes to activate the "social" as an issue for philosophy, sometimes to declare itself an anti-epistemology. Further, it said that its own methods of analysis would be determinedly empirical and naturalistic. As Shapin puts it, "SSK developed in opposition to philosophical rationalism, foundationalism, essentialism, and, to a lesser extent, realism. The

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[14] Although Merton, in his analysis of the cultural conditions for the development of science, seems to situate science as a cultural product and one carrying worth and value only locally, his fundamental interest is in the *kind of society* – namely democratic – that is conducive to the universalist ethos of science, and the totalitarian societies that make this difficult. He does not anywhere speak of different sciences, or of non-scientific knowledge forms.

resources of sociology (and contextual history) were, it was said, necessary to understand what it was for scientists to behave "logically" or "rationally," how it was that scientists came to recognize something as a "fact," or as "evidence" for or against some theory, how, indeed, the very idea of scientific knowledge was constituted, given the diversity of the practices claiming to speak for nature" (Shapin 2003: 299).

During the 1970s, SSK was housed mostly in the British centres of Edinburgh and Bath. In Edinburgh, Barnes (1974, 1977, 1982), Bloor (1976, 1983), and Shapin (1979, 1982) developed the 'interest' approach, attempting to draw causal connections between the interests of groups producing knowledge and its content. In this sense, early SSK tried to say that scientific knowledge could be understood, and should be studied, in the same way as any other area of culture; there were no special resources or methods required to account for science (Barnes 1974). Collins (1985) in Bath made more detailed studies of scientific controversies, revealing a more contingent set of negotiations between actors that resulted in consensual knowledge.

The late 1970s threw up a more complicated picture, and one that made the identifiable program of SSK more porous, with the publication of continental thinkers Woolgar and Latour's *Laboratory Life* (1979), an ethnographic study. The movement had meanwhile, in the Thatcherian climate of reduced funding in Britain, found base in the United States, where others working in this vein included Cetina (1981), Lynch, and Garfinkel, who used ethnomethodological perspectives on laboratory work, and philosophers of science like Hacking (1983) who were looking at science in the making.[15] These approaches were skeptical of causal accounts, preferring descriptive accounts that stressed the contingent nature of negotiations between powerful actors.

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[15] Significant here is the fact that philosophers, if not philosophy, showed signs of considering the social study of science a topic for philosophical reflection.

Meanwhile, the climate of the cultural turn in the 1960s had laid the grounds for a "reflexive" programme that insisted that SSK look back on itself and shed realist modes of seemingly disinterested description that it shared with science. The work of producing new literary forms that would do so was taken up in the discourse analysis programs of Mulkay and Gilbert (1984), Woolgar (1988), Ashmore (1989) and others. Latour meanwhile had, with Callon, developed the actor-network approach that broadly continued the "contingent negotiations" approach, completely non-causal and also attempting to bypass earlier dualisms – Latour and Callon's actors included the non-humans that were "missing" from conventional social and political theory. (The concept of material-semiotic actors as a specific challenge to (sacred) human vs. non-human as well as mind-body dualisms was developed by Haraway in her work on cyborgs; her work differs significantly from Latour's, however, in its strong positioning both within her other work on structures of power and its specific anti-postmodernist stance – which I will take up later in the thesis. The Tremont group developed a pragmatist and symbolic-interactionist approach to science studies, while anthropological work also served to micro-analyze scientific projects. These approaches had assumed a variety of SSK-like positions by the late 1980s; the later debates are often a series of internal wranglings on their relative merits. The early macro-social approach claims to offer structural accounts, while the later approaches propose both that this is not "how it is", as also that it is more important to give a detailed account of the micro-social strategizing that generates consent around projects.

As a general movement, then, SSK began with the impulse of asking – what is social about science. For early SSK, this was actually a question about the philosophy of science; about shedding philosophical a-priorisms as much as about seeing how

they are constructed in scientific communities. Marginal though SSK was to its parent discipline, however, both in terms of practice and practitioners, it carried its legacies. For one, it shared with traditional sociology of knowledge the prior commitment to epistemology. While in traditional sociology, this was evidenced in the search for error or bias, in SSK it was through the stress on theory in identifying contexts of science. Second, its radical program of investing science with the social was a continuation both of the old methodological impulse within Positivism of finding a (scientific) method for sociology, and of the realist idiom of *knowing the world* whose representations in science it set out to scrutinize. Third, in opening the door to psychologism and sociologism *while retaining the internal-external dualisms*,[16] it persisted in attempting to "anthropologize" the natural sciences – the misunderstanding that Foucault points to. The social here, if not contaminant, as the traditional sociology of knowledge would claim, was at best 'interest' or 'factor'; in the strong program of macro-analysis taken up by Barnes, Bloor and Shapin in the mid-1970s, it proposed strong causal connections between the social and the rational that failed to escape this dualism. The most such an approach did for the science-as-knowledge tradition in SSK was to produce knowledge as a conceptual network rather than a theory; the notion of science as a unitary entity did not change. Not giving up on this notion of unity also meant that the only route the critiques could take was to point to "essential" qualities of scientific knowledge that were problematic, either for ethical reasons or otherwise. Apart from the obvious confusions with the object of critique where essentialist accounts were the very ones being objected to, such a unitary account of science was doomed to failure for other reasons, as we will see in our account of post-empiricist philosophies of science as a non-unitary entity in the

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[16] Where internal is equivalent to individual rational, external is equivalent to the social, and the social is seen to oppose the rational.

last section of this chapter. Meanwhile, a pointer to the legacies of traditional sociology that were present in SSK is not an incriminatory stance but one intended to demonstrate how critique in SSK turned.

The picture changed significantly again in the 1980s. Andrew Pickering is one among those who moved away from the science-as-knowledge tradition in SSK to announce valid studies of science-as-practice. This is not to deny the recognition of scientific practice in science-as-knowledge traditions in SSK, but these had proposed an understanding of practice as the *application or creative extension* of scientific knowledge. Following Wittgenstein and Kuhn – vital practitioners for this school – this meant that the extension of the conceptual network would involve analogy or modeling. This modeling has to allow for open-endedness, by definition. What traditional SSK did in this circumstance was to introduce closure in the form of interest, assuming that actors would wish to extend conceptual networks in ways that serve their own *interests*; also, these interests act as *standards* against which further extensions get assessed, and selected. All this helped produce a version of scientific knowledge that was the product of, or relative to, a particular culture, and for SSK this helped point to the constructedness of scientific knowledge; as an understanding of practice, however, it was insufficient, as I will attempt to show in a reading of the science-as-practice work.

The post-80s practitioners, in their attempts to look closer at questions of practice, broke from traditional SSK. Whether in the form of detailed attention to practice as the subject matter for philosophy of science, where scientific culture is a mix of material, social and conceptual aspects in no necessary unitary relation to one another (Hacking 1983), or in an understanding of laboratory culture as an "artfully

enhanced" form of daily culture and of the making of social actors alongside material ones (Cetina 1992), whether as an attempt to study "the nature of conceptual practice" as the making of associations in a patchy culture[17] - a practice that involves free as well as constrained moves (Pickering and Stephanides 1992), or through a focus on link-building between widely heterogenous social and technical worlds (Fujimura 1992), these practitioners very clearly pulled away from the notion of the social as central organizing principle, from a causal relation between society and scientific activity, from the possibility of interest as providing closure for conceptual networks, and most importantly from an understanding of practice as extension of these conceptual networks. Although they retained the communal element of understanding scientific practice as against individual rationalist accounts in mainstream philosophy of science, it was a communalism that, for one, included both "men, nature, and machines"; further, an understanding of the negotiations between these various "actors", as Latour would have, required different work than the increased empiricism of traditional SSK, so that even variables like interests or standards were "mangled in practice", as Pickering puts it. Most importantly, practice had a "real-time" element outside of the historical accounts that traditional SSK had sometimes provided.

From normative to descriptive accounts

The point at which these approaches sometimes collided throws some light on the debates around the function of critique that I referred to at the beginning of this chapter. While the logical empiricism of the Vienna circle was primarily concerned

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[17] Pickering's understanding of culture as the "field of resources that scientists draw upon in their work, and "practice" … [as] the acts of making (and unmaking) that they perform in that field. "Practice" thus has a temporal aspect that "culture" lacks, and the two terms should not be understood as synonyms for each other" (Pickering 1992: 3 fn 1).

with what science *should* be like, SSK had declared itself a descriptive program of what science *is*, and alongside all its relatives, that position remained. Though SSK and its cohorts strained to answer the question of what the political content of SSK could be, we have seen, both from its origins and its trajectories, that rather than produce a critique of science, an understanding of the contexts of science was its avowed task.[18] After Merton, who introduced talk of the political contexts for science as an institution not only in totalitarian regimes but also democratic societies, the 'ethos of science' as a *politico*-cultural scheme, and therefore one inviting political action, however conventional, dropped away. In that sense, later SSK was more successful; having given up more completely on the social as influence or ideology, it did more justice to its stated task of description. Thus Bloor's claim that "SSK was just the extension of science to the study of itself" – an extension that perhaps reached its peak in the ethnomethodological (Cetina) and Paris school (Latour and Callon) versions.

The debates that have ensued between traditional or early SSK and the later SSK-like approaches are obviously symptomatic of the continuing difficulties of disciplinary methodological separations; they also stage, however, for a possible critique of science, the schism between single, causal accounts of the hegemonic, and the far more disaggregated picture of contingent negotiations. I will briefly go into four SSK or SSK-like practitioners' accounts – already mentioned earlier – to try and pull out the chief points. These positions represent four among the many that dot the SSK landscape – the strong programme, the ethnomethodological position, the science-as-practice position, and that of the philosopher of science.

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[18] A political critique of epistemology was taken up more decisively by cultural and feminist positions, which we will go into greater detail in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

David Bloor put out a clear account of the meaning of "sociological" in SSK. He proposed, in 1976, a "strong programme" in SSK,[19] thus introducing a methodological "skepticism" that primarily comprised his tenets of impartiality and symmetry. Rule following, in this frame, cannot be entirely explained by logic internal to, say, formal mathematics; social conventions, guidance, and so on, come into play. This is Bloor's account of externalism, drawn from Wittgenstein's skepticism of rule following.[20] In reply to Michael Lynch's critique of early SSK, where the former proposes ethnomethodology as a useful extension of Wittgenstein's insights on rule following, and challenges the sociological account, Bloor responds by examining the "internal relations" regarding rule following. He shows the constitutiveness of "internal relations" of rule following by so-called external social factors, and in doing so actually seems to offer a thick description of internalism, as also one that claims to differ from old sociological frameworks in that it does not depend, for instance, on the "Mertonian" account of norms that contribute to an ethos of science. In this sense, we could also hear Bloor as saying, outside of the internalist *versus* externalist debate, that narrow ideological accounts of "influence" or cultural "dopes" are not what his version of SSK is offering. For Bloor, "consensus is a way by which the deadlock between competing internal relations" (Bloor 1992: 274) is overcome; and this consensus has something to do with the "overall thematics of social structure". However, meanings are *generated* in rule following in a "step-by-step fashion", so that they are effects, not causes always already flowing from earlier applications. In answering the question of "whether SSK is political", therefore

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[19] An account that was causal, impartial with respect to truth and falsity, symmetrical in styles of explanation for both, and reflexive.

[20] "Wittgenstein asks what it is to follow a rule: how do we know that we have followed a rule correctly? He then insists, first, that nothing in the verbal formulations of a rule determines its next application, and second, that it is fruitless to invoke yet more rules to determine how to apply the rule in any fresh instance: such a strategy leads only to an infinite regress of rules for following rules" (Pickering 1992: 15-6).

(another question that has been staged by the rift between early and later SSK-like versions), Bloor would say yes and no. No, in response to traditional sociology of knowledge accounts. Yes, with respect to modes of consensus generation which are not arbitrary. By his own account, Bloor is a left Wittgensteinian.

Bloor's account gathers significance in the face of ethnomethodological critiques (Lynch 1992) of the classical sociological framework that, they say, separates rule-making from rule-following. These critiques see the sociological framework as a skepticist extension of Wittgenstein, which holds the relation between rules and conduct as indeterminate, and orderly actions as the result of social conventions and learned dispositions. The anti-skepticist position, on the other hand, treats rules and rule-following as inseparable, thus disallowing external social factors any role in the sense put out by Bloor. The anti-skepticist extension of Wittgenstein is what ethnomethodologists claim for themselves;[21] while they do take into account the grammar of rule following, saying that this is the useful position offered by Wittgenstein, they do not take an anti-epistemological position in order to do so, and do not consider this understanding of the "social" as consonant with the proper field of classical sociology. One way of separating ethnomethodological accounts of the social from sociological accounts would be to see the stress on practice in the former.

Bloor has suggested that Lynch's critique of the externalism of sociological accounts is based on a misunderstanding, and therefore untenable. Indeed, given Bloor's explanation, Lynch's critique no longer seems to hold. What, however, is relevant to our discussion is the stress on practice in the ethnomethodological accounts.

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[21] Probably Wittgenstein is both skeptic and anti-skeptic in an undermining of the realist-anti realist distinction, and therefore the skeptic interpretation may not hold.

We see a different take on practice in the science-as-practice accounts. The stress on conceptual practice was announced in so many words by Pickering. While this stress on practice marked his separation from traditional SSK, belonging to the strong programme of macro-social analysis and looking for closure as *the primary reason for doing so* also marks him as different from ethnomethodological accounts and the Paris school. There was, in this account, a return to the normative. Reading Pickering, it is clear that his exercise is not about replacing knowledge with practice, or its reverse, looking at practice as the operations or applications of knowledge, but of understanding knowledge as practice. This may be guaranteed to challenge disciplinary requirements as well, though it is not about anarchic scholarship. Further, this will not be the sometimes-hallowed notion of pure practice that inflects ethnomethodological accounts. Lastly, this will not be a comfortably retrospective 'story of how the discovery was made', and therefore cannot be in the past tense. It will be a far more uncomfortable and mangled notion than that. Pickering would say that it is not the 'fact', but the practice that makes science – a combination of what he calls temporality, human and material agency, intentionality, cultural goods, and tuning. Further, picking on the real-time element of practice, "scientific knowledge is objective, relative, and historical, all at once" – a response to the philosophical a-priorisms of mainstream philosophies of science, but not a straightforward relativist response (Pickering 1992).

Pickering has attempted to take up the question of arbitrariness in closure without falling into simple 'interest' accounts. For him, the question of closure cannot be understood as an abstract notion of interest hovering over practice, but rather as interest "structured by the cultural field of resources that provides the instruments for their formulation and possible attainment" (Pickering and Stephanides 1992: 163).

Obviously, this challenges the classical externalist account on its own, thus offering the possibilities for a nuanced rendition of the ideological. The first step Pickering makes in this direction is to transfer his reading of science from the representational (that "casts science as, above all, an activity that seeks to represent nature, to produce knowledge that maps, mirrors, or corresponds to how the world really is"[Pickering 1995: 5]) to the performative (where "[t]he world … is continually doing things, things that bear upon us not as observation statements upon disembodied intellects but as forces upon material beings"[6]) idiom.

What did SSK do for philosophers of science? For one, the SSK effect might be seen in the way philosophers of science took up sociological accounts for their subject matter, as Hacking did. At another level, it became possible to respond to critiques by saying that actual scientists operated in different contingent situations, not with philosophical a-priorisms like rationalism or objectivity; the tables were turned on the essentialist accounts of science that its critiques seemed to be holding on to. This, along with the historical context-embeddedness, was the position taken up in Suppe's fifth, contemporary phase of the philosophy of science. Perhaps the only real challenge to this phase came from the robust positions in science-as-practice.

But there were questions for normative accounts. Later SSK accounts like Pickering's, or associated work like Haraway's, actually also offered a different spin on the a-priorisms of philosophy. Rethinking objectivity, in the sense of challenging its detachment criterion, for instance, was one evidence of this, and it is this work that could have entered into dialogue with mainstream philosophies of science. I will provide a small window on some feminist debates on rethinking objectivity that offer

ways of dealing with this question – ways that do not suggest a moving into subjective accounts.

Before that, a word about practice. Pickering makes clear in his opening statements that by practice he does not seek to employ a value-laden term. The term, however, *is* value-laden, in the anti-theoretical stances of early Positivism, in the determinedly empirical approach of SSK, and, for our purposes, in the perspectival critiques of science that have come from anti-developmentalism, feminism, and postcolonial theory in Indian contexts – where particular meanings of the perspectival have been employed. In the field created by these discourses, various combinations of pragmatism, contingency, learning and resistance have been at work to denote and inhabit practice – meanings that we will more fully explore in the following chapters. Suffice it to say now that practice is the keyword for critiques of normative science today.

Feminism and objectivity: looking back at the normative

This chapter has so far charted in some detail the origins, hosts and trajectories of critique of the natural sciences, with an attempt to identify their vantage points. Most of these critiques retain a commitment to epistemology, with the vantage point of critique being either the conventional register of the political that would issue correctives to epistemology (like the interest approach in early SSK), or an insistence on practice – sometimes as extension or application of science, sometimes as a fresh way to cognize scientific knowledge. These have been fields that have dealt with the methods of scientific culture, or with the contexts of discovery of scientific

knowledge.[22] Feminism too, as a field, has had various critical engagements with the question of what is seen as universalist knowledge in science. Feminism has also taken on the role of a second order critique, borrowing from internalist as well as externalist accounts of science. Very broadly, the feminist engagements with universalist knowledge would include the following –

- a plea for access to and inclusion within existing frameworks without influencing them in any other way.

- feminist political challenges to normative frameworks that would demand special amendments to facilitate inclusion for special parties like women.[23]

- feminist philosophical challenges to normative frameworks that would suggest women as special agents of change in normative frameworks, and therefore ask for their presence.[24]

- and the last, the most vocal, and often the most dominant in our contexts, feminist calls to experience that take a variety of stances resistant to universalist knowledge – anti-epistemological and alternative among them.

While this thesis will go into greater detail about feminist engagements with experience in Chapters 2 and 5, for now we are concerned with the feminist take on knowledge itself, and *not only in the form of a response or reaction to existing knowledge systems*. We will therefore look at the movements in feminist philosophy

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[22] One of the common complaints of feminist critiques of science has been the stress in scientific theories on logical justification of findings with relatively less attention paid to the contexts within which choices of discovery are made. Science mostly holds contexts of "discovery" to be accidental, fortuitous, and feminists claim that this is precisely not the case.

[23] Examples of both of these could be found in liberal feminist positions that asked for inclusion in the vote, for instance, or, in the second instance, flexitime, portable technologies for housework, etc.

[24] Helen Longino's feminist contextual empiricism would be a move of this kind.

of science that have found ways of challenging the normative on its own terms, thus attempting to produce a more viable model of knowledge-making. We will do this, leaving aside the far more plentiful and visible moves that have talked about bringing women, or more women, into normative science. This is in order to open a window into feminism's own commitment to epistemology, a commitment that is too often buried in calls to experience or to a politics emerging necessarily thereof.[25]

Mostly, these movements have taken on board the question of objectivity as a requirement for knowledge-making, and the subsequent *model of knowledge* that inheres in science. Part of the feminist task has been to engage with the existing versions of objectivity in mainstream philosophies, and with the stated criteria of objectivity – detachment, public availability, independence, and relation to reality. In such an engagement, all or most of these positions have the underlying complaint that *objectivity, as it exists, is a fiction* of mainstream science, a criterion never met. Science, therefore, all these positions claim, is never detached. Emily Martin makes this point clearly in her work on the gendered descriptions of reproductive processes in biology texts (Martin 1991). The feminist task has sometimes then been to correct bad versions of objectivity in science (Langton 2000). Langton examines what she calls assumed objectivity that populates 'bad science'. Objectivity, which according to Langton supposes 'normal' epistemic circumstances, comprises four features –

- *Epistemic neutrality* – where a regularity in behaviour is presumed to be a consequence of nature.

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[25] As I will explain in later chapters, this is not however to produce a feminist epistemology or a feminist response to epistemology that is evacuated of the political. Such a production, I hope to prove in this thesis, is flawed to begin with, and I suggest instead a different understanding of the political, one necessarily tied to the epistemological.

- *Practical neutrality* – the move to maintain neutrality in decision-making to accommodate natures of things.

- *Absolute aperspectivity* – where observed regularity is equal to genuine regularity, not influenced.

- *Assumed aperspectivity* – where regularity is equal to normalcy.

Langton says power erodes objectivity, particularly its requirement of *absolute aperspectivity*. So "the epistemological norm of Assumed Objectivity is a bad one: it hurts women, and it gets in the way of *knowledge*" (Langton 2000: 142). Good epistemology can come only from *pure objectivity*, which dictates that we examine perceived regularity before equating it with naturalness. To strengthen the norm, therefore, is the move here. This can be done through spontaneous feminist empiricism that helps to achieve the type/ law convergence that assumed objectivity denies. Longino, in explicating spontaneous feminist empiricism, here suggests a power-with-power rather than a power-over-power norm as a suitable corrective to assumed objectivity.

Other feminists have asked to *strengthen existing criteria for objectivity* (Harding's strong objectivity), thus saying that science is not detached enough, and looking for ways to make it more so. For Harding, objectivity connotes aperspectivity. She tries to move in between to make a case for context-sensitive objectivity. Value, she suggests, actually strengthens objectivity. In today's hierarchical world, she suggests, one has to start looking for this strong version of objectivity, or for the tools to arrive at it, from outside the conceptual schemes and activities that exercise power. Standpoint epistemologies, therefore, admit the presence of subjective inputs and aspire to monitor them.

Sometimes, changing the composition of knowers has been claimed to help reach better objectivity (Longino 2001). Somewhere along the way, however, it appeared that the problem with science was the opposite – science was not attached enough. We thus saw recovery of work by female biologists like Barbara Mclintock who spoke to their plants,[26] or Jane Goodall in her work with chimpanzees – all attempting to produce better *objectivity through attachment*. Of course, attachment has been, in the feminist turns to experience, elevated to a higher status than knowledge. What might be most useful for my purposes in this thesis, however, are two other moves – one toward a different model of attachment – one that borders on detachment (Code 1998), and the other toward a different model of detachment – one that borders on attachment (Haraway). Both are asking to *change the criteria for objectivity* altogether.

For Haraway, the origins of a search for objectivity are not innocent positions, nor, as she strongly reiterates, socio-political positions that ex-officio contain epistemologies, but socio-political positions that offer visual clues. Such visual clues will not 'improve' objectivity in the sense of adding more information. They could, however, offer moments of ironic subjectivity, of suspended belief, in a system, that could be clues to work on for an attached, situated notion of objectivity. To that end, Haraway is even interested in changing the orientation of our sense organs.

Other feminist philosophers like Lorraine Code talk of building objective accounts – stories – by beginning from perspective, but in a way that requires a "situating [of] the self reflexively and self-critically. Nor can it be done incontrovertibly, for it is a matter of putting plots together, of achieving a factual and artifactual coherence and

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[26] See Fox Keller's biography of Mclintock, *A Feeling for the Organism*, 1983.

plausibility, and of constant revisions even in the process of establishing nodal points that make action possible" (Code 1998: 207-214). Such an account complicates the 'marginal as subjective' exercise that several critiques have indulged in, and further complicates the old pitting of (objective) science against (subjective) experience that feminist critiques in particular have relied on.

Other feminist thinkers like Lloyd, wish to give up on the dream of type/ law convergence. Objectivity is open-ended for her, and has degrees of success. For Lloyd, gender is necessarily related with epistemology.

These positions, their useful extensions, and the problems thereof, will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 5. For now, I think the single most useful point is the way in which these positions attempt to engage with mainstream philosophies of science, to offer newer understandings of a-priori conditions like objectivity – understandings wherein 'vision' is put to work again, previously passive categories of objects of knowledge are "activated", thus offering a different knowledge of dominant systems, as well as a better account of the world.

A response to current sociology of scientific knowledge from a post-positivist philosophy

We have moved, in this chapter, from a philosophy of science that worked with a-priori understandings and that informed earlier internalist histories of science, to histories and sociologies of scientific knowledge that attempted to challenge such a philosophy. We have seen the manner in which such sociologies suggested to a philosophy of science the need to insert issues of the social, the political, and of 'man'

– named as subjectivity – into scientific methodology. We have seen the complexities and the disaggregated nature of positivist philosophies of science that make such a critique difficult. The movement into subjectivity as requirement of methodology we will explore in greater detail in a later chapter, but we need, at this stage, to flag a certain set of responses by post-positivist philosophies of science to some of these critiques.

Later work within SSK like Pickering's made somewhat more successful inroads into the a-priorisms of mainstream philosophies of science; they also set up an interesting engagement with post-empiricist philosophies. Which were these, and what, if any, were the responses like?

Post-Kuhn, the historical attitude toward science, and consequently the perspectives on philosophy of science had undergone a sea change. Already, with Popper's falsificationism, the Duhem-Quine thesis, and Hanson's theory laden-ness of observation, internalist approaches to science had moved away from logical empiricism and logical Positivism. With Kuhn, and to a lesser extent Lakatos and Feyerabend, the concentration on the social took a turn that inserted externalist accounts firmly in the picture. We have seen this in detail in the discussion on SSK. In what Suppe calls the fifth phase, of historical realism, science was taken into account as a human activity with various historical contexts that maintained that all conjectures were fallible and that it was external histories of science that determined which conjectures were retained, while internal histories were concerned with empirical testing of conjectures. Having problematized the Cartesian model, this view of science was therefore no longer subject to the charge brought by critiques of Cartesianism. Such a scenario opened up conversation between the "two cultures"

rather than siting one as space of critique for the other. In such a context where the self-image of science itself was changing, it might be fruitful to re-examine the vantage points of the critiques, and such a suggestion has been the brief of this chapter.

Questions for critique

I will conclude this first chapter with a reiteration of the questions for critique that it set out to raise. For one, the owning of critique by particular disciplinary formations like literature in the Enlightenment has, I hope, been problematized in my exposition of the rise of sociology. More significantly, Foucault's take on the dubious role of 'man' in the critique of the physical sciences, and the consequent struggle to reinstate 'man' in the social sciences may offer a more nuanced problematization than the one offered through easy critiques of liberal humanism that still seem to hold onto 'man'. I have tried to do this partly through an exploration of the adjectives that have hitherto summed up the content of critiques of science – science as positivist, biased, political – in trying to show, as an example, the disaggregated nature of the Positivist movement itself and thereby complicate that most heinous 'fault' of scientific knowledge as identified by its critiques. This is not to suggest an impossibility of critique, but rather to advance the need to better understand the possibility. Most important, I hope to have begun to problematize the effect of critique – deemed to be political – in my exploration of the questions of interest and closure that populate sociological accounts of science. This is a question that has occupied centrality in critiques of science in the Indian context, although couched in a different language. In this problematization, I insert the question – is something that can be shown to be a

disaggregated entity also be shown to be hegemonic? In such an event, what would be a useful response? These are questions regarding the methodology of critique itself that I flag for now and will come back to in each of the subsequent chapters.

If this chapter has tried to disaggregate science as the object of critique, the two following chapters will be looking at the vantage points for critique, and to that end, will bring up a discussion of the two pillars on which feminist critiques of science in India stand. Chapter 2 will describe the notion of feminism as perspective, as opposed to feminism as a form of knowledge. This was a notion that grew in the climate of Marxism as metanarrative in Indian contexts. We will see how such a feminism travels from being a non-political entity to one that hosts the political most effectively. We will see, in Chapter 3, the other kind of response to Western science in the Indian context – the failure of Western science that apparently produces hybrid knowledges in the colony. Chapter 4 will demonstrate how a site like development becomes a site of contestation between conventional political registers charted in Chapter 2 and newer, contingent understandings of resistance described in Chapter 3, and how a feminism of perspective often acts as the agent of these articulations. We will see, in Chapter 5, how such a feminism then undertakes to articulate 'the problem with science'. I will offer, also in Chapter 5, what might be a different politics, as also a different epistemology, for feminist critique.

CHAPTER 2
FEMINISM AND THE POLITICAL IN A MARXIST SPACE:
YEARNING TO BE, YEARNING TO BE DIFFERENT

Introduction

This chapter is based on the premise that the relationship between *feminism and the political* has been primary in shaping the relationship between feminism and science – a relationship constituted of a political response to knowledge systems – in the Indian context. The chapter will therefore trace in part the changing trajectories of this relationship between *feminism and the political* in the Indian context, charting specifically the role of the *feminine as 'perspectival'* in the political legacy of Marxism, and in this role, its subsequent occupation of feminism as we knew it. This is bearing in mind that Marxism in Indian contexts has functioned as metanarrative in defining in a broad sense the 'political'; in this sense, it was also the space where a methodology of femin'ism' emerged, or at any rate was legitimized. This included the perceptions of what constitutes knowledge, what could constitute a politics of knowledge, as well as what could constitute an adequate critique of existing knowledge practices. At another level, Marxist practice has been a site, among others, for putting in place a hierarchy of perspectives vis-à-vis class as a category of analysis.

Through such an analysis, I hope to open up the term 'political' that has been the content of critique. For the purposes of the thesis, this will mean looking at *feminism as perspective* as one of the foundations of feminist critiques of science in the Indian context, the other foundation being the framework of *hybridity* that has been proposed as adequate *model of critique* by postcolonial scholars working on

histories of science. I hope to end the chapter by moving through such an opening up of the 'political', to a different possibility – one that might offer help in re-cognizing the relationship between feminism and the political. Such a re-cognition will help articulate a different model both of knowledge and critique that I propose in Chapter 5.

I will take up, in this analysis, the political trajectories of Marxist and feminist practice in West Bengal, reflecting on these through a reporting of certain somewhat personal although not entirely autobiographical journeys through the spaces of conventional politics, through scientific institutions, and through institutionalized feminism in Bengal. The mode this chapter will adopt, therefore, will be perspectival in itself, although I will, in the telling, seek to offer a more robust understanding of perspective – one that contributes to a different model of knowledge from the propositional model of dominant systems.

I am acutely aware that an exploration of scenarios in Bengal may not be reflective of Indian contexts as a whole, or even of Left practice in India in its entirety. I will therefore clarify at the outset that it is not such an attempt at capturing the entire Indian context that I am making here. I do, however, attempt, through this exercise, to problematize the existing common-sense around the following – feminism in India being primarily about political activism, the relationships between feminism and Marxist practice in India that may have produced such a response within feminism, the politics of feminism being necessarily an experience versus knowledge exercise. I will trace, through the chapter, the specific positions that embody such common sense. To that end, I have used the peculiar positioning that feminism in

Bengal occupies, or did, vis-à-vis both Western, universalist feminism, and vis-à-vis feminism in the rest of the country.

I propose, in this chapter, a possible re-cognition of the relationship between feminism and the political in Indian contexts. To this end, I argue for a feminist standpoint position as against the present climate where 'isms' have been rendered irrelevant, where macro-analyses are considered inadequate, and contingent negotiations with the dominant are seen as a reflection of adequate attention paid to local contexts. While I do this as an insider to earlier formulations of feminism as ideology as well as later articulations drawing exclusively on women's experience, in charting the journey through scientific institutions, conventional politics, and institutionalized feminism that I mentioned, I show how a turning away from these positions, as well as from dominant Marxism, has been made possible through an attention to differing perspectives. This is not in the sense of attention to new information or hitherto unheard testimony, but to such a perspective as fantastic,[1] aporetic to the given narrative. Perspective in this sense is a referencing of *what is seen*, therefore; the place to see from, be it a socio-political situation, or a position of marginality or exclusion, may provide an advantage, but only an advantage – both to provide a picture of the 'dominant' world, and also to provide a picture of it that was hitherto unavailable. To activate this advantage as a place both of critique – showing up the dominant world – and of knowledge-making – making visible other

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[1] Three meanings of the word 'perspective' provided by the Oxford English Dictionary include – 1. The relation or proportion in which the parts of a subject are viewed by the mind; the aspect of a matter or object of thought, as perceived from a particular mental 'point of view' … [h]ence the point of view itself; a way of regarding (something). 2. A picture so contrived as seemingly to enlarge or extend the actual space, as in a stage scene, or to give the effect of distance. 3. A picture or figure constructed so as to produce some fantastic effect; e.g. appearing distorted or confused except from one particular point of view, or presenting totally different aspects from different points.

possibilities, is what I call a feminist standpoint. I will explain the specificity of such a standpoint, as also its separations from earlier formulations.

It is clear that such an understanding of perspective as I have described above would require a different articulation of the place to see from as well. As context, or location, this has been theorized variously; I will submit that it cannot be understood as date-time-place, but a form of inter-relationality.

A more detailed note on methodology

This chapter will adopt a perspectival telling in itself, in an attempt to play out my preliminary hypothesis of knowledge as perspectival, where the perspectival is not equal to the conjectural. It is therefore the case that this telling is in the process of building, as Lorraine Code puts it, story from perspective, in what I have marked in the first chapter as a possible revised model of detachment and consequently objectivity.[2] This kind of telling is also working with a revised model of attachment from the ones populating the worries around location that today overwhelm our political understandings. It might be useful therefore to talk about the benchmarks that I use in this exercise. Who is telling, and from where? This telling is not a looking in at political formations from the outside, in the sense that a conventional history is. While it *is* trying to achieve a certain measure of objectivity, a certain critical distance, it cannot be unmindful of the nearness, the locatedness through which our

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[2] Code says that "… by 'story' I mean a sequence of the actions and experiences of one or more characters … my reading emphasizes the poiesis (= making) function of stories, where the character(s) are at once artificers and artifacts of their actions and experiences … My plea for stories focuses as much on locating philosophical developments within larger social and historical narratives as it does on seeking narrative starting points for critical inquiry. … Developing a well-constructed story is different from occupying a perspective: it requires situating the self reflexively and self-critically. Nor can it be done incontrovertibly, for it is a matter of putting plots together, of achieving a factual and artifactual coherence and plausibility, and of constant revisions even in the process of establishing nodal points that make action possible" (Code 1998: 207-214).

particular questions in their peculiar shape emerged. It is not turned fully outward in defiance however, as a community attempting to produce knowledge for itself through its location alone. This history is speaking with(in) its own community, telling a story that others of that community know the co-ordinates of, but wait somewhat uneasily for the changes in, for the moments of separation, the moments of turning outward. In that sense, it is about writing a queer history – not one that brings in the hitherto unvoiced or makes visible that which was not in order to add to history, but one that begins from the apparently limited perspective to look at the *present picture*, and that in such a looking, renders it strange.[3] In my attempt to build a story from perspective, then, I am speaking here of building critical distance from within the community; this is a different kind of detachment from the one available to the 'disinterested' historian-observer, as also a different model of attachment from the one practised by the interested anthropologist. It is not so much about an accurate representation of events as about questioning the co-ordinates of where that accuracy can come from. As of now, that place appears to be neither inside nor outside the particular political community I will refer to, but in a movement from within outwards, so that the particular place from which the description is being made is neither permanently sited in an individual member of the community, nor is it a permanent vantage point from which to see. Rather, it is, relative both to the community and its outside, a unique and momentary "gift of vision", as Haraway puts it; a fantastic perspective that makes the present picture look bizarre, and the only place from which such an insight might be possible. Haraway's 'ironic subjects'[4] would be better starting points than the

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[3] The classical deconstructive exercise of making strange would begin from the familiar; this telling, however, begins from the unfamiliar, or fantastic, or limited, perspective, looking from there toward familiar histories of feminism in India.

[4] For Haraway, working with a notion of "situated knowledge", "[f]eminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see." The question for her is "how to see from

'objective outsider'; at the same time, in its conscious turning outward, this model would not function as an 'epistemology of the oppressed' produced by the 'embodied insider'. In that sense, Haraway offers a revised model of attachment that also changes the criteria of objectivity altogether.

There is another albeit related sense of context-specificity that would be relevant here. Context is not only about geographical location, but an involvement, both historically and existentially, with the issues at hand. A particular perspective is therefore enabled by embeddedness in context, and a shared community of knowers. We have sometimes answered this requirement by introducing date-time-place as indicative of context. One of the consequences of this solution has been that context-specificity has been taken, after the self-reflexive turn in a Left politics attempting to move out of vanguardist politics, to mean *immediate* intelligibility to all other members of the community. Anything that seems to say something else, therefore, is seen, at worst, as obscene, irrelevant, *irreverent*,[5] so that the questions allowed/ formed within the hegemony of context then become a truth-in-itself. At best, it must wait for its time. This has become for us the new truth of the political – moving away from a *politics of vanguardism to a politics of location*. I propose that this is a developmental view of knowledge, context, and politics, and one that has not left behind vanguardism. The object of reverence here has merely changed from Marx to culture,[6] so that there is a pressure to shift loyalties to a cultural past that is imagined embodied in the 'mass' today. Context must be, I propose, to become a useful tool,

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below". In this respect, she sites those subjects situated "below the platforms of the powerful" as having the gift of 'sight' only as a visual tool, that allows them to be *placed in a position* that can question the dominant. Use of that tool will still have to be learned for any politics of resistance to emerge (Haraway 1996: 252).

[5] We have been more sympathetic to the 'unvoiced', which is sometimes confused with the 'unvoiceable' – the aporetic of discourse.

[6] In what is sometimes an act of self-flagellation more than self-reflexivity or a shift in understanding.

about relationality and heterogenous time, *between perspectives*, between worlds.[7] This is what it might mean to employ a revised model of attachment. It is, then, the ironic subjectivity, the positioning *elsewhere* of the non-believers occupying a space or system, that at all enables this telling we are about to embark upon. In the event, it does not always *cater* to the present, though told from a presentist perspective.[8]

This narrative, while delineating a relationship between Marxist practice and a different perspective, and about women and men on different sides of that equation, is also about the relationship between an idealized form of masculinity that Marxist practice is, and the alternate symbolic that it disallows.[9] In the event, it will attempt to unravel implicit levels of androcentrism in Marxist practice in this exercise.

The significance of locatedness here has also to do with its contributions, if any, to feminist thinking. In the intensely located, near-parochial exercise that this chapter will be, it is not only the anachronism that is feminist-Marxism in Bengal that is under scrutiny. The feminist common-sense that seeks to clarify a history for women, women's movements, and feminism in India, is also at stake in this exercise. And this is where I hope my revision of context, and of perspective as a way of

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[7] This would be somewhat similar to Barlow's use of "future anteriority", where she says that "paying attention to the temporality of what women will have been, particularly in the work of feminist writers … reinforces the truth that … theorists … had motivated expectations and were not passively representing verities of "context" …" (Barlow 2004: 3). Or that "using future anteriority is a way of placing emphasis on the temporal heterogeneity of the present …" (17).

[8] One critique of a presentist perspective would be about understanding the past through its own contexts. This telling, though to do with some needs of the present, tries to keep this in mind.

[9] I refer to the alternate symbolic here drawing on Irigaray's innumerable references to the ways in which women cannot be confined to the patriarchal feminine, whether she talks of *mimétisme* – "an act of deliberate submission to phallic-symbolic categories in order to expose them" (Irigaray 1991, quoted in Diamond 1997: 173), or in her re-articulation of the metaphor of Plato's cave, to the 'other-of-the-other'. As Whitford explains, "[t]he 'other of the other' … is an as yet non-existent female homosexual economy, women-amongst-themselves … [I]n so far as she exists already, woman as the 'other of the other' exists in the interstices of the realm of the [Same]. Her accession to language, to the imaginary and symbolic processes of culture and society, is the condition for the coming-to-be of sexual difference" (Whitford 1991: 104). I make this reference somewhat in parallel to certain other pairs of terms that I explore more fully through the thesis – anomaly/ crisis, or resistance/ revolution. The latter of each of these pairs of terms are what I propose as the possibility of a different world.

looking at generalities, a way that might seem limited and anomalous *except from one particular point of view*, will come in useful. It is in this sense that I propose this chapter as a demonstration of my hypothesis on perspective.

To these ends, this chapter accesses various kinds of material. It speaks of a hypothetical constituency of women-and-men-in-or-out-of-Left-organizations[10] in Bengal, tracking their passage through political and scientific communities, through a politics of feminism in an institutional setting, through to a repeal of the very contexts of feminism as they knew it. Put telegraphically, it plots the life of this constituency in conventional scientific-political communities where gender, but not feminism, is a definite part of Marxist agendas, to a breaking out into more fluid, revisionist spaces where there is a turn to the personal, and to feminism as perspective (a move that makes its intuitive entry in political spaces and is consolidated in disciplinary contexts of feminism), to a time of transition from politics to self-help and a concomitant loss of relevance of feminism as an 'ism'. I hope this map will help me trace the relationship between feminism and the political. Obviously this journey has not always had the same travellers, nor can it be plotted along a straight line. I will attempt, therefore, through this history, only an identification of moments that may provide a key to an understanding of this journey and its present turn.

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[10] A primary word about this constituency is in order here. When I say hypothetical, I do not mean imaginary; I do have in mind real people who have had the experiences I am about to discuss. This is a constituency, however, that has remained porous and differentiated. All are not in agreement, therefore, on the perspectives I will put out. In that sense, it is hardly a collective autobiography. The set of perspectives I will put out, however, are what I propose will help build an imagination for the 'political' content of feminism that may not be in consonance with feminism as we knew it. I will further propose that such a political content cannot be separate from the epistemological, and therefore the role of feminism in putting out a politics of knowledge will also be different from what we have now. I will follow this latter thread of the argument in chapter 5.

Learning and unlearning: gender and Marxism in Bengal

It would seem to follow then as an indisputable fact that 'we' – meaning by 'we' a whole made up of body, brain, and spirit, influenced by memory and tradition – must still differ in some essential respects from 'you', whose body, brain and spirit have been so differently trained and are so differently influenced by memory and tradition. Though we see the same world, we see it through different eyes. Any help we can give you must be different from that you can give yourselves, and perhaps the value of that help may lie in the fact of that difference. Therefore before we agree to sign your manifesto or join your society, it might be well to discover where the difference also lies, because then we may discover where the help lies also.

(Woolf 1966, quoted in Braidotti 1991: 209)

Ami khunjchi, ami khunjchi, tomar thikana ...Oli goli ghure klanto, tobu tomay pachhi na ...... Tumi bolechile shei din, shei byasto sakale ... Esho nishchoi, esho ekbar aamader michile ... Tai ichche holo jante ki bhabhe daabir kotha tule ... kemon shobai
haath dhore dhore gaan geye path chole ... ...Eshe dekhi aami Dharmatalar char kone
Char dal ... Shab nana shure bale eki katha Aamar sange chal ... Eto shabdo Eto chitkaar, tabu ki nidaarun dainyo ...Eki sloganer nana gandho ... tumi kothay chile
Ananya?

I have been out looking for you. I have walked the lanes … and bylanes, I am tired … That busy morning you had said … do come, once, to our rally … so … wanting to know how the demand for justice is made, hand in hand, song on lips … I came. When I get here, at the four corners of the Maidan … are four groups … each saying in different ways the Same - Walk with Me … in all that noise, what a profound loneliness there is … different flavours, but it's the same slogan … and I wonder … where were you, you who were different?

(Moushumi Bhowmick, singer)[11]

This is a woman speaking with a man.

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[11] See inside of the back cover for a recording of the songs that have been mentioned in this chapter.

This is an ambivalent outsider speaking with a sure-footed practitioner.

This is about someone who yearns to be part – of a difference.[12]

This particular telling comes at the time of a re-turn in Left circles in Bengal/ India (which is not to suggest a movement "as one") to questions of a Marxist standpoint. The pressure of turning the question around from what feminism can do for Marxism (feminism has to go along with Marxist understandings of oppression), to its opposite – what engagements Marxism may usefully make with a feminist approach (Marxism has to engage with 'New Social Movements') – is also visible. While such a rethinking is not entirely new, what separates this time from the earlier attempts to 'accommodate women's perspectives' within an overarching Left frame is possibly the parallel ferment around the 'political', so that the queer history that I use to talk about the relationship between feminism and the political is also a journey from ideology[13] – the place where we learnt feminism,[14] through deconstructive

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[12] I have an explanation about the multiple registers of this chapter that is partly an apology. There is, here, a somewhat uneasy juxtaposition of what I call the conventional register of love, with the conventional register of politics, where the register of love is not about knowing/ representing in the way that the register of politics is. I have done this in the hope of one interrupting the other, as also to provide an opening to the specificities of a feminist standpoint that I will set out here. I use the words of Moushumi Bhowmick, a poet-singer, as an allegory of the questions that could be vital ones, if this interruption is allowed, for the rethinking Left; questions that could be interpreted as feminist questions – questions of the hierarchical gendering of conventional Marxist politics where the feminine is drawn upon as complementary to the ascetic Marxist masculine, as also questions of a more radical thinking of sexual difference. I have identified roughly three moments in Bhowmick's music that help me ask these questions. In this first section, where I am trying to talk of whether or not we had a women's movement or feminist questions in Bengal, I find an early moment in her music particularly useful – where there is a sense of a search for a difference, the sense of a failed politics, the sense of a voice within a voice. Later on, this voice becomes more insistent (as the unvoiceable within conventional Marxist practice). And much later, in the last moment I have identified, she has moved on to other interlocutors – Marxism is no longer the chief or overpowering interlocutor. It is tempting to read the lyrics as emblematic of the problems women have had in Left spaces in Bengal, and to treat it as the plea for change. As I will come to in the later part of the chapter, however, it is more the reception of her music than its possibly prescriptive qualities that concern me here. As for the relationship with the 'we' of Virginia Woolf's memory and tradition, the resonances are perhaps few enough to be missed – with the yearning to be part of a difference that the registers I look at provide.

[13] I use this word often in this chapter, and would therefore like to clarify its usage here. There is the notion of (ruling class) ideology as false and abstract thought that gives an inverted picture of reality (as against science). There is another notion of "the set of ideas which arise from a given set of material interests" (Williams 1976:128-9), which latter notion allows for other kinds of ideology – proletarian, for instance. I use here mostly the latter notion, except in the section on Western trajectories in Marxist

moves centering around 'woman',[15] through the contingent, fractured spaces where

we said 'women', to an articulation of a standpoint of woman-women.[16] There are,

then, two arguments this chapter will make. One is about the need for standpoint

positions at such a time of ferment around the political. The other is about the value

and the specificity of a feminist standpoint position.

I begin with an examination of the debate around whether there was/ is a

women's movement, or a feminist standpoint in Left hegemonic spaces in Bengal.

This has to be understood in the multiple contexts of the feminist common-sense

outside Bengal that masculinist Marxist spaces did not allow for a women's movement

here, and of a concomitant strong suspicion of feminist agendas among the Left in

Bengal. This debate is important for my purposes because it has served as the legacy

for the issues I am about to discuss – it was the point at which the hypothetical

constituency I refer to entered into questions of gender. Let us look at two

representative statements or perhaps positions that have grown in the predominantly

Left milieu. The first set of statements is the following:

The women's movement in Bengal dealt with the core issues …[17]
feminism is the enemy of Marxism …[18]

Raka Ray, in her work on women's movements in India (2000), traces the

establishment and working of two organizations that she finds key to the feminism-

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feminism where the base-superstructure model is mentioned. Each of these usages is to be found in
Marx-Engels' work and later Marxist theory.

[14] That could be articulated based on the surely shared commonalities between women.

[15] That uncovered representations of an essence attributed to woman in patriarchal frames, and
simultaneously attempted to identify the onticity of woman that eluded these representations.

[16] That attempts to move from the patriarchal feminine, taking into account the questions asked by the
heterogeneous experiences of a woman's life as well as the experiences of different women, and
articulate a different feminine, perhaps available only through an act of interpretation.

[17] This is the position that Raka Ray works to prove, as I will demonstrate in this section.

[18] This refers to heated rhetoric within Marxist organizations in Bengal as well as to a position that I
will delineate in this section.

Marxism debate in Calcutta. One is *Paschim Banga Ganatantrik Mahila Samiti*, the regional women's wing of the CPI(M), which is the chief component of the ruling coalition in West Bengal, and the other *Sachetana*, an autonomous women's organization with Left sympathies (2000). In so doing, she touches at the core of a debate that has been vitally formative not only for women's organizations but all organizations – students' unions, trade unions – in these spaces. How can the dissemination of an ideology better take place – 'independently' or through the 'party line'? How can different opinions on practice be given adequate space? *Should* there be different opinions? Translated into the setting of women's organizations, these questions have sharpened. Can different standpoints exist, and co-exist, *in an organizational space*? Should one of such standpoints occupy primacy for the work of politics to proceed? Is one standpoint, namely the Marxist understanding of class, the true window on society and consequently the correct route to an emancipatory politics? Are other standpoints necessarily superstructural and therefore detrimental to a 'true' understanding of societal processes when given primacy?

Ray posits the political field in Calcutta as "hegemonic … with a homogeneous political culture and a concentrated distribution of power", as against her contrast case of the city of Bombay which is a "fragmented field with a heterogeneous political culture and a dispersed distribution of power. … This means", she says, "that in Calcutta, dominant organizations tend to occupy most of the political space, leaving little room for subordinate groups to establish themselves" (Ray 2000: 20). With this in mind, Ray charts the three issues that have been most at stake for women's organizations in Calcutta – both affiliated and autonomous – employment and poverty, ideology, and literacy, in the same order of priority. "The real surprise," for Ray, is in the fact that the autonomous groups in Calcutta cite the

same issues as the affiliated group. They do not cite, as in the case of Bombay, domestic violence, sexuality, fundamentalism, or family – issues that would apparently be seen as being more specifically gender issues. This state of affairs has been read as a developmental weakness of, or absence of, feminism in Left spaces in much of the feminist common-sense outside Bengal. Ray avers, on the other hand, that such a reading can only stem from fixed definitions of feminism, and suggests, instead, that it is the hegemonic political field in Left spaces that determines what issues get taken up here. She finds this evidenced in the sharing of concerns between affiliated and autonomous groups in Calcutta. A women's movement in Bengal, then, or what qualifies for feminist interests here, would be different from elsewhere. It would, further, take directions dictated by the hegemonic political field. So employment, literacy and poverty are identified by Ray as pragmatic gender interests, while domestic violence, family and so on – the issues that have primacy in spaces outside Bengal and those that are more easily identified as feminist – are named as strategic gender interests.

Of course there are questions. Some, such as what allows us to call a particular field hegemonic and another disaggregated, we will leave pending for now, only suggesting that an appearance of fragmentation may not be evidence of an absent hegemonic. Further, Ray's use of her own evidence may be descriptive in a way that fails to comment on the relationship between "pragmatic" gender interests and the hegemonic – work that would be more relevant to the trajectory and future of gender questions for the Left. There are others. Affiliated as well as autonomous women's organizations in Calcutta are today taking up issues of sexual harassment, domestic violence, tradition, and while it is too early to suggest a *shift*, there is definitely a greater visibility to these issues. Here, the clue to hegemonic fields may lie not only in

the issues but also in the nature of the approach to them. A debate that is apparently more central to feminism can be taken up by affiliated or associated organizations without 'gender interests' necessarily occupying centrality. 'Gender interests', be they pragmatic or strategic, may also be catered to outside of an avowedly feminist space, and this is where I depart from Raka Ray's formulation. In fact, the re-turn to Marxist questions that might challenge the perspective of the economic-in-the-last-instance, and that at least in part constitutes a response to feminism in spaces like Bengal, has been constituted by its focus on issues related to cultural constructions of gender (say signs of Hindu marriage), sexual violence, masculinity, hom(m)osexuality, the heterosexual-oedipal-family. It has also tried to think gender, class, race, caste, and sexuality in their curious imbrications. At least part of the reasons for this has been a notion *not* of what constitutes a feminist 'issue', or, put differently, what would be more *adequate raw material for a feminist analysis*, but what would be a feminist methodology of addressing any issue.[19]

To look at another way of answering the question of whether we had a women's movement, and whether it could be called feminist, let us turn to a discussion of anti-feminism in other spaces. If we are looking at Bengal as an island of anti-feminist 'Left' politics in what appears to be a sea of (increasingly liberal) democracy where movements like feminism might gain ground, Peggy Watson, in her examination of what has been termed the backlash against feminism after the fall of communist states in East Europe, is dealing with a somewhat similar situation (1997: 144-61). Western feminists, says Watson, have read the sudden forfeiture of

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[19] As we will see later, however, this separation too remained partial – between the issue and the methodology – in reformulated Left politics. This provides a pointer at the travel to Indian contexts of socialist and Marxist feminist questions where, I would propose, this hierarchy of issues was produced in the first place. It also explains, at least in part, why we were not always equipped to face the critique that 'our' feminism interrupted masculinist Marxist practice only in as much as being a "middle-class" feminism.

childcare, abortion rights, easy divorce laws in the scenario post-1989, as also the reassertion of family-based feminine identity, as a backlash against feminism. They have traced this backlash to the legacy of communism, and in so doing also posited Western democratic principles as universal and neutral. In response, Watson suggests that such a possibility of anti-feminism exists only when there is a visible and identified feminist moment *prior* to the absence. "We need, at the least," she says, "the social presence of feminism and feminists, as well as a valid notion of feminist-driven social change and female emancipation, before the de-grading of feminine identity [as is happening in post-communist East Europe] can be legitimately considered to constitute anti-feminism" (Watson 1997: 144-5). Such a condition, says Watson, is not identifiable under communism. "Under communism, the widely expressed dissatisfaction with women's so-called 'double burden' did not give rise to feminist political identity, but was rather associated with its repudiation" (161).[20]

Indeed. Under communism, these women had been released from "*petty housework*" through "*exemplary communist work*" in public catering establishments and nurseries; they had been freed from the "infamous laws placing women in a position of inequality" as a result of the doing away of "the lumber of bourgeois laws and institutions" around paternity and divorce (Lenin 1977: 488-9, italics mine); they were not, however, seen as different or bearing a different perspective. Even the erstwhile connection between women and feminism had not been made. Many of the more "direct" gender concerns seem to have been answered for within the socialist state, and it has been said that what remained was the result of "residual capitalism".

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[20] Watson is also, of course, making a point about the avowed universality of democracy. She argues that "the 'facts' of transition to liberal democracy in the former Soviet Bloc undermine the evolutionary view of democratization which is deeply rooted in the West, where political citizenship has been conceptualized in terms of the accretion of rights on top of, and as a counterweight to, pre-existing political inequalities. After communism, democratization has, *in itself*, a politically polarizing effect, involving the institutionalization of political exclusion as much as political inclusion." (146)

The approach to issues *identified* by the world outside *as feminist*, then, was through a different standpoint than feminism as we knew it. As to what a different perspective might have meant in these spaces, one could turn to the debates between Clara Zetkin and Lenin on the "woman question", or to Alexandra Kollontai's marginalization in the party organization after her attempt to raise questions of sexuality. This received wisdom would obviously have undergone some skewing, for better or worse, in dissemination there and here; one of the traces burst forth recently in the heated comment by a radical Left political activist/intellectual in Calcutta circles – *feminism is the enemy of Marxism.* In wholly unintended ways, that one comment symptomizes, perhaps, an anxiety – feminism will be the death of Marxism, Marxism here standing in for the political, and feminism standing in for a difference that could not be accommodated in this space. That activist-intellectual had, in her work, uncovered enough experience to know that a feminist standpoint on issues could not but challenge at least the practiced versions of Marxism. As per these versions of Marxism, then, it followed that feminism as difference could have no truck with the political, although women certainly could, as a constituency that qualified for intervention.

We could now ask the question germane to this thesis – could feminism as difference have an engagement with science in these spaces? Naturally accompanying the Marxist practice in organizations in Bengal were notions of the political as separate from the epistemological, as the women-and-men-in-and-out-of-Left-organizations had realized. Scientific and political practice were separate and to be kept that way, so that good scientists were made in the institution and good politics constituted movements to access the learning of that science and its products. Needless to say, where feminism as difference could have no truck with the political,

its prospects were twice removed in this situation where even a politics of knowledge had to be about access and not about knowledge-making per se, or about the models of knowledge inherent in science.

Was/is there, then, a women's movement in Calcutta? There are certainly women's organizations. *Could these organizations be called feminist?* If we are not going into the analysis with pre-defined criteria regarding what issues should be taken up, is it enough to retrospectively read feminist intentions into women's organizational activities here? What is, or is there, or should there be, even among contingent negotiations, some version of a standpoint that allows us to call a movement or a negotiation 'feminist'?

The words of a teacher[21] in the School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University, who had been invited to deliver a talk on women's movements to a radical Marxist group in Calcutta in the late 90s, come to mind. "*Prathame ekta taphat – nari aandolan aar aandolane nari*"[22] – she had gently reminded the audience. There could perhaps be another separation – between a women's movement, that is, one initiated by women, and a feminist movement? Ray may help our re-turn by naming afresh issues outside our feminist common-sense. But the question that she leaves untouched is that of the standpoint from which these issues may need to be approached, as would follow from Watson's argument.

I draw from Raka Ray's work, therefore, to make the first argument of this chapter – that *gender has not been absent, but a strong part of, Marxist agendas*.

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[21] Samita Sen, who is also a member of the autonomous group *Sachetana*.
[22] Let us make an initial separation – between women in a movement and a women's movement.

We could go on to examine, using a different kind of material, what shape questions of gender did take in Left spaces in Calcutta, keeping in mind the hegemonic political field Ray speaks of. To extend the train of Ray's argument, we could look at Left spaces as contexts of production of the questions on standpoint we have charted above and at the beginning of this section. We could read 'autonomous' here as association without affiliation. It would also be useful to look at the legacy of practice that has grown out of such association – the legacy of vanguardism, for one. Before we go on to that, however, I will take a small detour to briefly explore some elements of feminist interlocutions with Marxism in the Western context. Why take this detour? I am not doing this as an easy attempt at comparison, nor with a desire to reverently trace the birth and development of a 'school of thought' in feminism. On the other hand, it has begun to look like a truism today to say that 'our' postcolonial situations are not answered for by Western theories, or that a theory from a particular context is challenged by the *empirical* claims of a foreign space.[23] Further, the very universalist, dominant methodologies that such a statement seeks to critique, have recognized and dealt with this challenge through 'think global act local' strategies such as epidemiology (considering incidence or prevalence of disease as in the practice of social medicine), factoring in the local condition (thinking and writing development from the example of India, as Nussbaum would have – see Chapter 5), and so on. I find more useful here John's (1996) concepts of 'travelling theory' and composition of theory.[24] John suggests that there is a [mis]match between Western

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[23] Made more forcefully from a culturalist standpoint, this statement has challenged any claims to a feminist methodology.

[24] "All these considerations take on a special significance for those of us whose projects are tied up with subjects until recently hidden from history and analytical inquiry. Because they have never been "sovereign", the subjects of colonialism, race, class, gender, and sexuality are still coming into language at different, intermediate levels of analysis. Not surprisingly, the greatest amount of work on these themes has taken place outside the realm of philosophical investigation, sometimes prior to the constitution of "theory". The sense I have is that the field of theory has yet to come to grips with this

theory and our *concerns*. She goes on to suggest that a "rewriting of our projects in theory's terms" may not be the answer. She does not, however, propose a valorization of the defiance offered by 'our' concerns. Further, she suggests that such a travel defies easy geographical groundings of theory and experience, or even a single axis of definition of 'ourness'.[25] This is at least a partial movement to unpack the truism that pits (Western) theory against (oriental?) experience, in our particular discussion 'Western feminist theorizing' against 'third world women's experience', offering the hope that we do not turn *our* explanations into pastoral philosophies, intuitive explanations offered by the 'subaltern' or 'third world women'. I am, therefore, more interested in charting, somewhat in the guise of a "reverse anthropology" (John's term and strategy in this context), the proper name Marxist feminism in its proper contexts, to see its trajectory in the 'originary' space, and the *parting* of ways (not an original separation) between the theory *as it travels* across geographical boundaries. I am also interested in looking at the parting of ways between the explanations driving the politics in our contexts, and their Western 'complements'. Along with the mismatch mentioned earlier, it is this that might offer clues to looking at theories in context. Further, a composition of theory in context is what I would suggest the best way to understand the articulation and journey of feminism and the women's movement in Bengal, from an unviable relationship of feminism with the political, to an inseparable relationship with the same; in other words, to understand the movement from the

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situation; to rewrite our projects in theory's terms is not an adequate response. My suggestion [is] … to partialize our theories, and watch for their levels of composition, as a way forward." (John 1996: 67).

[25] To put somewhat telegraphically the steps I see here – One – our projects and theories are at least as contaminated, if not composed, by the Western Other's, as the other way round. Two – this may not suggest a happy hybridity, if we remember the gradient between the spaces. Three – a keen separation of 'their' theory and 'our' experience, however, only serves to cement the gradient. Four – we are looking here not at the receipt of individual theories from the West but at spaces between systems of explanation that interrupt each other. Five – this cannot then become a comparison between insular Marxist feminism in the West and in India, because of the mutual constitutivity of these spaces. An analysis of this constitutivity of spaces, which has often stood in for a comparison of systems, may also not be in order, for the two are perhaps inseparable, but not the same.

slogan, "feminism is the enemy of Marxism" to the other one, "politics is the essence of feminism". For this articulation, I propose that we could see the radical feminist slogan – "the personal is the political" – which came out of a feminist reaction to Marxism in Anglo-American contexts, as the outside, the artefact that activated, nay, produced feminism in the Bengal context. This was *feminism as we knew it*, but it is this exercise that might also help us identify what that 'feminism as we knew it' meant. This is what I mean when I say that the seemingly parochial exercise of looking at the circumstances of feminism in Bengal would have implications for feminism in India as well. This should have implications for a dialogue across feminist trajectories also.[26]

Feminism and Marxism: the Western story

> In my opinion very simply, if the left refuses a materialist analysis [of the oppression of women] it is because this risks leading to the conclusion that it is men who benefit from patriarchal exploitation, and not capital. What better confirmation of this could there be than their resistance – so theoretically inexplicable – to materialist analysis, their insistence on abandoning what is held to be their specific theory, when it comes to women? … I suggest it is for this reason that they have set up a barrage in front of this question for the last ten years.
>
> (Silveira 1975, quoted in Delphy 1980: 100)

> The first question a feminist must ask of Marxism, and we should refuse to discuss any other issue until we get an adequate answer is, what are women's relations to the means of production?
>
> (Delphy 1980: 102)

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[26] I would like to point out here that I do not seek to set up the Bengal and Western Marxist feminist scenarios as adequate microcosmic model for a contrast study between India and the West. Even a cursory examination of another Indian state – Kerala, often seen as the twin state of Bengal by virtue of the overarching Left presence in mainstream and radical politics – brings up evidence not entirely in consonance with the findings here.

But what, precisely, does materialist mean in this context? What theory of history and what politics inform this critique? … there is no definition of what materialism means when linked to feminism.

(Gimenez 1998)

Marxism is, by all the evidence, materialist. To this extent it can be used by feminism. In so far as materialism concerns oppression, and inversely if we accept that to start from oppression defines among other things a materialist approach, a feminist science … wants to reach an explanation of the oppression; to do this we must start with it (and) … it will tend inevitably towards a materialist theory of history.

(Delphy 1984: 159)

to me this means that materialism is not one possible tool, among others, for oppressed groups; it is *the* tool precisely in so far as it is the only theory of history for which oppression is the fundamental reality, the point of departure… [But] a materialist approach cannot be content with adding the materialist analysis of the oppression of women to the analysis of the oppression of workers made by Marx, and later Marxists. The two cannot be simply added together, since the first necessarily modifies the second. Feminism necessarily modifies 'Marxism' in several ways …

Two objectives, the extension of the principles of Marxism (i.e. of materialism) to the analysis of the oppression of women, and a review of the analysis of capital from what has been acquired in feminist analysis, are what should define a Marxist feminist or feminist Marxist approach …

(Delphy 1980: 87-88)

The pages of the *Feminist Review* were witness, in 1979-80, to a bitter (some would say crucial) debate between Christine Delphy and her critics Michele Barrett and Mary McIntosh. The debate was avowedly between practitioners of materialist (Delphy) and Marxist (Barrett and McIntosh) feminism, with each challenging the validity of the other's methodology. Delphy's statements above are from her response

to the critique of her work by Barrett and McIntosh, who took her to task for using Marxist methodologies – of historical materialism – outside of their proper political context, and applying them to achieve results – provide answers to the oppression of women – for which they were not intended. Delphy responded with an equally scathing critique of Marxist feminists' conflation of materialism with an analysis of the capitalist mode of production, their refusal to move out of conventional analyses of capitalism, and their insistence on only the 'ideological', or superstructural, to explain the oppression of women; Delphy saw in this an actual defence of a particular variety of Marxist theorizing that declared an *avowed indifference* to the sexual positioning of the worker while being actually *constituted* by such a positioning.[27] Conventional Marxist methodologies, then – those that took the material to mean only the economic, and slotted other questions in the realm of ideology – would not answer to the oppression of women, because they took it for granted; historical materialism as a methodology, on the other hand, could.

A slightly different complexion to the debate was given by Martha Gimenez, who in an electronic discussion forum started by her on Marxist and materialist feminisms in 1998, conveyed the existing confusion about the various namings. Gimenez was making her intervention at a time – more conducive to materialist feminism – when materialist feminists like Rosemary Hennessey, Susan Landry, Gerald Maclean and others, borrowing from Marxism, were yet seeking to site their efforts *within a socialist feminism* that distanced itself from the cultural turn. Gimenez sees these moves as disturbing, given the "dominance of socialist feminism on the US scene in the 60s and 70s", and the simultaneous marginalization of Marxist feminism;

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[27] It is interesting that this move, as also others like the definition of non-waged labour or the search for a different Marx, have later independently been the route taken in postmodern Marxist reformulations of class understandings.

a relationship where "[s]ocialist Feminism, … despite the use of Marxist terms and references to capitalism, developed, theoretically, as a sort of feminist abstract negation of Marxism". Twenty years after the heated debate between Marxist and materialist feminists, in a political climate fashionably unfriendly to Marxism, Gimenez wonders whether this is happening because "Marxist Feminists are likely to find more acceptance and legitimacy by claiming Materialist Feminism as their theoretical orientation". Where Barrett and other Marxist feminists of the 70s had been questioning the validity of materialist approaches for feminism, Gimenez sees the methodological borrowing as a reason why materialist and Marxist feminisms could have a more fruitful dialogue. To that end, feminists would do better to ally materialist currents with their origins in Marxist feminism in order to strengthen and dynamize it, rather than 'take' from Marxist feminism the methodology but not the name. And as far as methodology is concerned, Gimenez continues to be intrigued, rightly, by the various self-definitions – some less clear than Delphy's – of materialist feminism. An example is Jennifer Wicke, who, in a special edition of *The South Atlantic Quarterly* devoted to Materialist Feminism edited by Toril Moi and Janice Radway, defines it as "a feminism that insists on examining the material conditions under which social arrangements, including those of gender hierarchy, develop... [that] avoids seeing this (gender hierarchy) as the effect of a singular....patriarchy and instead gauges the web of social and psychic relations that make up a material, historical moment" (Wicke, 1994: 751); "... [that] argues that material conditions of all sorts play a vital role in the social production of gender and assays the different ways in which women collaborate and participate in these productions ... [and that] ... is less likely than social constructionism to be embarrassed by the occasional material importance of sex differences" (758-759). Elsewhere, Landry and Maclean, in their

1993 book, *Materialist Feminisms,* define it as "critical reading practice...the critical investigation, or reading in the strong sense, of the artifacts of culture and social history, including literary and artistic texts, archival documents, and works of theory..." (x-xi). The desire to save materialist feminism from cultural studies or literary theory, as Gimenez suggests, is strong; the methodological separations or specificities are not.

To recapitulate, then, of the three named strands that seem to populate this area, socialist feminism at least in North American contexts seems to have been born out of a critique of Marxist positions by radical feminists wanting to bring in pure gender questions or pointing to the betrayal of these by the Left. This strand critiqued Marxist feminism for employing uncritically the Marxist base-superstructure framework to explain both class and gender exploitation, asked the question of what is specifically feminist about Marxist feminist analysis, and identified patriarchy as the main enemy, creating structural (sometimes "ahistorical", as Gimenez and others have put it) explanations of its functioning. It also pointed to how socialist states have failed to recognize women's issues other than work, and how Marxist feminists have failed to see that Marxist analysis does not explain what sustains the women-home hinge in the first place.[28] At least some strands of it, however, notably authored by Barbara Ehrenreich in WIN magazine in 1976, distanced themselves from isolationist moves in radical feminism, seeking to unpack simple notions of patriarchy and to displace Marxism, in order to arrive at a system of explanation that did not consist in an 'adding up' of feminism and Marxism as critical tools. Powerful theorists of this group also include Alison Jaggar (1983), who used Marx's concept of alienation,

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[28] Such an analysis of the socialist states, however, has been adequately put in question by Watson's questions regarding adequate grounds for the existence of feminism in these states. The previous examination, in this chapter, of whether an 'issue' is per se feminist, also questions this socialist feminist assumption.

extending it to the experience of the non-waged – women as housewives and mothers – as against the conventional Marxist reading of waged labour as alienating. Iris Young declared class as a gender-blind category of analysis, made a shift from class to division of labour as a useful entry point, and asked for a single theory, as against the comfortable 'dual theories' alliance of Marxism to explain gender-neutral capitalism, and feminism to explain gender-biased patriarchy (Tong 1998:122). Young put out the thesis that "marginalization of women and … [their] functioning as a secondary labour force is an essential and fundamental characteristic of capitalism" (122). Juliett Mitchell (1971) combined a materialist analysis of capitalism with an ideological analysis of patriarchy, and stated that although "economic accounts" were still primary, they failed to explain reproduction, sexualization of children, and sexuality, all of which Mitchell considered as determinative of woman's status. Rejecting, therefore, the solution of an economic revolution, Mitchell asked for a psychic revolution that would challenge phallic attitudes.

Socialist feminists, therefore, would have problems with both Marx and Marxists. Marxist feminists remained more faithful to both, sometimes re-turning to the early, 'humanist' Marx to rehabilitate gender questions, sometimes taking up the concerns of 'working women' as the constituency for their politics. Marxist feminism turns primarily on the concept of the sexual division of labour and household, which became one of the most contested sites of theorization. There emerged a whole slew of work on the household – arguing for wages, treating housework as creating surplus value (the wages-for-housework campaign),[29] and arguments against wages. There was also work pointing to the sexual division of labour in the public sphere (the

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[29] The early 1970s saw a feminist group called the Power of Women Collective launch, in the US, the campaign as a response to the devaluing of housework.

comparable-worth movement for equal wage). Often in these theorizations, there was a return to Marx rather than Engels. The critique was that Engels had privileged production over reproduction in explaining women's oppression, or that Engels' belief in an original sexual division of labour did not translate into a critique of the *institution* of heterosexuality, and the attempt was to fill this gap (Engels 1884).

Marxist feminists also later took up, largely in Britain and to a lesser extent in the US, questions of representation and the production of "women as a category", retaining, however, loyalties to the Marxist corpus, and resisting trends like French materialist feminism that asked for more radical reformulations of Marxism - Delphy, for example (Jackson 2001). This was a trend in theorizing that allowed an adequate and *autonomous* fine-tuning of the ideological, particularly post-Althusser – a project of extension of existing Marxist tenets rather than an interruption.[30] This changed, however, with the post-structuralist turn where the concept of ideology was replaced by discourse, and deconstructive work became the chief tool of critique.

Materialist feminism grew out of a critique of duality in both Marxist (material explanations for capitalist exploitation of the worker and ideological explanations for women's oppression, keeping the base-superstructure model alive) and socialist (ahistorical theories of patriarchy, moving away from the material bases of oppression) feminist explanations, and attempted to retain structural explanations as well as the specificities of social contexts – a more pragmatic approach. This strand is well inflected through postmodern and postcolonial questions on truth claims and metanarratives, and the return to 'working women' as a necessary, long overdue, and accurate critique of capitalism has driven the finer points of the analysis.

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[30] Jackson refers to the project of the Marxist feminist journal *m/f*, launched in 1978, as an example of this turn.

The above is a cursory glance at complicated trajectories, but it offers some answers to the questions with which we came to this exercise. Rosemary Tong's measured comment offers a clue –

> Because Marxist theory has little room for issues dealing directly with women's reproductive and sexual concerns (contraception, sterilization, and abortion; pornography, prostitution, sexual harassment, rape, and woman battering), many Marxist feminists initially focused on women's work-related concerns. They elucidated, for example, how the institution of the family is related to capitalism, how women's domestic work is trivialized as not *real* work, and how women are generally given the most boring and low-paying jobs. … even if the nature and function of woman's work are not complete explanations for gender oppression, they are very convincing partial ones.

(Tong 1998: 105)

The interlocutions between feminism and Marxism, then, had come to be defined in its originary spaces, at least initially, as a concern about inclusion, rather than the terms of that inclusion. Further, these were debates, whatever name they took, that were seen as internal to *either* Marxism *or* feminism. Up until the work of Fraad, Resnick and Wolff on the household (1994), the renewed interest in Delphy's work by materialist feminists (Landry and MacLean 1993, Wicke 1994), or postmodern Marxist work on capitalocentrism by Gibson-Graham (2001), a dialogue that was more than just reactionary, that truly interrupted each the other, had not even begun.[31] The position, in Marxist practice and theorization, continued to be of a total theory that could explain women's oppression as adequately as other kinds, *after* the economic revolution.

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[31] Fraad, Resnick and Wolff challenged class notions in conventional Marxist theory by naming and analyzing household processes as class rather than non-class processes. Gibson-Graham refused to adopt earlier modes of critique of capitalism, stating that these continued to fall into the trap of "capitalocentrism"; they preferred to see resistance, or ways of life, as existing independently of capitalist economies, and not only in reaction to them.

We are also concerned with a different kind of question here. What would be the significance of these latter moves – the postmodern turn in Marxism, the resurgence of materialist feminist questions, indeed even the earlier 'cultural turn' in Marxist feminism – when seen through the lens of John's notion of "composition of theory"? Quite possibly, rather than internal disputes, "theorizing … at the level of metaphors" (as Gimenez describes the attempts to respond to other entry points than class), or seemingly endless struggles around naming, the turns seen here acquire a different meaning. The Marxist feminist need to respond to 'women of colour' through a taking up of identity questions, postmodern Marxist feminist work shedding the capitalocentric approach in Marxism in favour of "local struggles", or materialist feminist work seeking new, more contextualized perspectives on knowledge, may all be symptomatic of a partializing of hitherto complete theories, a setting in perspective, a "composition" that is never quite complete – all of which is enabled by the empirical claims of a foreign, non-Western space, but also finds a way forward through it.

This is most in evidence in the work of feminist standpoint theorists, who draw their political stance from Marxist theory, again with the displacements they find necessary for the borrowing:

> Marx – utilizing an aspect of reality – overthrows the arguments of the economists and points to the overthrow of capitalism itself. Marxism is therefore science. It is an analytical reconstruction of the way in which the mechanism of capitalist production works.
> On the other hand, as well as being a science, Marxism is revolutionary ideology. It is the analysis of reality from the viewpoint of the working class. This in its turn means that the working class cannot constitute itself as a *class* without taking possession of the scientific analysis of *Capital*.
>
> (Colletti 1979, quoted in Hartsock 1998: 86)

Nancy Hartsock, who returns to Marx as an originator of a different concept of objectivity – one produced through context – from that of traditional empiricist readings of objectivity, advocates both a return to Marx *and* a retention of Marxism as science. This return is, however, not to the 'humanist', subjective Marx that a lot of earlier Marxist and socialist feminists have accessed.[32] Also taking on board Althusser's critiques of that Marx,[33] she attempts to show that the young Marx – in his initial movement from analyses of exchange to analyses of production – was embedded in a materiality of human relations, an intersubjectivity, to be precise, which formed the ground of his major concepts of labour, alienation, and class, and which in no way rejected objectivity although giving a different meaning to it. This Marx was left behind by conventional Marxists aligning with conventional definitions of science, by feminists critiquing the same, as well as by Althusser in his desire to save Marx for theory. Hartsock goes on to propose a methodology borrowed from this Marx for feminist standpoint theory – a methodology that involves a turn to certitude rather than truth – that provides knowledge 'good enough' to act on. Such knowledge, Hartsock goes on to argue, is more accessible from the vantage point of the oppressed, indeed embedded in it, and provides a better knowledge of society, as also greater potential for transformative justice.

There is much more to be read in this light in the work of later practitioners of feminist standpoint theory, of whom Sandra Harding has most persistently adopted the questions posed by the lives of 'third world women' or 'women of colour' – still useful categories for her – to ask "Whose science? Whose knowledge?", and to propose a "maximizing of objectivity" that is possible only through the multiple and

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[32] An important thinker here would be Raya Dunayevskaya, who led the movement for Marxist Humanism in the US.

[33] Who must be left behind, says Althusser, to access the 'real' or political Marx – the scientific Marx. The young Marx for Althusser is also the immature Marx (Althusser 1970).

different realities of women's lives, or Donna Haraway who speaks of knowledge(s) as being necessarily partial or limited by virtue of being situated.

Without going into the merits of this thinking at this point, we are interested in asking what more this exploration has given us, apart from a glimpse at how theories may be composed. A first glance at Indian contexts, in terms of the affiliated-autonomous debate in women's political organizations, seems to offer an analogy to the socialist feminist attempt to break free of Marxist fetters. There is a similar shift in issues focused on, from ideology, literacy, employment, to family, domestic violence, sexuality, reproductive rights, as autonomous women's organizations begin to form in India in the 70s. Questions of representation – historical, literary – have been taken up, in uncanny similarities with the 'cultural turn'. Given the strong presence of the Left in the particular spaces I discuss, however, the need to situate gender questions seems more urgent not so much in the context of overwhelming Left language, as seems to be the case in the Western contexts we discussed, as in a 'skewed' presence of the critique along with the target – pragmatism along with ideology, the backlash along with feminism, a high visibility to gender questions along with critiques of an unsatisfactory addressal – that appears to be the particular characteristic of 'postcolonial societies' today. In trying to work through what would be an adequate feminist response to Marxist thinking in Left circles in Bengal today, therefore, it is these cohabitations that I will try to tease out.

Perspectives on a journey

The hypothetical constituency of women-and-men-in-or-out-of-Left-organizations that I spoke of at the beginning of this chapter, in their passage through

the scientific institution and the political communities it housed in the hegemonic Left spaces in Bengal, had experienced the milieu of the unviable relationship between feminism and the political. They were hitherto in a conventional scientifico-political space where both science and politics were rational enterprises, separate from each other, but enterprises which could also be conducted in alliance. However, somewhere in the happy combination of efforts to become good scientists by paying attention in the classroom, and good humans through politics, the exercise turned traumatic, as questions from the familiar world of politics often interrupted the rigorous exercises in the equally familiar world of science.[34] These and other interruptions resulted partly in a refuge-taking, for a while, in an indifference bordering on antagonism toward one or the other of those worlds; one became either a 'good scientist', *or* one became 'persistently political'. For the good scientist, knowledge became the power to act, to heal, to 'make human' and whole she who was ill or non-knowledgeable. For the persistently political, knowledge seemed poised to debar entry into the ethical, the human. The constituencies became mutually exclusive. For both constituencies, at this point, the ethical was the essence of the political, while the epistemological could stand aloof, unmarred. As for the human, both worlds were claiming, at different points and in different ways, this category for their own.

At this point, the two journeys split. Those who had been looking in the same direction together, found themselves turning outside from the tight circle. The women-and-men, the 'persistently political', lost quite a few friends to good science.

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[34] Some things about the 'good doctor' began to look increasingly embarrassing, to take an example, as one explored, perforce, those interruptions, often beginning in the clinic, but not always ending or contained there. The 'good doctor', for instance, always knew. The good patient never did, and never asked. That changed, in a while, to the 'good doctor' who always knew, and always told the patient what she 'needed to know'. The 'good doctor' always maintained a critical engagement between the text and his clinical experience, but the experience was his. The patient continued to be experienced, but in pain, not in knowledge. For Knowledge could be born not of pain, but of the observation of pain.

Having offered allegiance to the now isolated community of the 'persistently political', however, these women-and-men experienced a need to rethink politics, to 'do' it differently, to cognize it in terms of the 'political' as an interpretative tool. What did this mean? Once outside the ritual, conventional, domain of Marxist political practice, once in a space where there was neither party nor party affiliation but (only) a porous community, once in a space where questions other than class were at least visible, the dissatisfaction with conventional politics brought several responses. For one, the sense that politics was based on poor theoretical foundations resulted in the move to rectify this; the result was a continuing separation of politics and epistemology, with a shift in focus from the former to the latter. Another response was to bring back the excluded perspective, or the *excluded as perspective*. The earlier relationship between feminism and the political too changed radically thereafter, with a feminism that took off from the view of the feminine as perspective, a feminism that began to enjoy an inseparable relation with the political. We could bring up two more statements or perhaps positions that populate this recognizably feminist milieu, that exemplify this shift. These were positions that were held theoretically in the women's studies department these women-and-men passed through, as well as in the texts that articulated feminism at a global level.

Women's studies is a perspective and not a discipline …
Politics is the essence of feminism …

And we have, in parallel, in the space of the 'rethinking political', the following –

Aamar kichu katha chilo ... tomay balar ... kebol tomay ...

I had something to say … it was meant for your ears alone … but it was lost … under the weight of the

jei na ami thonth nerechi

	words of today
...	*…in the*
shei kathata	moment that I
toliye gelo ...	… moved my
ei shomoyer	lips to utter the
shabdo talay ...	words …

Moushumi Bhowmick, the singer whose words are roughly translated above and in the earlier section, appeared on the scene at a time when urban middle-class Bengali music was reinventing itself in the 1990s. 'Anti-establishment' had already become an energized word, and not just in radical Left politics, at the time, and was often the content of this music.[35] Alongside, but not quite with,[36] the shift in the music that spoke of and to the critical Bengali psyche, came her songs – songs that seemed to embody the pain that almost declares access to perspectival identity. While this impulse can be recognized in many parts of feminist discourse in India – in Partition narratives, or in various other kinds of "social suffering", on the Left in Bengal, particularly post-Naxalbari,[37] it signaled, through the experience of trauma and the sense of a 'failed politics', a singularly powerful access to a reflexive radicalism. Most of her music had, at this time in her writing, a languorous, yearning, intimate quality, a drawing into immediate inter-subjectivity, as it were, of the Other. This is music that is completely new to Left spaces, stepping completely outside the 'slogan', not immediately intelligible to those outside the community – a community that changes and shifts – but music with presence enough to sometimes be called

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[35] While the 'establishment' here suggested the hegemonic Left, equally harsh objects of critique were its radical critics – the 'bomb-mongers', for neither of them provided the answers the middle class asked for.

[36] In an interview titled 'Singing from the Outside' with a leading English-language daily in 2002, Bhowmick talks of her positioning as "an inability to fit into "the *Baangali* Establishment. I think it just happens to people who grow up outside the city. You never do quite belong" (*The Hindu* 2002).

[37] A large-scale and violent movement against the establishment in the 1960s that started from an armed agrarian uprising in North Bengal, and involved large numbers of students and intellectuals (but was not classified outside revolutionary circles as a 'mass' movement). Proposing the Maoist path of protracted armed struggle, proposing a surrounding of the city through the villages, and attacking 'revisionism' within the communist parties that were then part of the ruling coalition, this movement began within the communist party ranks, and nearly a generation – often referred to as the 'cream' of Calcutta's elite schools and colleges - was wiped out in unprecedented police repression upto the late 1970s in Calcutta alone. The wounded beginnings of rethinking Marxism in India might be this point.

'revisionist'. Coupled with her 'failure' to bond with big music companies despite the amazing quality of her music, Moushumi Bhowmick seems to epitomize resistance in a world of compromise.

But there are two senses of the perspectival that we are working with here. If political, and by extension Marxist practice, has regarded the "particular point of view" – class, for instance – as what enables a politics, an-other point of view has, by the same ken, sometimes appeared "distorted or confused". We have seen that gender is a part of Marxist agendas; are Marxist agendas gendered? Much work has been done on the 'place of woman' or the feminine in nationalist discourse; Lata Mani's work on the discourses around sati (1993)[38], Partha Chatterjee's suggestion regarding the "nationalist resolution of the women's question" (1999),[39] and Spivak's notion of the "brown woman who must be saved from her traditions" (1988) come to mind, each pointing to the woman as bearer of 'culture' as a private domain in these discourses. While most of these critiques do not suggest a way out of the binary they seek to debunk, except in some cases through a faithful reversal, we are more concerned with a certain overlap of significations with Marxist discourse here. *Notions of the woman* populating older Marxist thought, inextricably bound up with Bengali *bhadralokness*[40] and the Enlightenment man, were not vastly different from

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[38] Where she talks of how the woman travels in between being the object and the ground for the debates around tradition and its interpretations in both British administrators' and early social reformers' (named proto-nationalist by Uma Chakravarti elsewhere) accounts.

[39] Here, as elsewhere, Chatterjee has pointed to the inside-outside framework, where woman occupies the domain of the inside/ the spiritual/ the private, as the nationalist reaction to the colonialist concern for the 'Indian woman'.

[40] A rough translation of *bhadralok* would be intelligentsia; descriptively a middle-class that emerged in Bengal in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, associated with property-ownership and Western education, the word soon became a metaphor for gentility and culture, that various constituencies then laid claim to, to *become* the *bhadralok* [Broomfield 1968]. Marxist practice would logically undermine the values enshrined in this class; early Marxist practice did not, however, traveling, instead, through *bhadralok* 'ness' to initially share the same cultural space. Interesting studies of cultural production in late colonial Bengal in fact argue that the "present Left hegemony in the state is largely based on the successful construction of a Marxist discourse in *bhadralok* cultural

this approach, although they retained some degree of ambivalence regarding the entry of women into the public sphere. Obviously there is a movement, in a Marxism now on the move; so that a different perspective at least creates an interruption. But a continued mapping, albeit an insecure one, of the public-private, persists. Woman-Marxism, love-politics, affect-reason, here seem bound up inextricably, adding new significations but retaining old maps.[41] In the same moment that I speak of the essentially 'feminine' inchoate perspective, there is also the political as masculine. Here it is an ascetic masculine that is spoken of (Dasgupta 2005: 79-98), that is other than the image of the 'true communist' previously in circulation. "Instead of the identical warrior-like stereotype invoked for discussing the communists," Dasgupta says, "I will emphasize what draws them closer to the figures of wanderer and renouncer, to that of a devotee as well as an innovator … [t]he ascetic inflection … is not exceptional but rather constitutive of the very way one became a communist in Bengal" (Dasgupta 2005: 3)[42]. Such a figure of reticence, put together with the 'much too emotional but non-knowledgeable' feminine image that emerges from the music I discuss above, completes the picture of the insecure mapping I have been trying to discuss. I would further suggest that in becoming the 'rethinking Marxist', more adjectives were added to the ascetic masculine figure. This figure is also a sentimental one, retaining old austerities but vulnerable, as it were, to the power of affect.[43] Is the power of perspective set out by Bhowmick's music then *received as* emotional, sometimes inchoate, essentially 'feminine'? Is this then the 'inner critical (moral?)

productions", registering important shifts from Marxist theory, so that "the articulation of Marxism took on a distinctive middle class character in the process" (Dasgupta 2005: 79).

[41] I am talking here of the conventional registers of love and politics where the familiar separations between emotion and Reason, feminine and masculine, are available.

[42] Dasgupta goes on to paint a rich picture of the particular philosophy of austerity that populated the bhadralok Marxist conscience.

[43] In such a making of the Marxist man, could the complementary journey for the woman be from the adoring woman, to the infantilized woman, to the angry woman?

voice', the constitutive inside that overlaps with earlier Marxist visions of culture, rather than the outsider? The inchoateness, it would seem, has to remain so, translating into an otherness, not difference, serving as a repository of that which cannot *be*, so that that which *is* can survive. A true complementarity appears to have been achieved here, in this coming together, and I would suggest that this becomes the placeholder for a possible feminism in Bengal, one that can have a relationship with the political. Does such an inchoate, essentially 'feminine' perspective then contain, and contain, the political content of gender in Marxist practice?[44]

It is at this juncture that we come to the question of the women's studies experience. The opening question for the first class of the M. Phil course in the School of Women's Studies in Jadavpur University (2001) was – "Is women's studies a perspective or a discipline?" As the class, and the classes, progressed, stressing on perspective as all-important, reiterating again and again the birth of women's studies from the women's movement,[45] other thoughts came crowding in. The pair of terms – theory-practice – had operated fairly differently for women-and-men-in-and-out-of-Left-organizations previous to their entry into the School. In the rarefied cigarette-smoke filled rooms of radical student politics of the 1980s, where the women had held their breath – literally and metaphorically – for fear of distracting from the political, feminism was at best ethical practice that only needed to be added on to be more

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[44] I would suggest here that the relationship between the 'feminine' and the 'inchoate' or 'intuitive' is not sedimented as a stated position in these histories, but more as residue, where the anthropologized category of the 'political-man-in-need' carries huge capital. This is a suggestion I find in the work of Michelle Le Doeuff, who examines early positivist-empiricist work in the sciences that has been critiqued for carrying the Reason-emotion divide, and a sexed one. Le Doeuff is skeptical of this critique, finding instead that the hierarchical gendering of forms of knowledge in these texts comes through more as a residue than a well-defined position. This residue, she finds, emanates from the asides, sexist remarks, and an anthropologized reading of Reason that accompanies the other view of Reason – mixed-sex, complemented by and related to intuitive knowledge (Le Doeuff 2003).

[45] And indeed this was the way the very syllabus was organized – the first 6 months set aside for the general discussion on perspective, after which the students bifurcated into two groups one of which would take textual readings for representations of women, the other the 'social science' route for feminist critiques of theory.

sensitive to women, at worst borrowed theory or a bourgeois ruse that needed to be rejected, and, most often, irrelevant to the discussion.

So it was perspective, yes, but only perspective. To answer the earlier question posed between Ray and Watson, there was 'gender interest', at an experiential level. The women's movement was movement by women organized by a vanguard, and the theory always was of the economic as the primary question. Any sense of a different standpoint growing out of that perspective was not only unwelcome, it was absurd.[46]

A 'troublesome' connection happened here – troublesome given the well-established critique of the hegemony of white Western feminism in setting global agendas. When the heady 'her'story of the women's movement in the West and the wealth of radical feminist theorization around gender shot through these smoke-filled-rooms, it spoke powerfully to the women who were looking for something in those spaces. They already knew India had a women's movement; they themselves had their own women's wings; one Left organization even had an exclusive women's journal – left to the women to run, and never remembered in parleys with other political forces. Over the years, the women in that mo(ve)ment have been forced to unpack the meanings, re-read that moment, and moving with the metaphor of travel (perhaps pushing it a little), I suggest that in a field already organized around a different hegemonic axis – that of the Left – global feminism acted not so much as arbiter or example, but perhaps as that tale that helped the 'turning outward' that I have spoken of at the beginning of this chapter. A turning from within outward to build a critical

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[46] Formed in the 1981 conference at SNDT University in Bombay, the IAWS constituted itself as an autonomous body, unlike the AIWCC, and took upon itself the task both of articulating the mandate of Women's Studies as a discipline and of spelling out its connections with the women's movement. From the many publications, conference proceedings, and manifestos that bore the mark of this exercise, it is clear that there was a movement, in the 80s, to speak of 'women's knowledge', and of bringing such a perspective into the academic institution. Whether such a movement produced the conditions for a different standpoint is the question I seek to ask.

telling that needed the 'outside' question as much as the 'ironic subjectivity', the different perspective afforded in the Marxist legacy. These women, then, and some men, went to these texts, these stories. They re-read the stories of the Telengana struggle, of the women of Progressive Organisation of Women, the Mahila Samta Sainik Dal,[47] to look for those lines in-between, to look at how those women had, in their manifestoes, "stressed the question of sexual oppression of women in a way that earlier social reform or feminist groups had not" (Kumar 1993:105). And they began to shift from pointing only to the status or presence of women in this or that place, to also pointing to the structures of oppression, and to the levels of meaning at which the category of gender was organized.

There was something else happening at the time. The general dissatisfaction with the violence, the impositions of the official party, the mode of 'doing politics', the issues being raised, the complete lack of self-reflexivity, was beginning to find one expression in a theoretical caucus that identified itself as definitely Marxist but drew from post-Marxist and postmodern Marxist literature that had begun moving away from notions of base-superstructure or even from the 'economic' as the last instance. Gender, being quite obviously the most consistent failure of the Left, became the rallying point around which this group sedimented into solidarity. The Left's failure to address gender was considered the result of poor or no theorization, and cutting-edge theory therefore became the weapon this group was looking for. This impulse carried within itself a critique of mainstream academia as well. There were, then, three moves here – a critique of lack of theory in the radical organizations, a critique of poor theory being turned out in academia, and an implicit critique of how

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[47] Both organizations were formed in the 1970s.

politics was being defined and done. The entry into women's studies was seen, in this frame, as another way to share these moves and hone one's theoretical skills.

Did women's studies then offer that space for articulation of difference?[48] What, for instance, were the 'issues' that were seen as important for academic activity? An examination of the publications, workshops and ongoing projects of the two major women's studies centres in Bengal throws up a wider variety of issues under discussion than Raka Ray's reading would allow for. While this chapter will not go into a detailed analysis of this area, I would like to point to the chief topics that have been worked on. Women's labour is, as expected in the space, a major area of interest. So is the right to health and education, politicization of women, and women in professions. A large part of this work is couched in the language of empowerment – a word which carries high currency in development agendas. Also seen in empowerment terms is the discourse around the girl child – her plight in the informal sector and traditional patriarchy being the chief focus. So far, this work is seen as an engagement of need. Outside of these conventionally Marxist issues, there is work on oral histories of Partition and the associated displacement of women, trafficking, mental health, violence, sexual harassment. A major part of the work, however, is on the recovery of women's writing – a project of writing into history the *everyday* stories of/ by women who, be they in the domestic space or elsewhere, are making their negotiations with disadvantage. Along with biographies making visible women

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[48] Sitting in the bastion of an abundantly self-assured Left, the move towards articulating a different perspective was in itself perhaps a radical one. But the space was also a fraught one – fraught with other differences, with the pressures of loyalty to the Left (not official pressures, but the difficulties of separating from the legacy), with the constant straining at self-reflexivity. Here was a feminism that was attempting to move away from a vanguardist practice but that, even in employing a different perspective, wanted to communicate the truth of gender to its women, that wanted to 'show' them patriarchy, make them 'see' gender. This feminism had found it difficult, while practicing a 'speaking to', to 'speak with' the experience of the women who were its 'mass'. Feminism as it had organized itself in these (Left) spaces felt it shared a common perspective with women around them because of their very enmeshedness; the standpoint they (the feminists) then offered was, however, theirs exclusively.

who became independence martyrs or political heroes, this work has been seen as a re-affirmation of personal spaces as legitimately political. I have indicated toward the 'troublesome' impact that global, Western, universalist, feminism might have had in these, 'our' spaces of political negotiation, and the subsequent intense re-articulation of what was seen as the personal, possibly private domain in nationalist histories. We can see here how personal, arguably individualist spaces, seen as *invalid* on the Left unless politicized,[49] have been re-written also; my question is, in what way. In the struggle to survive that old Left charge – the personal is antagonistic to the political – have they become re-written as *fragile*, requiring attention and carrying a conventional political import of their own? Do tropes like extreme adversity or martyrdom – recognizably political tropes on the Left[50] – that populate these women's lives, continue to shore up the prescription?[51]

A looking back again at the journey of the hypothetical constituency I talk about might be illuminating here, and this has to do with the way in which these women and men had read the second-wave slogan itself – that slogan that, in its changed form, became theirs with reformulated Marxism. While reversing the old Marxist slogan to say that the personal *is* the political, for one, the old vanguardist impulse was retained so that feminism, from being an unviable companion to politics, now became *the* politics that would energize women's hitherto untouched lives. Contradictorily, the personal, the everyday, began to be seen as a pristine space, forgetting the overdeterminations by the politics of patriarchy. Where patriarchy on the one hand had trivialized the everyday, the everyday in the shape of the *normal* had nevertheless remained the single most powerful site for the operations of the

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[49] The legitimate slogan on the Left being – "The political must enter into the personal".

[50] Through being the "voice of the oppressed".

[51] This, rather than choice of issues, is how I would suggest hegemonic fields work – a performative making possible of a move that is at the same time constraining.

patriarchal hegemonic. So in the personal-political slogan, both words had their earlier paleonymies that had not been taken into account, and further, that these women and men had been *interpellated* by. They were not trying to formulate their revised politics in a vacuum, obviously.

It is also here that I would like to note a connection between subjectivity and the political that this and other women's studies centres were trying to make. While the notion of perspective that is intuitively put out in political spaces finds analogy and consolidation in the institutional feminist spaces I have just discussed, the kind of nearly stereotypical paean to subjectivity that Moushumi Bhowmick represents is not picked up by the feminist Left in Bengal that reiterates subjectivity (in terms of perspective) as its very foundation. While in the political spaces that hosted this intense discussion of perspective, the complementarity that it produced seemed important, for the feminist Left, subjectivity is that fragile perspective that must be protected. Put differently, it must be fragile and inchoate enough to warrant protection/ inclusion/ mention.

For such a protection, then, is masculinist Marxism a necessary requirement?

There were other ways in which the prescription had been working. From somewhat prior to the establishment of women's studies centres in India, 'culture' – equated with superstition, tradition, and other code words – had been defined by the Left as another non-rational element of the personal that needed to be opposed. Given this legacy, feminists in India have, as John (1998) has pointed out, had a different pair of terms from the nature-culture binary in Western philosophy that Western feminism much needed to critique. That pair has been culture-politics. The engagements on the axis of this pair have been many and varied, ranging from a

"culture versus politics" position, following on which "culture" could be pitted against feminism, to a politics of cultural explanation. Sometimes, this has produced a rejection of feminism, sometimes a uniquely Indian feminism.

The engagements with culture have been mostly in the fields of literature and history. Here, popular notions of the fluidity of gender in the Indian philosophical imaginary that are said to speak for the particular Indian experience, sit in uneasy contest with feminist readings of antagonism between the sexes or of the operations of traditional patriarchy. Then again, avowedly feminist engagements with the 'plurality' of Indian pasts, especially with regard to evidences in literature or history, may be found. While work like Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai's *Same-Sex Love in India,* for example, has seen the fluidity of sexual relations and freedom of choice of sexual partners in representations from Indian pasts as evidence of the plurality of ancient Indian philosophy, [52] scholars like Romila Thapar in their work on the status of women in ancient India have sought to undermine easy notions of plurality and liberatedness by pointing to the evidence of subordination of women especially under Brahminism. This again seems to be countered by findings about the Buddhist periods, which read Buddhist philosophies as sexually egalitarian. Many scholars, including Thapar, have also worked at the interface between literature and history (as in reading the *Sakuntala* story) to show up the element of interpretation that produces what counts as an authentic cultural past. John's point here is that while Western feminism has organized itself around the essentialist-constructivist debate as played out in the category of sexual difference, feminists in India have found culture to be the 'natural kind' that must be de-essentialized or valorized as the case may be. In

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[52] "Ancient Indian philosophy provides us with tools to undo the categories of gender and sexuality" (Vanita and Kidwai 2001: 24).

hegemonic fields like Bengal, then, this Left's promotion of a scientific temper and suspicion of culture, an most clearly demonstrated in the Popular Science Movements, brought it into natural alignment with feminist work that 'saw' traditional patriarchy, or read scriptural prescriptions against women.[53]

'Theory', then, was obviously different in these contexts. The questions were different. For the hypothesized constituency of women-and-men-in-and-out-of-political-organizations, however, the answers were not all forthcoming. Questions of perspective, or the slogan 'politics is the essence of feminism', sometimes took on trajectories that justified a retreat from difficult questions, or rejected theory as too abstract. Feminism in these spaces, having already established strong links with the experiential, did not always face the task of translating or examining the dynamics of the relationship between experience and politics. And in the evaluations outside seminar rooms, a far too defensive retreat into perspective got picked up by critics to 'expose' women's studies for what it 'really was' – a softer discipline, a women's space, a space of 'narrative', not theory. This was the theoretical response in non-conventional political spaces I was talking of, seeing in women's studies nothing other than an extension of the dominant positions on the Left that would not have known how to deal with a stronger articulation of the 'sexual difference' question,

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[53] The Left's suspicion of culture was put to work most effectively in the popular science movements that spread throughout independent India and Bengal, promoting the notion of a 'scientific temper'. This is, however, a more complicated trajectory than it seems to be – one that will be explored more thoroughly in the next two chapters. The Popular Science Movements, that I will discuss more thoroughly in Chapter 3, are being read more minutely today, expanding the notion of what the movements were, as well as disengaging them from a straightforward Left agenda. In this reading, they are seen as pro-people, access-oriented movements rather than hegemonic ones, putting science to work for the people and challenging material disparities brought in by 'big science'. It is with this latter shift, however, that I propose the Bernalist spirit came into its own. The point this chapter wishes to make here is this. Apart from the hierarchical science-culture opposition that was legitimized here, the alignment between feminism and Marxism also failed to question the logical positivism that imbued this notion and practice of science. At the present moment, this notion of a 'scientific temper' has seeped into sustainable development practices like building smokeless stoves, low-cost hygienic toilets etc, associating with tenets of community medicine – a more measured method of factoring in the social environment. This movement is yet to be examined more extensively.

which did not consider the possible legitimacy of a feminist standpoint. In the event, the questions that were being raised – of feminist standpoints as being necessarily produced through the perspectives of women's lives, of context not being site of verification of theory but the site of its production, of the journey from perspective to standpoint not being one of consciousness-raising in the old forms but being possibly more mutually constitutive, of relations with other standpoints – like class, being necessarily to be worked towards rather than given or understood, sometimes got buried under this version of the theory-practice debate.

One shape this shift to rigorous theory took, as we can see, was of a criticality that challenged both 'feminist activism' and 'Marxist politics', but also helped a positioning outside both. Why did gender play such an important part in this expression? By the incitement to discourse that was already in place? As the easiest identifiable failure and therefore weak point of the Left? Or, most damningly, as the constitutive inside to a discourse of loss of the 'political' that remained, nevertheless, androcentric?

The questions I am trying to ask here are the following: one, whether with a certain women's perspective/ otherness being used to deconstruct Left agendas, the interlocutors were actually different generations of male Marxists warring over the right to 'own' gender; and two, whether retaining gender as perspective and the putting outside of the possibility of gender as standpoint was a necessary component to the articulation or re-articulation of a Marxist standpoint. And as I recall the obsessive theoretical investigations at one point into the onticity of woman that vied with the discussions on the power of perspective, Irigaray seems to put back into focus our question:

> Why try to speak with a man? Because what I want, in fact, is not to create a theory of woman, but to secure a place for the feminine within sexual difference.
>
> (Whitford 1991: 159)

It is important to keep in mind that in the debate between ideology and perspective, the Left has always been on the side of ideology. The Left, then, would seem to be making a break with its own methodologies, in retaining gender as perspective. But not if we look at the second, third and fourth arguments this chapter makes – that gender as perspective is a *constitutive element* of Marxist agendas, that gender as perspective is in fact a *Marxist legacy* in our spaces, and that gender as standpoint remains perhaps the constitutive outside of Marxist discourse. This is what I hope my exploration in this section has demonstrated.

But is gender as perspective a feature only of Marxist spaces?

Feminism: an anachronism?

In conversation recently, Moushumi Bhowmick talked about a shift in her thinking from the previous somewhat "self-indulgent" mode, to a realization of a need for engagement with other perspectives. That realization is reflected in her music today – in her associations with folk singers, her shift from the theme of 'failed politics' to little movements in people's lives. Or would we say she has lost the "radical edge" of politics?

We have, so far, been treating geographical spaces as equivalent to political fields. But worlds of resistance, or those explicable through frames other than hegemonic, are to be found in the same geographical spaces. In our re-definitions of hegemonic political fields, we have attempted to show how the Left legacy has been

operative in producing contexts for resistance as well – as in questions of a feminist standpoint, or even perspective. Questions of a feminist standpoint may be said to have acquired such survivalist[54] significance in Left spaces *on account of* the field being defined through a single standpoint possibility – namely Marxist. The force with which these questions present themselves in these spaces is nearly inexplicable elsewhere. But where is elsewhere? Different geographical spaces, or different conceptual frames? Spaces sometimes outside the conventionally 'political'?

The Telegraph – an English language daily brought out in Calcutta by the *Anandabazaar* group of publications, once known specifically for its anti-Left stance, now one of the more visible newspapers in the city of Calcutta – boasts a weekly women's page that has been running now for eleven years. For a regular reader of this page, certain moments in the history/trajectory of this page stand out. Moments that have marked a certain movement, for instance, from the issue to the achiever, to be covered in the broad centre-piece of the page. That achiever may be India's first woman pilot, the record-breaking Indian woman cricketer, the once-victim of domestic violence who has now published a book bringing together testimonies by women. There has been the introduction of a narrow left-hand column offering witty, perspectival but 'light' discussion on, say, recent happenings of interest to women. A short collage at the bottom, of international or national events highlighting women's issues.

Nothing much to complain about. Nothing much … that is too difficult to digest, that is too thought provoking, too narrowly focused. Nothing much.

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[54] A 'women's movement' had always survived within Marxist spaces, as we have seen. It is a different kind of survival we talk of here – the sense that the features of this movement did not always allow us to call it feminist.

Women are always, everywhere, making their little negotiations, fighting their battles. The negotiations are necessarily contingent, the resolutions contextual.

But why are we expecting so much from a newspaper?

We are not. We may only be looking at what is perhaps one reflection of a conceptual frame where 'gender interests' – referred to in the earlier part of this paper – come up, and are negotiated, without the benefit, or burden, of a standpoint. One reading – the radical Left's – of the phenomenon would put it as the 'influence of the market', to state it very crudely. At least one feminist reading would name the backlash against feminism as responsible for such a movement away from the recognizably political. But we are up here, perhaps, against an elsewhere – a conceptual frame where feminism is not always the enemy; it is merely irrelevant. And this is a conceptual frame where we have already moved on, parallel to a movement from ideology to extreme contextualism, also from politics to self-help.[55]

But there are parallel movements *within* feminism that need to be taken into account, and accounted for, to delineate more fully the climate within which this investigation is placed. One of the concerns of feminism as a critical discourse vis-à-vis various hegemonic formations has been to provide a different vantage point from which to both describe and transform 'real' situations. In doing so, it has been hard put to fix this vantage point; where earlier it may have been easy to talk about "oppression of women", today this vantage point – assuming it comes from women – recedes each time into fuzziness or multiplies manifold. What of women? And what of different women? Whether it be termed "fractured feminist foundationalism" (Wise and Stanley, 1993), or postmodern feminism, trends in Western feminism have moved

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[55] I will elaborate further on this shift in Chapter 5.

out of Cartesian certainties of a "view from nowhere", through to Derridean ideas of choreography or dance, offering at the very least a multiplicity of perspectives. These have, however, as Susan Bordo suggests, while attempting to move out of dualistic logic, sometimes introduced another transcendence – "the historical specifics of the modernist, Cartesian version [having] … been replaced by a new, postmodern configuration of detachment, a new imagination of disembodiment: a dream of being *everywhere*" (Bordo 1994: 466). At another, and related level, Bordo talks of "the conversion of … [the insight that] gender forms only one axis of a complex, heterogeneous construction, constantly interpenetrating, in historically specific ways, with multiple other axes of identity … into *the* authoritative insight, and thence into a privileged critical framework, a "neutral matrix" (to borrow Rorty's term) that … is … capable of determining who is going astray and who is on the right track" (463). Theorists like Toril Moi (1999) have, on the other hand, attempted to stem the flow of endless difference by talking of taking responsibility for stands; moving from a complete gender scepticism that would suggest that through attention to difference, the notion of gender would be too fragmented to be useful, to looking at meanings within context, or a "laying claim" to a contingent identity.

I will delineate, in Chapters 3 and 5, the articulations around women's experience that have been made in Indian and broader postcolonial contexts, which have largely traveled from ideology to contextualism. One model of talking about women's experiences for feminism has been of the woman as subject of experience excluded by the dominant. This is exemplified in the post and anti-development debates (Escobar 1995), discourses around the experience of motherhood, the construction of the 'third world woman' as repository of experience. Resistance in this model is seen as arising from the consciousness of this oppressed subject. Further,

'resistance' in this model is either "pre-capitalist" or completely 'outside', suppressed; its structural or other relationship to the forces of domination is not clear. The other model, partly building on the gaps in the former one, has been of reading hegemonic spaces as hosts of contextual and contingent negotiations, where the results of the dynamic between the hegemonic and the resistant can neither be predicted nor explained through simple hierarchical structures.[56] A fuller exploration of this latter model, then, would help make the case for women as having differing and valuable perspectives; it would not, however, easily allow for the consolidation of these into a common standpoint.[57]

In the 'third world', thinkers like Chandra P. Mohanty (2003) have forcefully defied the Western feminist delineation of the 'third world woman'. Although it is not entirely clear how Mohanty employs the tools of race or class to do this, her primary impulse – a denial of the homogenization inherent in the naming – is relevant to our discussion, as a strand of thinking that fails to 'find' enough unity in the constituency of women to offer it up for a universal feminism.

Feminist critiques of positivist-empiricist science have run into similar questions. Rejecting the possibilities of a feminist method (Harding 1987), or of a feminist epistemology (Pinnick 1994, Heberle 1998), some of these have 'failed' to find the unified subject of feminism that would allow for a unique basis of critique,

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[56] One of the more powerful analyses in this direction in the development debates come from Gibson-Graham who identify what they call "capitalo-centrism" in the post and anti-development positions that "attribut[e] to the global capitalist system a naturalized role as the preeminent and self-regulating 'essence' of development … created and disseminated as the discourse of capitalism … [and consider] local differences, movements and forms of resistance … [as] the weaker 'other' to the dominant structure" (Gibson-Graham 2001: 156-163).

[57] This model is significantly visible at a time when development agendas themselves are producing self-perceptions of plurality, inclusion, and open-endedness. At one level, it would seem to be pragmatist stakes that drive the initiatives – not, for instance, a non-reflexive pushing of 'modern medicine' that takes away agency from women, not an easy repetition of the colonialist critique of the indigenous. Mainstream development discourse has even given up on terms like 'third world', partly on the plea of globalization having rendered it less than useful.

although not rejecting the need and possibility of the critique itself. Mostly, these positions have been critical of "women's ways of knowing" that has occupied centrality in much of science critiques through feminism, and also of the relativist stances that have otherwise been the route.

Feminism, with this development, then, becomes the theory that is most challenged by this output of heterogeneity as difference. Suggested solutions have usually been in the form of some access to identity, as by Moi. A lot of the moves have also asked for a separation between politics and epistemology, where feminism is on the side of politics, rather than an attempt to make what is called a strained connection. So Denise Riley, for instance, would suggest that "it might be preferable, rather than endlessly brooding over the annoying fixity of social identity or the wavering, perhaps reassuringly wavering, nature of psychical identity as a woman, to examine this identity "at the level of the political[.] One's identity as a feminist, for instance" (Riley 1989: 135).

I have, in this section, attempted to draw a tentative map of the various theorizations conceptually outside Left spaces that also do not adopt a feminist standpoint position, either through a questioning of gender as a possible standpoint or through a questioning of standpoint possibilities in general. Postmodern fragmentation or liberal pluralism have taken up that space. I will, in Chapter 5, attempt to delineate both this climate of fragmentation and feminism's own journey in the Indian space vis-à-vis this climate, in greater detail. Let us now return to Left spaces to re-examine the shape questions of gender have recently taken there, and their possible overlaps with these outside questions.

Marxist turns to gender

From a Marxist neglect of gender questions or of feminism on the count of it being a bourgeois preoccupation, and therefore not politically transformative, through a feminism of perspective that broke out of the hegemony of class as the sole entry point of analysis, we may have moved on to a different kind of slogan, a set of positions that are voiced by 'rethinking Marxists' in conversation, as well as by feminists:

Marxism is no longer a relevant interlocutor for feminism …
The Left has to move on to the superstructural …

An examination of spaces outside entrenched Left positions – the women's page of *The Telegraph*,[58] or the women's movement outside Bengal – will show that the issues at stake have been vastly different, the very questions different. Marxism in these spaces is not a relevant interlocutor for feminism; even issues of employment and poverty are addressed through development, not class. We could take a look here at the more recent change in vocabulary in Left spaces as well as the overlap of languages with those outside.

Ahalya is a women's journal in Bengali started around 1983 among the radical Left in Calcutta. It is, in its own words, *nari samaajer mukhopotro* – the voice of the women's society. Its logo – freedom, dignity, equal rights. Articles appearing in the journal between 2002 and 2004 have varied – reports of the struggle of women workers in a textile mill against informalization, female foeticide, book reviews, short stories, poetry, health tips, relevance of international women's day, tributes to

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[58] A leading English daily in circulation in Calcutta.

revolutionary political women, critiques of the nationalist state, the uniform civil code, communalism, violence against women, family welfare and population control, the Hindutva phenomenon, images of the new Indian woman, mental health of Indian women, agriculture, globalization, imperialism, sexuality, river linking. Only a more detailed reading will offer clues to the standpoints from which these may have been written or selected. At any rate, the issues are there. For our purposes, a short report on a discussion regarding signs of marriage organized by this group may be useful, also to enter in greater detail into Marxist attitudes towards science.

The couple in question belongs to a village in Tomluk in Medinipur district in Bengal. The husband has, for several years, been part of a science movement that has regularly attacked superstition, coercive traditional practice, dowry, and rituals, and has been variously popular and unpopular for the same. The crisis was precipitated by his wife's act of removing her *sankha* – the ivory bangle – and *sindur* a month into the marriage, after she had, as both of them stated, been initiated into rational thinking by her husband. Some villagers reacted to the act, and threatened the couple, perhaps more so in the light of the husband's committed participation in the science movement, and in the face of adverse publicity following media reportage that they said had maligned the village. *Ahalya* had decided to support them, and organized the discussion in order to initiate debate and arrive at a resolution asking the administration to prevent the situation from snowballing into a violent one. The discussion was rich. For one, the group that had come to listen – *Ahalya's* critical mass – was fairly heterogeneous. Several of the women wore signs of marriage while some did not. This could have been a women's group trying to avoid vanguardist practice – a single party line. A sense of struggle against inequality was very much in evidence (why do men not have to wear any sign) as was the outrage against woman

as property. But these are the oldest roots of Marxist feminism. Health hazards of wearing *sindur* were pointed out. But among the strands of anti-religion, scientific rational, or cultural thought that came up, the *key word was choice*. This was the only bulwark, it seemed, against tradition that would be legitimately accepted by all. So the woman should be allowed to remove her signs of marriage if she *chooses* to. Of course the rest of the village may then *choose* to ostracize her, but this being a choice that impinges on her own, it stands discredited.

Was this a version of a feminist approach? Questions of a woman's agency being intimately tied to that of her family did come up, not in the form of challenge but as constraint that must be worked within. It did, at another level, succeed in showing up the overlaps between avowedly Marxist and liberal languages, as also the slow taking up of space by a liberal logic that has been fairly successful in appearing free of value or ideology. Science, in this scheme, was seen as a definite liberator. What I wish to show through this discussion is how the approach to an issue – both in terms of perspective and practice – will reflect what standpoints are being engendered in the organization.

Towards standpoint possibilities

There are two questions that emerge here. Why a standpoint? What is this standpoint and what is it that makes it specifically feminist, as against its Marxist connotations?

As of now, a metaphorical reflection is more available than an evidenced one. Without sinking into metaphoricity for its own sake, however, a few possibilities

could be explored. Having identified the problems of vanguardism, a rethinking Left *and* a reactive feminism may consider that what remains for us to do or think is a re-turn to perspective. But how? In making a claim for experience as context of knowledge, will experience be some ontological starting point or will there be work for feminism in employing that perspective to arrive at a standpoint? Perhaps the problem in our contexts is this. The strands in feminism that seek to value the practices of *women's lives*, as Sandra Harding puts it, have sometimes taken upon themselves the responsibility of erasing themselves from the space, so that the *perspective* that women may share, that may arise from the commonality of experiences of a definite social location, are made to *substitute* for a feminist standpoint. One view would be of such a turn to 'pure experience' as impossible. It could, on the other hand, seem that our very frameworks of understanding are faulty, that the hegemony of fields is a product of our theorizations, that the experiential knowledge of women, for instance, is constantly offering modes of negotiation *without any work involved toward and from a standpoint* of, say, feminism, as the new anthropologies of gender seem to amply demonstrate. All that is required then is a *turn* to experience, not a re-turn.

There is a third possibility. That it will have to be a *re-turn* – from the perspective of the excluded as resource – not authentic or originary, but appropriate. Here I find useful the model of the excluded available within feminist standpoint theory, of the woman as 'outsider within' (Collins 2004).[59] While this formulation

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[59] Feminist Standpoint Theory talks of the possibility of a situated, perspectival form of knowing, of such a knowing as necessarily a communal project, and of this knowing as one where the community of knowers is necessarily shifting and overlapping with other communities. While Haraway would speak of 'situated knowledges' as against the 'God trick', as she calls it, of seeing from nowhere – a neutral perspective (Haraway 1992), Sandra Harding would go on, however, to propose a version of strong objectivity – a less false rather than a more true view; this, Harding would suggest, can come only from the viewpoint of particular communities, sometimes the marginalized, sometimes women. This is

evokes a degree of unease about whether this social location can be enough as a starting point (whether women then always have to be the outsiders within to be able to speak from this space), it offers, I think, valuable clues to work on. It is here that the movement from within outward that I suggested could be useful – a movement that requires the positioning as 'outsider within', or 'ironic subject', but also an act of interpretation that puts that positioning to work. The very notion of standpoint would be then the act of interpretation, not a place already defined; it 'is' only in the *constant interrogation* of both dominant discourse – masculinist Marxist discourse - *and of the category of resistance* – feminism – within which it may be named. If this has a mutually constitutive rather than a representative relationship with perspective, it will also mean a separation from both old vanguardist methodologies and newer calls to experience.

If, as Donna Haraway puts it, partial perspective is available to those that do not occupy "the platforms of the powerful", what is the difference from, for instance, subaltern perspectives? If the difference is unavailable, is a feminist perspective on knowledge common with other theories of oppression, or is there a specificity to it, which would be in keeping with the very question of perspective? And if so, where? Sandra Harding has spoken of clear separations that feminist standpoint theory is making from its Marxist origins. Harding attempts to site this specificity in looking at the feminist standpoint as accessible to differences within women *and* in between women; she would say that the subject of feminist knowledge is multiple – as women

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where Harding's version of standpoint epistemology is still grappling with the question of whether the experience of oppression is a necessary route to knowledge. (Harding deals with this with this by treating women's lives as resource to maximise objectivity, Haraway by treating these women as ironic subjects, and seeing from below as only a visual tool) A related question is whether the very notion of standpoint epistemology requires a version, albeit a more robust one than in place now, of systems of domination, and it is here that a productive dialogue could be begun between Haraway's more experimental version of "seeing from below" and Harding's notion of strong objectivity.

exist only in culturally and historically specific moments; also, each is multiply constituted. As of now, this answer is simply not enough, and I attempt, throughout the thesis, to look for only methodological, not content-driven or identitarian insights pertaining to women, in addressing this specificity. To that end, I find it useful to denaturalize two associations – one between feminism and the political, and one between feminism and women. This is not to cut the connection between the two, but to think about them a little more, and away from feminism as we knew it. Women were the subjects of feminism, in a move intended partly to inaugurate both their agency as well as to offer them a space in the political, to release them from vanguardism. After the denaturalization, women, however, do not, in an essential or referential sense, remain the subjects of feminism, or its major responsibility. This somewhat blasphemous statement will mean that their lives could be a vantage point, but just that, requiring more work to articulate a politics of vantage, as also being subject to its questions as any other constituency. Both these connections I will explore more fully therefore in Chapter 5, after I have laid down in greater detail the journeys vis-à-vis women's experience in the Indian context.

A significant point of departure for this project, however, would be the alliances between standpoints other than feminist that Harding speaks of. These alliances, I would submit, would have to be forged against antagonisms as well.[60]

Would that suggest a different kind of Marxism than the one that informs our practice? For a re-turn, an engagement with questions of a different Marxism will

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[60] I make, therefore, my last clarification – this chapter does not take the position, summed up eloquently by Spivak, that "Marxism and feminism must become persistent interruptions of each other" (1988: 249). It does not because I feel there is not yet an adequate description of the nature of the present relationship between Marxism and feminism in our contexts, nor of the trajectory of that relationship, which would be essential before such a move. This chapter has, I hope, contributed in that direction.

have to be made – trajectories in postmodern Marxism that view class as process rather than descriptive social category and consider its overdetermination with other standpoints (Resnick and Wolff 1987), re-worked understandings of 'third world' (Chaudhury, Das and Chakrabarti 2000), 'third world woman', and specific understandings of Marxism in these contexts. As Spivak would suggest, "Marx keeps moving for the world as the world moves" (Spivak 1999: 67).

For the rethinking Left in Bengal today, the more powerful methodologies have come not so much from the need to discover a self-evidently different or 'third world' *starting point* for Marxism, as to explore more thoroughly the 'travel' and the possible compositions – not all innocent or incidental – that the theory could offer when interpreted from a different perspective. Chaudhury, Das and Chakrabarti, in speaking from a 'third world Marxist' standpoint, would make a strong case for the *work involved* for Marxism in third world spaces –

> [t]o produce and sustain a Marxist discourse that includes a world of the third
> (as distinct from the received concept of the third world) as a discursive space
> in the context of late twentieth century world capitalism

(Chaudhury, Das and Chakrabarti 2000: 81)

They turn around the tricky question of "collaboration" with hegemonic discourses to paint a picture of conscious unrepentant collaboration. In a deliberate and telling formulation on theoretical spaces available to "an unrepentant postcolonial collaborator" in the third world, they speak of a possible *reinscription* of the "third

world" on the "margin, as a follow-up" to the closures to the postmodern totality introduced by "somebody in the West" [61]…

> Our discourse begins where they end: on their margin, as a follow-up – discovery – of the consequences of such closures. *Third world* gets rehabilitated in a postmodern totality from such endeavors
>
> (Chaudhury, Das and Chakrabarti 2000: 62-3)

Perhaps this is also the tool lying there for the *feminist* to pick up, to create a discursive space of negotiation for 'feminism(s) of the world of the third' in these spaces, and also think a different kind of feminism? As to what work she might put that tool to … *Aamar kichu katha chilo* …[62] If this is a woman speaking with a man, we might look at it as inchoate speech. We might, also, however, put it to work, to define a feminist standpoint, as a speaking with, rather than a speaking (back or down) to in a simple reversal of perspectives. This will also involve a re-cognition of the asymmetry of dialogue as not necessarily or always hierarchical, but one that facilitates the attempt to voice. New significations of love-politics could perhaps be put to work, to exceed old maps?

And perhaps the strains of Bhowmick's music will return to haunt both the feminist and her interlocutors …

Ami ja dekhi tumi ta dyakho ki	Do you see what I see
Ami ja jani tumi ta jano ki	Do you know what I know
Ami ja bhabhi tumi ta bhabho ki	Do you think as I do

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[61] The authors are referring here to Laclau-Mouffe's perhaps too easy definitions of open society and nodal points in their version of post-Marxism, and Resnick and Wolff's postmodern Marxism.

[62] I had something to say.

CHAPTER 3

IS SCIENCE HEGEMONIC? SOME APPROACHES TO CRITIQUING SCIENCE IN INDIA

Introduction

In Chapter 2, I delineated one of the premises of feminist critiques of science in India, namely the notion of the feminine as perspective, and its occupation of feminism. Such a meaning of perspective as a way of seeing that is limited, experienced but non-knowledgeable, has been one of the vantage points of a feminist critique of knowledge systems in the Indian context. I will, in this chapter, concentrate on the other pillar of feminist critiques of science in India, the postcolonial promise of hybridity, and its commitment to what might be called cultural difference. This exercise will involve the delineation of the framework of hybridity and its use in postcolonial circuits to describe the object of critique – Western science – as fragmented, as hegemonic but not completely successful in its dominance, as containing within its dominant self the seeds of resistance. It will involve an examination of the externalist and 'outside' histories of science that are used to vindicate such an approach. It will show the disjunct between the claim to hybridity and the practice of these histories themselves. It will also necessitate an examination of the claim to difference, which shores up the promise of hybridity as a counter-hegemonic exercise.

Critical science studies in India have been focussed on the travel and reception of what is seen as Western science in a resistant space. Under the metanarrative of

Marxism, historiographies of science and postcolonial Historians[1] of science in India have variously proposed notions of either the success or failure of this enterprise, resulting in the production, in an inflection through Indian forms of knowing, of a hybrid or mutated knowledge. There are certain characteristics that are common to the critiques. For one, they state Indian forms of knowing to be multi-perspectival, diffuse, practice-oriented. This multi-perspectivity is read as actually making a case for difference. For another, these forms of knowing are read as being placed below other, more powerful knowledge systems. Third, the critiques are fairly clear that their object is Western science, in whatever way constituted, which according to them has a central(ised) philosophical and institutional character, and which a valid critique would do well to describe and counter in this essence. Fourth, the place for such a critique to begin is from the presence of an alternative perspective, hosted in a different *system*, in this case the Indian form of knowing which though multi-perspectival yet affords a coherence. The critiques possessing this set of characteristics, then, do not examine the construction of the category Western science, nor examine it in its own contexts of real-time practice, concentrating instead on the institution as made visible in the "exchanges with non-science" in a hierarchically ordered space.

Feminist critiques of science in India have taken up both the prescriptions of these critiques and the place accorded to feminism in the Marxist framework, convincingly reproducing both dynamics for a proposed feminist critique of science, and in fact unwittingly serving as the place for their vindication. I have attempted to

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[1] I use the capitalization to hold the said historians to the commitment they have set up – to work towards radicalizing the discipline of classical history. This commitment explains the trajectories their arguments have taken, their challenge to continuities, their challenge to geographical location.

make one part of this argument in Chapter 2, tracing the place of the feminine as perspectival – the inchoate insider, the inner moral voice to the political.

Chapter 1 attempted to get a sense of the disciplinary origins of the critiques of science. The present chapter will attempt to trace in some detail the agendas of one of these disciplines that have contained most critical science studies exercises in India, in order to put on board the further question – is this an adequate starting point for a critique of science?

Anomalous histories of Western science: takes by a modernist, a postcolonial,[2] and a postmodern

> The emergence and existence of India is inseparable from the authority of science and its functioning as the name for freedom and enlightenment, power and progress. Standing as a metaphor for the triumph of universal reason over enchanting myths, science appears pivotal in the imagination and institution of India, a defining part of its history as a British colony and its emergence as an independent nation …
>
> (Prakash 1999: 3)

> … the staging of Western science in the interests of Western dominance … is a recognizably familiar story. What escapes the attention of this often-told tale of Western power, however, is the distorted life of the dominant discourse. So pervasive and enduring is colonialism's triumphant self-description of its own career that we frequently fail to identify the

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[2] Having already used the word 'postcolonial' several times over, I would wish to put in a clarification here, particularly since this is the chapter where I lay down my problems with the argument. In my use of the term postcolonial, I refer, always, to those critiques of science in the Indian context that access the term postcolonial as a position, as a geo-political situation, and as a vantage point of critique. This may look like ghost-chasing, given that the standing of postcolonialism as a school in several humanities departments seems to have run its course. Yet, while the criticality of postcolonialism in general may have run its course, this is still the space and vantage point from which critiques of science in India continue to be made. More important, this may be a comment on the moribund condition of "critique" itself, a comment that I take on board as more to the point, and that I try to address in this chapter – hence the obsession with the hybridity framework and its careers in histories of science. This is also my argument against a simplistic historicization of critique, which is a different concern from what becomes critical, and when.

subterfuges, paradoxes, distortions, and failures that punctuated its exercise
of power.

<div align="right">(Prakash 1999: 19)</div>

The last two hundred years have witnessed a shared, conflict-ridden
relationship between Western science and modern India. While Western
science played a crucial role in constituting the identity of modern India, it
has itself been transmuted and redefined in the process.

<div align="right">(Chakrabarti 2004: 1)</div>

The journey of science from Europe to colonial India was one from
metropolis to periphery, and thus the displacement of science through
peripheral experiences basically implies questioning the terms of the centre
by the periphery … in what ways can the periphery, if it essentially continues
to remain the periphery, alter the terms of the centre?

<div align="right">(Chakrabarti 2004: 1-2)</div>

The study of the knowledge forms of non-Western societies is a rapidly
emerging research field that could have a lasting impact on the disciplinary
history of science. Long marginalized by positivist and triumphalist histories
of science, the history of non-Western knowledge forms presents
opportunities for rethinking the discipline.

<div align="right">(Raina 2003: 2)</div>

I propose to discuss, in the next three sub-sections, three major arguments on
colonial hegemony that stem from vastly different positions, yet carry a common
discontent with explanations of colonialism offered hitherto. The 'modernist' take I
refer to is well exemplified in Pratik Chakrabarti (2004), who places his "historical
elucidation of science in modern India" [blurb] as a comment on the nature of the
relationships between history and science, against existing arguments of *Orientalism
and its negotiations*, and on the framework of *hybridity* within which a lot of the

discussion of these negotiations takes place, both among historians of science and critiques of colonialism.[3]

For transmission, against negotiation

For Pratik Chakrabarti, the object of inquiry is Western science – a science that underwent transformation in its travels in the Indian context, but that was, at the moment of entry, Western science. The task, for him, is to trace the trajectories of this travel – of Western science in modern India – a task that is expected to throw light on the structures of its hegemony in the space of the colonized, through an analysis of "how its cognitive content was linked to the social and cultural grid of its practice in a colony" (Chakrabarti 2004: 26). As he puts it, "Science may in a particular location be isomorphic in both structure and form with similar knowledge forms elsewhere, but its essential character lies in its specific manifestations, which are imbricated in the nature of the relationship between the two zones" (4). While this might mean, at one level, that the object of inquiry becomes visible only in the moment of its engagement with the other, through relationality, the study of travel in this case (and even a making visible here is the empiricization of an allegory) presumes an *originary isomorphosity*, and proposes to chart the 'cultural specificities' of those isomorphic idioms in 'particular locations'. This approach promises to step out of the Orientalist rational-intuitive binary of West-East relationships that a usual reading of different sciences in different cultures promotes, for such an approach is "inadequate for understanding the experience of science within the non-West" (3). It also challenges

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[3] I will offer a detailed discussion of the hybridity framework in the latter part of the chapter. For now, it is relevant to state that hybridity spelt, for all parties disgruntled with earlier explanations of colonialism, a different account of hegemony in general – one where the dominant was not completely triumphant, now or ever, but held resistance embedded in its core. Homi Bhabha, in his *Location of Cultures*, provided a detailed delineation of this framework in 1993, and most postcolonial scholars have since taken off from his work. I show, as the chapter progresses, the ways in which these borrowings have significantly departed from the actual theoretical foundations of Bhabha's articulation.

the opposite – the Needhamian[4] ecumenical view of science as universal end to different paths. It proposes to do this by concentrating on the "social, political, and cultural spaces within which Western science was *transmitted* and absorbed in the Indian colony" (10, italics mine). It relies for its information on the history of the establishment of science institutions, the trajectories of individual scientists, the examination of nationalist historiographies, and colonialist accounts of "native science". In his own words, Chakrabarti's work tries to "locate the links between the social context of science and its cognitive content" (25).

Chakrabarti goes on to chart a thick history of what he sees as the subtle shifts from a "colonial science", to a "national science" that was not anti-colonialist but aspired to be science, to a "nationalist science" that made comparative claims to Western standards and that eventually proposed original and prior scientific status for itself – a journey best embodied in the delineation of J.C. Bose's personal trajectory as a scientist and then a nationalist. Chakrabarti describes these shifts, tracing the history of institutions like The Bengal Asiatic Society, The Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science (IACS), and the Bose Institute. For Chakrabarti, however, this is not a history that can be traced in isolation in the "colony", his definition and articulation of which we will come to later. Going by his thesis of isomorphicity, what is undertaken in 1784 with the establishment of the Asiatic Society by William Jones, is the "quest for 'truth'" (30), a quest following on, and in consonance with, the rise of "'truth' in seventeenth-century England" (29) and its associations with science as "the dominant form of truth" (29) which itself "can be traced to Enlightenment thought, which positioned truth and reality as basic values alongside humanism" (29-

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[4] I will provide a detailed picture of the Needhamian account of science in the next section, saying for now that simply put, the Needhamian account proposes a view of the universality of science, arrived at through different routes in different cultures.

30). I have looked briefly at this imputation to Enlightenment thought of the said values in an earlier chapter, and will not go into it here. What was happening in the colony, then, was the "obsession to find meaning in a strange and complex world" (31) – namely, the Orient. Here begins Chakrabarti's analysis of the role of the Asiatic Society and his description of "colonial science" as a pursuit that combined the unique features of marginality (of methods deployed in a space where conventional methods were not feasible), liminality (scientific work being conducted in remote areas) and individual creativity. The individuals in question were, of course, 'men of the Empire', often Company officials, working in a "distant land", separated from the home community. This combination best describes for Chakrabarti the impulse inhering in science "for colonial investigators [as] the pursuit of intellectual conquests over new territory" (31) – either in the shape of verifiables that confirmed metropolitan hypotheses, or as fallibles that forced new hypotheses. It is also "the journey of scientific wisdom from center to periphery and back, the European study of non-Europe." As an obvious corollary, this apparently entailed a "kind of dislocation or disorientation … [of] European knowledge [that] had to establish itself in a distant land that promised only the unknown and the undefined" (33). And it is also here that Chakrabarti traces what he sees as the fundamental link between Orientalist knowledge and the socio-cultural aspects of scientific research in the colony, in that "both were attempts by disciplines of European post-Enlightenment epistemology … to come to terms with the other", as also in that "both projects [had a] … critique of Eurocentrism, which of course existed with a typical Orientalist paternalism towards the Orient" (43). Examining work specially in geology and meteorology under the aegis of the Society in this period, Chakrabarti makes a case for this critique having been hosted, articulated and codified in the Asiatic Society; "[s]cientific works under

the Asiatic Society … [arguing] that the study of nature of Asia would contribute crucially to Europe's understanding of the earth" (44).

What then happened to colonial science as Chakrabarti defines it? What came of its claims to challenge and thereby enrich the European episteme; put differently, what of its critiques of Eurocentrism? More importantly, what of its position vis-à-vis Orientalism? In Chakrabarti's analysis, the attempts to answer the second question are more forthcoming. The very vast tracts of land available to geological survey, for example, or the varieties of weather, or the multitude of illnesses, automatically seems to have contributed, in terms of data, enough evidence to confirm or challenge existing metropolitan hypotheses. Rather than extension, diffusion, or dislocation simply resulting in hybridity, Chakrabarti sees in the project of colonial science the impulse to come up with findings that would enrich European science. What is important for him in his analysis of centre-periphery relations is the complicated routes by which peripheral findings influence the centre. While the liminal nature of colonial science allowed the colonial space, in his opinion, to actually function as the true site of flowering of European science,[5] the route back seems contingent on, well, contingency, or at the very least the contingent status at the centre, determined by consensus, of the particular themes on which work in the colony had been undertaken, as he demonstrates in the case of the acceptance among prominent metropolitan physicists of J.H. Pratt's geodetic theory. The possible hybridization through transmission, then, of colonial science, while being more than an extension, needs to be read, apparently, as useful or otherwise in the light of its journeys back, and this is what Chakrabarti attempts to do.

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[5] "Orientalism and liminality suggested to colonial scientists that it was actually in this Indian tropical site that science might attain its true enlightenment" (59).

The journey back does not end here, however. The changing relationship that Chakrabarti sees between colonial science and Orientalist knowledge, or between the study of "nature in Asia" and "culture in Asia", also impinge upon the fate of science in the colony, although there is more often than not a conflation in his work between Orientalist studies and Orientalist knowledge. Colonial science as described by him is at first an enterprise that is, in consonance with its European counterpart, attempting to break from tradition; it is a new science, Baconian in approach, product of the Enlightenment, and its brief in the colony is to "make a new and fundamental statement about the natural world *in* the Orient.", as also to reform society (61, italics mine). In such a climate, the individual creative colonial scientist, working rigorously amidst deprivation and privations in the colony, was part and parcel of the impulse, indeed its shining example. The divorce that Chakrabarti points to between science and commerce in such a scenario was also destined to contribute to the disinterested image of science. But the movement towards professionalization and increasing specialization in European science (a move that was not replicated in the colony where a lot of the work had begun looking esoteric and commercially unviable) transformed the *creative colonial scientist into an amateur*. As the 'big' picture of colonialism changed from the late 1700s to the mid and late-1800s, as hegemonic associations between the colonial state, commerce and scientific research strengthened, and as, simultaneously, Orientalist studies consolidated as a discipline in the Asiatic Society and other places,[6] colonial science failed, in Chakrabarti's opinion, in its dream of an alternative centre for science. A universalist position on science that had helped to shape colonial spaces not merely as happy receptacle but as happy participant for an enrichment of European *science* did just that – it enriched

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[6] This being part of its founding brief.

European science, failing to consolidate its critique of Eurocentrism. As colonialism progressed, that mission of enrichment too became a non-reality. In other words, colonialism had frustrated the project of science in the colony.

Post-mid-nineteenth century, however, colonial science attempted a reversal of fortunes. Driven partly by the commercial needs of the colonial state, partly by the logic of science in Europe as a socially useful, practical need-based enterprise, scientific research from the mid nineteenth century "revolved around three contesting points: between applied and pure research; between industrialism and romanticism; and between colonialism and universalism" (99). Chakrabarti's analysis of the last mentioned contestation, between colonialism and universalism, is made through a further study of institutions like the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science (hereafter IACS) and the Bose Institute, in the context of "shifts in Indian, British, and international economic trends … the introduction and expansion of railways in India, the growing imbalance of payments of England with other industrialized countries, the First World War, and linkages within scientific research and industrialization" (99). Colonial science was now adopting postures of independence from the metropole, aided by the later scientists' standing in the metropole, as also the administrative changes in the colony – "the 'New Industrial Policy' of the Government of India during 1900-20" (105) under Lord Curzon, who insisted that the government encourage free enterprise. This new colonial science still carried the insistence that science "in India had the same promise as in Europe" (117), but had altered the terms of its relationships with utility and technology as the legitimate handbrothers of science, proposing to "complete the 'economic cycle' … in [and for] India" (119) rather than only use the colony as the source of raw material and ready markets. The argument for applied research in the colony that stemmed from this,

however, met with disapproval at the hands of the colonial administration. Rather than read this as a straightforward imperialist position, we would do well to recall that the argument for applied research, by Holland and others, also rested at least partly on the notion of the rich natural resources and the richer skill of ancient India in mining these resources – an argument at least as Orientalist as the opposite one that derided the weak natural world that was the colony, or the accompanying one that described the "native culture" in similar fashion. And it is this situation that Chakrabarti hints at in his delineation.

The space evacuated by a failed colonial science gets taken up, in Chakrabarti's analysis, by what I will call a national science, and then a nationalist science. Continuing with his theme of isomorphicity, and concentrating on the "practice of science in a colonial world" (149), Chakrabarti traces the history of the IACS that was established in 1876 with the intent of "cultivation of and research in science by Indians, [and] … the popularization of science within the general populace" (150). Mahendra Lal Sircar, the founder, proposed science as the guiding spirit for political nationalism, saying in fact that "the best way, in my humble opinion, to do this [achieve nationhood] is not by platform blustering and newspaper invectives, but by substantial achievement in the field of intellect" (Sircar 1899, quoted in Chakrabarti: 151). This spirit had an epistemic as well as moral component that was essential for fashioning and fostering, in turn, the national character.[7] At the same time, this spirit was alien to the national; if at all there was a greatness and scientificity to India's past, it was certainly not in evidence, the present having been

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[7] "'For that interpretation of national life, past and present, without which the citizen cannot rightly regulate his conduct, the indispensable key is – Science. Alike for the most perfect production and highest enjoyment of art in all its form, the needful preparation is still – Science. And for purposes of discipline – intellectual, moral, religious – the most efficient study is – Science … Necessary and eternal as are its truths, all science concerns all mankind for all times'" (Sircar 1899, quoted in Chakrabarti: 151).

taken over by superstition and institutionalized religion. It was therefore essential to cultivate such a spirit, in the austere mode of Comte's positivism, in order to build a self-reliant national character. The building of this character was associated, in Sircar's mind, with 'man-making', but through the physical task of doing, or cultivating, science. The kind of science being spoken of here was pure science, not the technical education that later colonial science had attempted to promote,[8] and the pursuit needed to be free from government. What was the nature of this freedom? "'We should endeavour to carry on the work with our own efforts, unaided by government, perhaps more properly speaking, without seeking its aid. Now this does not mean that we will not accept any aid from that quarter if it comes to us unasked, and unhampered with conditions and restrictions, excepting the all important condition of the continuance of the Association. Let me not be misunderstood. I want freedom for the institution. I want it to be entirely under our own management and control. I want it to be solely native and purely national'" (Sircar 1976, quoted in Chakrabarti 2004: 162). A freedom, then, that contributed to self-reliance, that signalled maturity; not an independence that was anti-colonialist in its impulse, a point on which national scientists like Sircar split from 'political nationalists' like Bankim.

But this very alienness of science to the Indian, and its attachment to the West, while being worthy of emulation, had its problems. A 'Western materialism' in currency after the loss of spirituality[9] was inadequate as a way of life, just as an

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[8] "Science had a higher and nobler claim than the narrow, utilitarian, Benthamite one … Do not confound Science with technical education in the industrial arts … let every step of science education be explained by experiments, for science to be effectually learnt should be learnt in the laboratory …" (Sircar 1976, quoted in Chakrabarti 2004: 161).

[9] Thus reviving this organic tradition from within the West was part of the picture – work by neo-vitalists like Geddes etc. would be consonant, in this frame, with Bose's work; by helping " 'voiceless' plants speak, Bose appeared to restore the lost mysticism of science, to 'humanize' its mechanical

'Eastern spirituality' devoid of any material input was. Comte's positivism was therefore to be critiqued, and a judicious mix of Eastern spirituality and Western materialism alone could provide the answer. That Sircar's project of this complicated sharing of the spiritual and material failed to make the grade either in nineteenth century Western science or in science as practised in the colony, is what Chakrabarti brings to our notice.

By the time of P.C. Ray, C.V. Raman, J.C. Bose and others, however, science was no longer an alien object to the national. By Chakrabarti's account, there was by this time a strong reading of ancient Vedic science followed by a break in the Pauranic period when caste rigidities and institutionalized religion took over, and the impulse to construct a monistic world view in the service of science was in place. Somewhat in antagonism to Ashis Nandy's psychobiography of J.C. Bose (1995), Chakrabarti poses Bose's journey as the metaphor for this impulse, charting the travel from a scientist coming from the Orient but nonetheless "heard in the highest institutions of metropolitan science" (185), who turned into a symbol for Indian nationalism, proved that "Indians could also successfully conduct research in science" (187), and then into a categorical symbol of an 'Indianness' represented in monism.[10] Bose, and others, "could now play the role of that 'Indian' which the Europeans as well as the nationalists expected him to play" (200).

And placed thus, this nationalist science could position itself as able to critique the West, not from within European science, but from within Hindu or Indian science

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worldview" (211). And among the nationalists, there was P.C. Ray who talked of the possibility of a "civilizational synthesis and the universality of science" (222), further drawing connections between ancient Greece and India.

[10] "This also explains Bose's transformation from a physicist in 1896-7, to a plant physiologist, and then to an 'Indian' scientist by the 1900s [who worked on] the demonstration of the universality of irritability in all living tissues." (203-9)

as the primary system. As Chakrabarti shows in the case of P.C. Ray, once ancient Hindu science could be shown to not only exist but also as prior in antiquity to ancient Greek science (the avowed fountainhead of European science), this case was bolstered in other ways too. And this was what the P.C. Ray of *Hindu Chemistry* took up as his primary task. It is the essentialization of tradition in these attempts that Chakrabarti points to:

> Within both camps, tradition was defined in terms of classical, ancient Vedic wisdom. The debate was on whether it was superior to or parallel with science. It was through such a characterization that the cognitive content of science ultimately came to terms with that 'tradition'. Thus, while science continued to be debated on and rejected in the popular arena, a museumized tradition increasingly posed the lesser threat to its cognitive status. This shaped the course of the 'other' science of Bose which attempted to infuse the two – which he sought to realize through the Bose Institute.

(Chakrabarti 2004: 214)

The Bose Institute, then, was a space that "would realize the possibilities [both] of science and the regeneration of India" (214). It was through the latter that Bose attempted to do the former. And in Chakrabarti's opinion, it was this pressure of 'Easternness' that "paralysed him qua scientist" (217).

Let us try to engage with Chakrabarti's work on an alternative understanding of Western science's hegemony in colonial India. Having set down his elucidation of "Western science in a colonial world" [blurb], it is now possible to step back and trace the chief points of his argument. For this, we also need to ask who his interlocutors are. Chakrabarti places his "historical elucidation of science in modern India" [blurb again] as a comment on the nature of the *relationships between history and science*, against existing arguments of *Orientalism and its negotiations*, and on the framework

of *hybridity* within which a lot of the discussion of these negotiations takes place, both among historians of science and critiques of colonialism. Simply put, Chakrabarti ranges his readings against those of Ashis Nandy (1995), Gyan Prakash (1999), and Dhruv Raina (2003), who commit, according to him, the cardinal error of concentrating on negotiation as resistance to hegemonic structures of Orientalism and colonialism, and who therefore, in his opinion, present nationalist scientists as resisters, the popular as appropriating and re-defining Western science in the colony (Prakash), and contingent trajectories of science as having a mutative effect on the practice of science itself (Raina). For Chakrabarti, the more important task is to show, for one, that the starting points *and agendas* for science in the metropole and the colony were the same, or at least analogic. For another, Orientalist knowledge of the 'culture of Asia' and scientific knowledge of the 'nature of Asia' had differing trajectories that converged later, and he displays an unwillingness to concede that the discourse of science in India could be easily understood or subsumed within the discourse of an essentialised cultural difference – a position and a problem that he sees enshrined in "culturalists" like Nandy and Prakash. It is this failure of subsumption that Chakrabarti sees in all his studies of scientists, institutions, and documents, and it is in their individual and collective attempt at the convergence (of science and culture) that he sees the 'failure' of science in the colony. In seeing such a failure, however, he states that he is not taking the Needhamian ecumenical approach to a history of science, but simply doing a reading of the practice vis-à-vis its claims. Chakrabarti expects an avoidance of both these positions – the Needhamian and the cultural essentialist – to guarantee him a better reading of hegemonic Western science as well as its embedded resistances. For him, this understanding of Bhabha's framework of hybridity where resistance is often at the core of hegemony is the useful

one, as against Prakash and others who have applied it in order to make resistance appear decisive.

For dislocation, for hybridity, through translation

I will address Chakrabarti's readings of these interlocutors only inasmuch as they have a bearing on the debates in question and are relevant for a valid critique of science. 'Science' as "a metaphor for the triumph of universal reason over enchanting myths" (Prakash 1999: 3) does indeed seem the sweeping statement that Chakrabarti bills it, and a readiness to see "the distorted life of the dominant discourse" (19) may seem a suspicious failure to see the dominance of that discourse. Chakrabarti certainly does us a service in approaching even nationalist science in its plural and contradictory moments. What Prakash does, however, is actually bolster some of Chakrabarti's own arguments with some differences. He makes a case, for instance, for how the nationalists articulated an Indian modernity as "*irreducibly different*, [one whose] modern configuration … must reflect India's *unique and universal* scientific and technological heritage" (Prakash 1999: 7). The pressure for both uniqueness and universality we have already seen in Chakrabarti's reading of P.C. Ray and others; how Prakash differs significantly in his reading of the success of nationalist efforts is to see them as making a call to be irreducibly different. To that end, Prakash presents the nineteenth century as an undivided period, or more precisely, P.C. Ray as the "dislocated destination" in whom the search for originary antiquity, Hindu science, and universality can be fairly read. In that sense, Chakrabarti's complaint of Prakash's having ignored the "journey" would stand.

But what exactly is Prakash doing here? Against classical readings of colonialism's power as a triumphant single narrative,[11] as well as against the simple counter-argument that "the reality of heterogeneity explodes the myth of the homogenous nation rooted in archaic Hinduism" (90), Prakash sets out to examine "the story of the powerful colonial transformation of the elite and an account of the elite's emergence as a force that called into question the terms of colonial dominance. It would be a mistake to characterize science's divided, hybrid authorization as a story of the cultural adaptation of Western knowledge to Indian conditions. "Adaptation" does not capture the contention and contingency of "translation"; it fails to recognize the renegotiation of knowledge and power forced upon Western science because its hegemony could not be established through imposition. To achieve hegemony, science was compelled to disavow dominance; it had to implode prior conceptions of Western and Indian identities and express itself in the media of the Hindu atman. What was remarkable in this process was not the strange content … but the estranged position from which the authority of modern knowledge was enunciated" (83). To make this clear, Prakash uses the notion of hybridity, by which he refers to "the implosion of identities, to the dispersal of their cultural wholeness into liminality and undecidability. Such a notion of a hybrid, non-originary mode of authority is profoundly agonistic and must be distinguished from the concept and celebration of hybridity as cultural syncretism, mixture, and pluralism. Hybridity, in the sense in which I have used it … refers to the undoing of dominance that is entailed in dominance's very establishment. It highlights cracks and fissures as necessary features of the image of authority and identifies them as effects of the disturbance in the discourse that the "native" causes. … Hybridization and translation addressed the

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[11] "Colonial exploitation as the model for the progress of science, capitalist colonialism as the accumulation of knowledge – such was the representation of history in discourse" (67).

relationship between languages and subjects positioned unequally" (84). This, for Prakash and others working at postcolonial reconstructions, constituted the primary critique of modernity as residing entirely in the West.

This is exactly what Chakrabarti draws from Bhabha,[12] and his reading of culturalism in Prakash is not in order simply because, among other reasons, it is through the examination of "science's cultural authority", the process of significations, that Prakash establishes the hybridity argument. He demonstrates the argument in what I will call as hybridity-in-process, and I propose that it is actually this demonstration, rather than culturalism, that is problematic.

It is useful to follow Chakrabarti's impulse and not his insight into the problem with hybridity. In his own approving reading of Bhabha, Chakrabarti rightly sees hybridity as a condition where resistance is at the constitutive core of hegemony. His problem is in the apparently self-evident and decisive character of resistance that Prakash gleans from hybridity. Going back to the question of what this collective exercise is about, that is, producing an accurate rendition of the hegemonic in order to be able to move towards a counter-hegemonic position, I submit that the problem is not the one of "syncretism, mixture, and pluralism" that Prakash distances himself from. The problem is that hybridity sees hegemony as fractured rather than monolithic – a useful rendition – but also as structured and all pervasive.[13] Given such a reading,

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[12] "the strength of his ideas lies particularly in their ability to locate a continuous mutation and immanent critique within Orientalist discourse. Thus, resistance can be located within the hegemonic site itself and often unexpectedly at the very core of it. The very enunciation of it as a discourse of power was through dislocations, constant loss, and gain of authority" (Chakrabarti 2004: 241).

[13] Using the framework, Prakash presents both colonialism as a discourse that had to present itself from within the particular and that exercised power through such an estrangement, as also nationalism as a fragmented discourse that seeks 'nationness' through rationality and universality yet is disturbed by the unresolved figure of the subaltern.

it is obvious that the only direction to go from here, for Prakash, is governmentality,[14] and indeed he does so, bringing in the notion of the colonial state as a governmental one, one that worked with a pastoral form of power, a "knowledge and discipline of the other … [that] was positioned as a body of practices to be applied upon an alien territory and population … [with] the establishment [for instance] of new forms and institutions of medical scrutiny; population statistics, sanitation campaigns, and vaccination drives [that] brought a medicalized body into view" (10). Apart from this understanding of governmentality and its relevance to the colonial state, which is beyond the brief and scope of this thesis, this is where my chief question to the concept of hybridity lies. In this hybridity-as-process framework logically extended, any counter-hegemonic exercise, however fraught, is problematic, because it is through contingent negotiations, rather than an ideological positioning vis-à-vis power, that the built-in response to hegemony comes. In fact, following Bhabha, hybridity is a thorough and *ongoing* description of reality that actually refrains from formulating a theory of hegemony, and this shows up in Prakash's own difficulty in understanding the process itself as more than "an unequal positioning" – a consideration of power that hybridity is bound to disallow. Prakash of course sets up a meaning-power coalition in order to insert hybridity into hegemony, talking as he does about the cultural authority of science as his primary concern, but even so, he fails to make clear how the arbitrariness that must necessarily be the character of hybridity finds closure; how the "native" becomes, each time, the discordant note of dominant discourse. In such a case, the multiple dislocations it shows up fails the

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[14] "[t]he state … according to Ranajit Guha, was "an absolute externality" in colonial India, [therefore] science was not encumbered with the task of constructing hegemony" (9-10).

implicit promise of the *postcolonial*[15] that it sets up, of being able to offer a theory of the workings of power *that can suggest a response and an after to it*, commonly named resistance.[16]

There is another related and explicit promise that is not met here. Prakash proposes to undermine, through the hybridity framework, the binaries of East/West and colonizer/ colonized; notions of an Indian modernity that flows from the West and that acknowledge the latter as the apparent seat of modernity are unacceptable to him. The isomorphicity framework that Chakrabarti works with, therefore, is untenable; Prakash insists, instead, on a constitution of Western modernity through empire, although the only evidence he has to offer in this light is that of the "*simultaneity* of the formation of Western scientific disciplines and modern imperialism" (12). An Indian modernity, he argues, is constituted through the insertion of discord into the discourse of the West in the colony, and nationalists working toward a notion of Hindu science were, in colonialism, the chief proponents. Following on the general theme of hybridity, Prakash is clear that this was not a nationalism that proposed naïve nativism drawing in a linear way upon ancient Vedic science; on the other hand, there is a sense of *repetition rather than return* to classical Vedic science, the attempt being *to access anteriority rather than origin*. We will not go into the merits of this particular formulation here, being more concerned with what it does to the binaries in question. While this, like Chakrabarti's reading of early colonial and nationalist challenges to Eurocentrism, does contest the conventional

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[15] What is post about the postcolonial? If a going beyond, what would that involve? This is the real question, following on my examination of the hybridity framework, that I seek to ask of this set of critiques.

[16] It would be interesting here to note actor-network theories like those of Latour, that grapple with a somewhat similar problem – bringing in arbitrariness, but not clear on what provides closure. For Latour, however, hegemony is not the kind of problem Prakash and others set up for themselves, although he does refer to networks of power.

geographical anchoring of West/ East or colonizer/ colonized, the more ambitious promise – of dismantling the *concepts* – fails. In the face of this failure, the category 'Western science' that continues to be used also fails to find anchor, and continues to attach itself to conventional geographies. With the combined failure of the promise of counter-hegemony and the promise of a conceptual challenge to East/ West binaries, the setting up of possibilities for a valid critique of science is thin at best. Prakash and others attempt to 'show up' Western science *against its own claims* for what it 'really is' – as constituted through imperial practices – and thereby challenge the self-image of geographical anchoring or homogeneity; this anchoring, nevertheless, is the starting point in their accounts too. They are unable to follow up on the construction of the category Western science, a task Merton – Europe's rough equivalent of Indian historians of science – does at least in part, despite his externalist leanings.[17]

Or it is in the failure of these promises, perhaps, that another possibility comes alive. A possibility that brings back (not to rehabilitate) the unfashionable binary albeit in even more unfashionable shapes, and proposes a standpoint critique of science.

Can there be a Needhamian history of science in India?

> The study of the knowledge forms of non-Western societies is a rapidly emerging research field that could have a lasting impact on the disciplinary history of science.

> (Raina 2003: 1)

For Raina, the "study of knowledge forms of non-Western societies" was an exercise through which the questions posed from these spaces could be, and indeed

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[17] The reference to Robert Merton here is as the founder of the SSK school of science studies, one of the first to introduce the concept of externalist accounts of science (see Chapter 1).

were, taken back to interrogate Western science itself. Starting from a critical examination of the earlier view of science as triumphalist (Western) narrative that marginalized non-Western knowledges, Raina charts the arrival of the reflexive turn in the last three decades of the twentieth century that inflected the work of history-writing, of the study and representation of the Orient, and of science studies. Parallel to the exercises of internal reflexivity that this engendered, a number of "reverse commentaries", as Raina puts it, were being put in place – critiques from the vantage point of marginalized "non-knowledges", critiques of colonialism that displaced the centrality of Europe, and feminist challenges – from within and outside the West – to the Western philosophical canon. "The dialectic of enlightenment had now [apparently] moved towards the critique of modernity and its most potent symbol, science" (2003: 3).

It is the ways in which this critique of modernity/ science developed and inflected the writing of histories of science that are Raina's concern, and it is his conclusions in this regard that are relevant here. Raina sees this turn as analogical to the turn toward co-constructivism of scientific knowledge and culture in SSK in the North, and he hopes to bring the reflexive account to bear on historiographies of natural science in India. As different from Chakrabarti (who is attempting a social history of science in India) and Prakash (who is attempting to see the cultural hegemony of science), Raina sees himself as providing a "social epistemology of the science and history archive on India" (1). He concentrates on "how Indian scientists and historians of science engaged with the sciences of India … [w]hat … they inherit[ed] from the Occidental discourse about the Orient and where … they depart[ed] from the former" (2), trying to trace, in the often insubordinate nationalist writing of the history of science in India, a series of "idea hybridizations at the

periphery" (185) that implied a possible critique of Western science. The value of such an exercise for him is in the "contest[ation of] the script of science as a cultural universal, … counterpos[ing] it with a more polycentric model of the growth of several scientific traditions …" (10) – a task taken up by postcolonial historiography, which he characterizes against Eurocentric models in the following manner (Raina 2003: 12).

Civilizational presuppositions/ theories of knowledge	*Eurocentrism*[18]	*Post-colonialism*
Theory of history	Isolationist	Multicultural
Theory of science	Transcendent	Contextual
Theory of transmission	Arrow of influence points eastward	Multidirectional arrows of influence constituting a network

It is this notion of the contextual nature of science that Raina sees as the reason why a social epistemology such as his will be useful in contributing towards a *transformative* critique of science, through a pointer at the relation between context and cognitive content. The breakdown of the 'Big Picture' of science afforded by such approaches, Raina is convinced, will change the way we think about science. In fact, Raina asks the question of connections between cognitive content and social or historical context, in order to answer that in the interests of better science, they may

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[18] Eurocentrism is defined by Raina following Harding as – "'a set of institutional, societal, and civilizational arrangements for distributing scarce economic, social and political resources … [a]t the individual level … overt and covert Eurocentric beliefs and practices …" vectored through institutional Eurocentrism in academia, through societal Eurocentrism in the cultural sphere, and through philosophical Eurocentrism at the level of meaning (Raina 2003: 25).

be better seen in conjunction.[19] The exercise will, if we follow his train of argument, also provide tools for "some version of an ecumenical picture of the advance of science … a notion of situated universality, while recognizing the possibility that politics intrudes into the process of knowledge production" (202-3), although he points to problems with the Needhamian ecumenical version. Does this mean that he is skeptical of the possibility of a global narrative for science? His larger project, the history of the history of science, as he puts it, is premised on the belief that both global turns in the sociology and philosophy of the sciences, as well as the very visibility of actors outside the mainstream of science – named alternative, different, or marginal – will alter the course of the history of science as a discipline, weakening its positivist tendencies, strengthening objectivity through inclusion, and producing a more robust global account. The task, for him, is to help this happen.

'Post-colonialism', for Raina, constituted, along with multiculturalism, the chief external factors that challenged and altered the trajectory of the history of science as a discipline. Flagging post-colonialism as "an address marking the era after the end of British colonial rule" (197), Raina marks the insubordinate nationalist re-writing of the history of science, and not only of the non-West, as both challenging the Eurocentric impulse of earlier streams and taking up the question of why the scientific revolution failed in India. In either case, "greater attention came to be placed on the impact of colonialism on the knowledge systems of India, and the institutionalization of modern science in the country" (197). It was in such a setting

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[19] "[T]he social theory of science … dissolves the distinction between the social and the cognitive, and retains the possibility of a revolutionary critique and revision of scientific practice. Social epistemology on the other hand entertains the possibility of dialogue between the scientific community and the community of sociologists of science who apparently threaten the former. … The present work does not strictly distinguish between social theory and social epistemology, but since it is positioned as one variant of the post-colonial theory of science, it is programmatically proximate to the social theory of science" (7-8).

that issues of transmission – i.e. transmission becoming an *issue* for simple centre-periphery models – begin to occupy centre-stage, and we have already seen the breadth and scope of this impulse in the work of Chakrabarti and Prakash. It follows that straightforward models of transmission of Western or modern science, from West to east in a centre-periphery fashion, with the failures being identified as those of inadequate implementation, faced challenges from this space. Basalla's (1967) diffusionist model of transmission would fall in this category.[20] This model was built on the premise that (i) modern science emerged in the nations of Western Europe (ii) a scientific revolution occurred in these nations in the seventeenth century, and that (iii) modern science subsequently diffused to non-Europe. It outlined three stages in the transmission – stage 1 in which a non-scientific society or nation provided a source for European science, stage 2 in which a colonial science developed in the colonized non-scientific society, and stage 3 in which transplantation of modern science was completed and the struggle to achieve an independent scientific tradition commenced. There was in this thesis a certain formulaic attempt to fix modern science, colonial science, etc, but geographically so. Colonial science, too, is an undifferentiated category, even geographically and constituency-wise, unclear on whether it meant settler colonies or non-settler outposts of empire. Raina recognizes this and challenges Basalla's model on this count as on several others, including its

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[20] Historian of science George Basalla, who set out his model in a paper titled "The Spread of Western Science" (1967-8). The model, being contemporaneous with economic theories of development like Rostow's, offering latecomers like the newly independent nations in the non-West a grid to frame their material, and coming at a time when the optimism residing in science was high, obviously carried legitimacy at the time it was put out (Raina 2003: 179). Basalla's model was also contemporaneous with, and may have drawn from, the center-periphery model in economics. Center-periphery is a binary framework used in economics to formulate the linkage between nations. It was presumed that the center referred to the metropolitan or developed nation states while periphery referred to the underdeveloped countries. The relationship between these was so articulated that the subordination of the periphery was ensured and a flow of surplus value to the center guaranteed. There are numerous varieties of this model, which was particularly strong among Latin American nations. While Marxists were prominent thinkers of the center-periphery models, some non-Marxists too (especially trade theorists who argued that the structure of trade was construed in favour of the center) were part of it (Chakrabarti & Cullenberg 2004).

failure to recognize the possibility of "idea hybridizations at the periphery" (185). This model was challenged in its own time too, the notable challenges coming from those subscribing to the 'cultural universal' model of science and from the transmission studies genre itself, but it informed policy and influenced early studies on science and imperialism. With Joseph Needham's work on *Science and Civilization in China* (1977) being taken up by nationalist-Marxist historians, however, the co-ordinates shifted considerably.[21] 'Scientific rationality' was not seen in this second model as a contribution of Western culture; rather, Needham offered what is called an ecumenical view, advocating the notion of science as a cultural universal.[22] The shift he made was in positing science as *internal to all* civilizations; the task for him then was one of charting ways of doing it 'other' than the Western.[23]

Already interrupting the trajectory of later postcolonial theorizing that has, despite its ambivalence and accessing of hybridity, persistently predicated its research questions on the notion of modern science as a Western European product, (Prakash 1999), homogenous in representation and translated hegemonically into 'our' idiom, then, is the implication of the Needhamian shift.[24] Stepping back a little from the postcolonial reading, we see that the Needhamian tradition itself, working with earlier epistemic definitions of science, ignoring "those scientific traditions or theories that did not join the streams leading to the growth of scientific knowledge" (Raina 2003:

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[21] Joseph Needham, chemist and historian of science.

[22] This refers to "Needham's idea that the history of science of a region was integrated with its social, environmental, and economic history" (Raina 2003: 148), and further, that "similar social processes across civilizations either promote or deter the progress of science" (150).

[23] Chakrabarti's work too would be reminiscent of this model, and Prakash steps out of it only by befuddling the temporal connection between colonial and nationalist science.

[24] Prakash and others attempt to 'show up' Western science *against its own claims* for what it 'really is' – constituted through imperial practices – and thereby challenge the self-image of geographical anchoring or homogeneity; this anchoring, nevertheless, is the starting point in their accounts too. Needham's account is, on the other hand, *premised* on a notion of science as inherently cross-cultural, and is therefore presenting a different version of reality than this starting point, in other words, delinking science from the qualifier Western.

146), merely looking for 'other' ways in which science was pursued in non-Western civilizations, was still a blow to the earlier Eurocentric models like Basalla's that were clear on the site of origin of science (the nations of Western Europe), and which only needed a theory of travel. As such, the Needhamian model was a rallying point for scholars working within proto-nationalist and nationalist frames in the 1950s; they found in it a useful foil to Eurocentric discourse on science. The Needhamian model gave them "the opportunity to legitimate modern science culturally within their socio-political orders, to reinvent cognitive connections between the practice of modern science and the cultivation of traditional knowledge …" (Raina 2003: 147). The project was taken up by a variety of positions, including nationalists and Marxist historians seeing science as a socially transformative force against obscurantism as well as a tool in the anti-imperialist struggle.

The Marxist attitude to science in India, however, also leant on another influential thinker who had a different kind of impact on notions of science, and consequently non-science or 'traditional knowledge' in India - J. D. Bernal. Bernal's *The Social Functions of Science* (1939) and his later *Science in History* (1954), coming out from within classical Marxist historiography, were to be the counterpoint to Needham's then ongoing work on the China project, and was to become the Red Book for Left organizations trying to deal with seemingly resistant attitudes to science among the 'masses' in India, as also for science policy. It was obvious to Bernal that science as a form of knowledge was Western in origin; he was more interested, however, in the impact of science on history through changes in modes of production, and the possible and desirable impact on culture[25] of a scientific method and temper,

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[25] Here we find implicit continuities between Bernal and Needham, as also with other historians of science, in whose work science as value-neutral knowledge took the shape of a moral commitment and performed the function of a reaffirmation of the West; a function that seemed to take up on the crisis of

than in any ecumenical view that could respond to this. This is not to say he was blind to the histories of imperialism and their implications for the presence of Western science in India, but he saw them as a process in decline, and the spread – or transmission – of science as a greater necessity at a time when "[t]he peoples of Asia and Africa and Central and South America are now entering, not as select elites but as masses, into the effective world of our time" (Bernal 1965: 13). In this form, then, and in the sharp separation from religion, art and magic, Bernal became the icon for the popular science movements – attacking superstition and promoting experiment – that were a major agenda on the Left of a newly independent nation, as also the frame for policy.[26]

For the Left in India, then, both Bernal and Needham became pillars of a Marxist way of thinking science. As Raina puts it, Needham was the inspiration for the "'high church' of science studies in India … whilst the 'low church' drew capital from the Bernalist one" (Raina 2003: 146). The Needhamian project was what, according to Raina, became the anchor for the theoretical work on the historiography of science in India thereafter, providing the "master narrative, to be elaborated or subverted, for subsequent research into the history of science of non-Western nations" (Raina 2003: 147, italics mine).[27] To this end, a comprehensive project to write a history of the sciences was mooted by the Indian National Science Academy (INSA) with the UNESCO in 1951. However, as Raina looks at the issues that took up space in the various science journals devoted to ferreting out such a history, what he comes

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humanism resulting from the two world wars. The two projects, then, could be seen as complementing each other in this sense.

[26] "Religion is concerned with the preservation of 'eternal' truth, while with art it is individual performance … [t]he scientist, on the other hand, is always deliberately striving to change accepted truth" (43). As such, "scientific temper" also became the counterpoint to "culture" and restrictive traditions, seen often as coincidental in these movements.

[27] As Raina puts it, Needham was the inspiration for the "'high church' of science studies in India … whilst the 'low church' drew capital from the Bernalist one" (Raina 2003: 146).

up with are a series of priority disputes, internalist accounts, studies of ancient texts that took on an antiquarian studies mode, all heavily steeped in scientism, inflected with the burden of nationalist historiography, and caught up in the internalist-externalist divide, while the commitment to the project remained rhetorical. It is as late as the 1990s that the volumes of "History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization", as part of the Project of History of Indian Science, Philosophy and Culture (PHISPC) launched by the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, edited by D.P. Chattopadhyaya, and making another effort in this direction, are to be seen. Though there was work by individual historians outside INSA, notably Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya and Abdur Rahman, in the Needhamian frame, they took different directions - excursions into the suppression of materialist traditions by later spiritual tendencies that disallowed the growth of science in India (Chattopadhyaya 1959) or a pointer to the Bhakti and Sufi traditions in India not being antithetical to scientific practice or growth (Rahman 1996, quoted in Raina 2003:148-9). An ecumenical history seeking to produce a single or coherent account of the history of science in India had, obviously then, failed, or failed to take off.

Why? In looking for answers, and in a direction away from inadequate research, the following possibilities present themselves. The project, while sensitive to questions of cultural reception, was still definitionally attached to a vision of the "centrality of modern science in contemporary culture, the founding impulse of the scientific revolution of the 17th century …" (Raina 2003: 144), in other words, the Old Big Picture of science,[28] and, in the event of there having been no scientific revolution to speak of in Indian contexts, as well as in the 'failure' of the Needhamian project here, Raina chooses to push the question further, to ask whether there can at all be

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[28] Where science is born in Western Europe through a scientific revolution.

such a history in India. The causes Raina himself identifies in the sense of a technical failure of such a history are of an all-permeating scientism that characterized the post-independent Nehruvian Indian scientific establishment that could not but present contradictions for a Needhamian history, the neutralization of the cultural import of modern science by the first generation of scientist-historians, the presence of other issues like the mode of production debates for the Marxist historians of a newly independent republic, and the amateurish nature of much of the work taken up. Marxist historians linked the suppression of materialist input from artisan cultures as responsible for the absence of the scientific revolution, and by extension, proposed that rigid caste hierarchies were the cause of the absence of the scientific revolution in Indian contexts. In asking the question today, of course, Raina suggests, there is the further difficulty of whether a global narrative will survive in today's postmodern world. It is alongside the note of the 'failure', however, that we could identify the claim to a different and perspectival form of knowing made in this field, rather than a 'different paths to the same goal' approach offered in the Needhamian model. This is a claim that never takes up the classical oppositional posture, as Nandy points out. It is also often closely intertwined, paradoxically, with Needhamian histories, as is evident in the work of Marxist historians writing on Indian science and philosophy, for instance. Further, it relies on difference as anteriority. We will keep these features in mind in coming to the case for difference in hybridity.

Raina's commitment to the Needhamian question is an epistemological one. The failure of a Needhamian history in India he sees, however, not as an epistemological question but a socio-political one; the possible solutions he sees require a transcendence of the socio-political contexts he places science within. For him, sociological relativism or contextualism should not presume a concomitant

collapse into epistemological relativism, and it is a "situatedness" that takes cognizance of the socio-political that he is attempting while retaining a commitment to a possible ecumenical account of science. In this sense, the repainting of the Big Picture he suggests leans on an externalist possibility, and is not entirely free of the externalist-internalist divide, while the revised historiography he suggests is a liberal one.

In the same light may be seen the relationship between science and politics that Raina, along with Prakash and Chakrabarti, relies on while making his arguments. The political is seen as an intrusion, welcome or otherwise, one that needs to be taken cognizance of for an adequate sociology and history of science. Raina believes that equal attention and inclusion in historiography will help set right the inequalities of positioning of metropolitan science and non-visible knowledges, just as, in his view, increasing visibility has forced attention by histories of science – a tautological stance at best. The march of historiography of science towards democracy, in Raina's scheme, seems as inexorable as it is desirable. And in such a scheme, descriptions of the hegemonic seem as redundant as critical moves towards counter-hegemony.

From hybridity to (in)difference

Let us see what would have been necessary for the hybridity framework to succeed as an enterprise in science studies in India. It is obvious that it is not only straightforward theories of dominance but also later articulations of consent generation like Nandy's "second colonization" that Prakash, Raina and Chakrabarti are hoping to nuance, in different degrees, through the hybridity framework. Put

telegraphically, the hybridity framework brings in certain attitudes – ambivalence, negotiation, contingency, difference. Ambivalence is the split at the heart of domination. Negotiation is the quality, through positioning, of resistance by the "native". Contingency refers to the arbitrariness of the closures offered by this negotiation (so it is not a simple notion of 'interest'), which is why hybridity is posed as process rather than structure. Difference is, or should be, the inability to be captured within structures of sameness. The postcolonial, in robust definition, could be the epistemo-political act of resisting the hegemonic – here the concatenation of contexts and meanings created by colonial domination, imperialism, or in other words, the act of making active difference. My thesis is a thin challenge to the hybridity framework in as much as the latter claims to provide a substrate for understanding hegemony that will then *produce a critique of the hegemonic*. For one, the descriptive framework of never-ending and arbitrary negotiations that each of these interlocutors sets up does not offer, or require, possibilities for critique. And the claim to difference that is made in this challenge to the dominant does not work. As Bhabha himself puts it:

> … the site of cultural difference can become the mere phantom of a dire disciplinary struggle in which it has no space or power. Montesquieu's Turkish Despot, Barthes' Japan, Kristeva's China, Derrida's Nambikwara Indians, Lyotard's Cashinahua pagans are part of this strategy of containment where the Other text is forever the exegetical horizon of difference, never the active agent of articulation. The Other is cited, quoted, framed, illuminated, encased in the shot/reverse-shot strategy of a serial Enlightenment. Narrative and the *cultural* politics of difference become the closed circle of interpretation. The Other loses its power to signify, to negate, to initiate its historic desire, to establish its own institutional and oppositional discourse. However impeccably the content of an 'other' culture may be known, however anti-ethnocentrically it is represented, it is its *location* as the closure of grand theories, the demand that, in analytic terms, it be always the good

object of knowledge, the docile body of difference, that reproduces a relation
of domination and is the most serious indictment of the institutional powers
of critical theory.

(Bhabha 1994: 31)

But the "active agent of articulation" is not something the hybridity framework needs to support; the difference it supports is *differánce* – comprising both difference and deferral – to talk of a constant deferral of meaning, an impossibility of fixed signifieds allotted to a signifier. Nor is that "active agent" likely to appear in the contingent negotiations that hybridity promotes. In that sense, it is hardly difference but indifference. For hegemony to be countered, or for the "active agent" to appear, "current postcolonial studies" must make possible the postcolonial promise, that is, it must define better than it has done to date what it means by each of the terms 'colonial', 'postcolonial', and the overdetermined space of 'the third' which it marks as the site of contestation. The historicist rendition currently available in postcolonial studies is hardly likely to offer closures to that contest,[29] nor, as I will examine in detail in the next chapter, will a discovery of the "active agent" as resistant empirical entity in response to science or technology.

It is here that I would like to briefly recall the Kuhnian notion of the anomaly that is part of normal or paradigmatic science. According to Kuhn, it is the transformation of anomaly to crisis that ultimately challenges the existing paradigm, instigates the work of revolutionary science, and drives the search for an alternative

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[29] "Current postcolonial studies … are overtly historicist … The 'post' of the postcolonial studies has the sense of a simple succession, a diachronic sequence of periods in which each one of them is clearly identifiable. It has a historical referent (the concrete of the colonized past) and indicates a rupture with the latter. As always a thousand schools of thought contend in postcolonial studies. But their differences count for little next to this abiding unanimity. The business of postcolonial studies is to deal with the legacy of the colonial space. From this legacy the postcolonial space breaks away as one comprised by a sovereign nation" (Chaudhury, Das and Chakrabarti 2000: 171). I have also, in Chap 4, offered a further account of why hybridity cannot explain hegemony).

paradigm that can take its place (Kuhn 1970). While disciplinary exercises in both the physical and social sciences have stressed on the notion of paradigm that Kuhn brings to the fore, it seems to be the work of pointing to the anomaly, and the crisis, that both spaces seem to have actually engaged in. In the histories of science in the Indian context, all driven by a commitment to postcoloniality, the attempt to articulate difference is very strong. Looking at them through this lens, I would suggest that the notion of difference is held forth in these disciplines as the *anomaly that is expected to do the work of crisis* in the paradigm that is Western science. This is most visible in the resistance-revolution pair of terms that is at work in histories of science and critiques of technology, and I would tentatively suggest that this is the problem with the work that the hybridity framework is put to, or expected to support – a pointer to anomaly, which is difference, and the expectation of its always already graduating to crisis, which is revolution. I will explore this in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Which brings us to the question of the political. What are the characteristics of the relationship between science and politics that the interlocutors in question bring up? For one, it is Mertonian in approach,[30] without the thoroughness that Merton brings to his analysis of the "ethos of modern science" that I have delineated in the first chapter, the result being a fairly externalist approach that, as I have mentioned, retains the internalist-externalist divide it purports to dislodge. Combined with a version of the hybridity framework that slips, in its commitment to the political, into some form of "voice discourse",[31] this approach fails to delineate clearly what it means, for instance, by contextualism. I have tried to expand on what a useful notion

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[30] Not bringing its analysis to bear on scientific method, but, as I have detailed in Chapter 1, speaking of science as a product of a politico-cultural ethos.

[31] A spontaneous voicing from a community that is in and for itself – in this case, simply put, resistance. Voice discourses have become widely visible today as modes of resistance to hegemonic structures.

of context could be, in Chapter 2. With such a notion of context, the problem with the approaches we have looked at becomes clearer. While they clearly position themselves as commentators on the sphere of the political, marking it as a special player vis-à-vis science in Indian contexts,[32] talking of institutionalization and access, relating the epistemological only in so far as referring to a power-knowledge nexus, the appeals they make of the political space remain within the externalist paradigm. When such a notion of the political produces, in the shape of active agents, "newly resurgent groups seek[ing] to appropriate the public space seeking legitimization of their claims from an imagined history" (Raina 2003: 203), these approaches are forced to either reject them as "jingoism" or celebrate the 'recalcitrant native', not to mention the multiculturalist position of inclusion that liberalist historiography has to promote. The promise of the postcolonial to induce crisis, then, fails, as I have mentioned earlier, not in the least because of the simple temporal definition it started out with.

What of colonialism? Chakrabarti has a notion of what a "colonial world" could mean – one with "a subordinate, dependent status" (25). Given the geographical anchoring of West and East that is in evidence here, colonialism too gets contextualized in a time, associated with a people (so colonial scientists were British), and often disengaged from the process and the relation. The possibility that began with the conventional reading of colonialism as an economic relation, and that Chakrabarti attempts to follow in his tracking of the journey, ultimately becomes an issue of the need to shift from transmission to translation. Translation is also a way to

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[32] "the intermixture of science and politics … is not unusual. Yet their combination in India shows something extraordinarily urgent, an intimacy that is as intense as it is fragile. Introduced as a code of alien power and domesticated as an element of elite institutions, science has always been asked to accomplish a great deal – to authorize an enormous leap into modernity… The intelligibility of the dominant political discourses rests upon this architecture of Indian modernity" (Prakash 1999: 12).

talk about the colonial relation. Translation here means, for Prakash, a process by which the colonial idiom expressed itself in the language of the 'subordinated'. Following Benjamin's position of "all translation [being] only a somewhat provisional way of coming to terms with the foreignness of languages", Prakash seems to be somewhat in consonance with a notion of translation that is current in science studies – via Kuhn and incommensurability. Kuhn discusses the concept of translation as possible only in the case of local incommensurability, where meanings are preserved across languages or theories (and here he makes connections between literary and scientific languages). Prakash, however, posits translation as an anterior rather than posterior event to difference, or different languages, as in the constitution of an "irreducibly different" modernity through the act of translation; further, it is an event made possible in situations of unequal positioning, as in the colonial relation. Similar strands of thought can be found in Chakrabarti too, and this notion ties up with their common ideas about hybridization. I will come to the possible problem with anterior difference. In the event, translation is their articulation of mutation rather than preservation of meaning across the colonial relation (science posing as myth, for instance), leaning heavily on the "provisional" aspect, offering individual agency, heady in its difficulty of closure. That, for the purposes of this thesis, is one problem I concentrate on in their use of translation.

The notion of context I have put out requires a connection between the epistemic and the political that is better than externalist, and that is more difficult than the contingencies of the hybridity framework will allow. This is the possibility I will explore in Chapter 5, through a reading and development of some strands of feminist standpoint epistemology. This reading will take up the other problem that has to do with the posteriority of difference in Prakash's formulation. Postcolonial work,

inasmuch as it is providing a substrate for critiques of science, has the notion of a sedimented anterior difference, coded culturally and in the past. The avowed position, though, and one also necessary for a critique of hegemony that is not to fall into voice discourse, is posterior – an act of interpretation that uses the 'visual tool' afforded by a positioning below the "platforms of the powerful" to 'see' the hegemonic.[33] This would go with a notion of perspective that, seen from the point of view of the dominant, is fantastic, something that distorts the 'real' picture or does not provide the whole picture, which can be afforded only from 'nowhere' as it were. But from the view of the "one below", it is what gives a picture that not only affords a completely different view of things from that which was formerly in place, but one visible only from that particular place.

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[33] The first supporting premise of this argument is Haraway's, when she suggests that being situated below the "platforms of the powerful" provides an ability to better 'see' dominant systems and other possibilities. Haraway and other feminist standpoint epistemologists have claimed marginality of situation as the best positioning for knowledge-*making* (as against a position that says knowledges of the powerless have been excluded), and have pointed to the disproportionate relationship to power as the reason for this, although they have failed to show why. Haraway solves the resulting problem for herself somewhat by saying that this positioning is only a visual tool, allowing women, for instance, to be placed as 'ironic subjects' in a system. Accepting this as a provisional premise, I have suggested in my second chapter that the act of interpretation of this positioning or perspective is what can produce, or make active, a posterior difference. I am making a shift here, from the standard Marxist topography of vertical hierarchies that made possible an "epistemology of the oppressed" – the old notion of standpoint. After the shedding of old 'isms' and vanguardist impulses in this space, there emerged an intuitive politics of contingency, building on a knowledge and an ethics possessed by the 'excluded' as it were – a radical pastoral philosophy. The shift I wish to make, somewhat parallel to Haraway, is to a picture of a re-turn from the perspective of the *excluded as resource*, not authentic or originary, but appropriate. What could possibly work is an attention to possession as momentary cognizance rather than possession of an identity; a momentary gift of ab-normal vision that could help describe the dominant in terms other than its own. The notion of a standpoint would then be the act of interpretation that puts this positioning, this transient possession, to work; not the interpretation of a place already defined. And it will have to be performed each time.

In trying to answer the question of *why the "positioning below" should enable better knowledge-making*, or else *to reject the claim*, I propose, in chapter 5, a different description of the hegemonic and its relation to the "powerless". Such a different description entails a superimposed morphology wherein the "powerful" and the "powerless" complete one circle with a common centre, rather than above and below and clearly demarcated. If the powerless is to use her 'visual tools' to tell the story of this circle, she must think of *speaking from somewhere*, but building that story from perspective, in a move away from both embodied insiderness or disinterested objectivity, with a notion of context or situatedness which is not [only] about date-time-place, but most importantly about relationality, the space between the moments "powerful" and "powerless". Such a notion induces a porosity of boundaries (of body, community), disallowing the soliloquous counter-hegemonic discourses that we have seen in the familiar political world, in the category formations of sexual minorities' movements, caste politics, women, or the subaltern. It creates attachment. It also creates separation – a *turning from within outward* of a story-teller hitherto alongside another in the same space, hitherto completing one circle with a common center.

A very short note on history and science

To reiterate a point I have been attempting to make, what does the shift from internalist histories of science written by scientists, to externalist histories written by historians without a clear idea of the cognitive content of science, entail for a critique of science? What ultimately comes, for instance, of Prakash's suggestion that Vedic science was being accessed as the discontinuous repetition of a past, or of Chakrabarti's analysis of the prior antiquity (to Greek science) of Hindu science that nationalist scientists attempted to access in order to corner universal and good science for themselves? The discontinuities between past and present that these readings show up are radical, perhaps, for classical history; for science, a discovery of discontinuities merely confirms the traditional dynamic picture of science. Which is another reason why the relationship between history and science remains externalist, just as the early 'influence' models of SSK did; even the contextualism proposed by Raina or the political connection forged by Prakash are none other than this.

After difference, what of science?

Taking a position with the victims of modern science outside the perimeters of the 'civilized' world, I shall offset myth against science and history. These victims, for good or for ill, tend to speak the language of myths; their rulers and their self-declared emancipators both speak the language of science and of history.

(Nandy 1995: viii)

Here I come to another set of questions that have animated postcolonial theorizing around science, making more explicit the case for difference, and

examining them will help me go back to the suggestions of a failure of standardization or of a Needhamian history coming out of the historiography of science in India. The questions for postcolonial theorizing, to recapitulate, have been the following – Has there been science in India? Have they been alternative sciences? What have been the relationships between Western science, modernity and the state? How have histories of colonialism inflected the politics of science? Where the *self-description* of science has moved to one of dynamicity and practice, primarily relying on real-time accounts, these strands of postcolonial thinking stay with readings of modern science as homogenizing and hegemonic, mostly calling to account a science stemming from Aristotelian philosophies; their impetus is to detail and nuance the models of translation whereby this hegemonic science was translated into 'our' idiom, and to consistently point to the binary opposition between 'their' science and 'our' myth, 'their' centrality and 'our' liminality, 'their' knowledge and 'our' experience. Some of these thinkers have then taken up the question of "alternative frames of knowledge" (Nandy 1980), to react from the vantage point of this liminality. Some have spoken of a hybridization of knowledge forms that in itself constituted the content of resistance (Prakash 1999). My point of concern in this section is to examine the case for difference made in these arguments, in order to ask the question of whether a consolidation of anterior difference will help a critique of science.

If the explicit debate in the historiography of science in India has been around science and its possible modes of transmission, this position is at the other extreme in that it denies even such a possibility.[34] It is interesting to see this argument, though, in the light of where it appears in the trajectory of the author, and how that trajectory

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[34] This also finds similarities in other spaces like Subaltern Studies where faith is pitched against reason (Guha 1997).

seems to re-enact the debates in the historiography of science in India. Nandy, a psychologist by training, first wrote *Alternative Sciences* on the life histories of two scientists, Jagadis Chandra Bose and Srinavasa Ramanujan, in 1980, with the intent of exploring the ambivalences towards modern science in their work, and their efforts to answer the questions posed by their own cultural contexts. In Nandy's exploration, however, the separation between the content and context of science was clear. Bose, felt Nandy, "projected a distinctive concept of science and gave tantalizing clues to the personalized meaning given to science by an Indian scientist" (1). It is in a later, fresh preface to a new edition of the book appearing in 1993 that Nandy takes up "a position with the victims of modern science outside the perimeters of the 'civilized' world", and it is at this juncture that Bose's biophysics in the tradition of Indian science, or Ramanujan's mathematical worldview as shaped by indigenous schools of mathematics acquire new significance for Nandy. This is a clear shift, then, from a focus on science as central in these lives, and on these life histories as reflective of 'others' relationship to that center,[35] to one where the reflections are on difference, and are more complicated. Nandy develops this latter strand more intricately in *The Savage Freud* (1995), speaking of a way of accessing the past as a vantage point for a critique of the present.

This is not, however, a shift from a comfortable insiderness in relation to Western science, to a recalcitrant outsideness. In *Alternative Sciences*, Nandy talks skeptically of the currency of a particular image of science as an unchanging, impersonal, ahistorical and acultural "mass of knowledge" (11) and as "a problem-solving technology which can cure some of the world's major ills" (10), both among a

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[35] As is evident in the title of the introductory chapter of *Alternative Sciences* – "Alien *Insiders*" (italics mine).

large section of scientists and the laity, premised on a denial of the cultural historical roots of Western science. Moving away from such a notion, he builds up a more embattled vision of science, and positions Bose as caught up in the "weary conflicts between the traditions of his society and the traditions of science, between a Westernness associated with the culture of his country's rulers and a Westernness characterizing the ruling culture of modern science, between science as an ideology and science as a gentlemanly hobby" (2); he sees Bose's attempt (and subsequent failure) "as [that of] a creative scientist who hoped to delineate for Indian scientists the outlines of a possible collective identity" (2) through his belief in the autonomy of science itself. Nonetheless, it is in science's "use as a creative process which allows the scientist and, through him, his society and times to impose a *particular meaning on personal and social existence*" (12), that Nandy sites the project of the book. In other words, the impulse here is towards a re-cognition of science through its individual practitioners. To this effect, Nandy cites Bose's reception by the leading lights of the Western scientific academy – including Einstein and Huxley – as something that can be classified as neither Orientalist nor positivist,[36] but as symptomatic of a movement toward a new philosophy of science as a shared environment of discovery, anxieties and conflicts – a subjective world.

Despite the ambivalences contained in Nandy's formulations on the possibilities offered by a "creative scientist" for shaping a collective identity for Indian scientists, or in taking the question back home to the West, Nandy is not taking up these histories in the attempt to "support an alternative Indian model of science" (14) where the referent would continue to be the Occident. Nor is he "providing a

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[36] These scientists were neither "innocent admirers of Eastern mysticism, nor were they innocent of the philosophical basis of modern science" (13).

defence for a worldview for those to whom an alien culture, such as the ancient Indian or the modern Chinese, becomes important on ideological grounds" (15). Clearly, Nandy is denying the possibility of an oppositional difference. "Fortunately," he says, "in the case of contemporary India, such an inverse relationship between an 'Indian science' and its Western counterparts is difficult to establish [and this anticipates the next section of this chapter]. The Indian 'alternative', for even the most ardent alternative-seeker, is impossibly unmanageable. It not only seems a half-dissent, it also seems inefficient, chaotic, abstruse, amorphous, and unsure of itself. Its capacity to become a dedicated opponent or even a counterplayer of any other culture is … much poorer … India's 'dissent', in this limited and peculiar sense, is less controllable" (15).

The last sentence of the section quoted above is telling. Nandy is denying the possibility of a clear-cut oppositional difference; he is also, at the same time, suggesting the impossibility of any 'dissent' being captured or co-opted into the dominant.

By the time of *The Savage Freud* (1995)*,* however, Nandy has a clearer sense of what the chaotic, amorphous half-dissents should bring. His "source of inspiration in this enterprise are those Asian, African and South American intellectuals who, whether they know it or not, are trying to ensure that the pasts and the presents of their cultures do not survive in the interstices of the contemporary world as merely a set of esoterica" (Nandy 1995: x). Hence Nandy sees the "desperate and often-pathetic attempts to return to the past in the Southern world" as a way of discovering "possible alternative bases for social criticisms of the existing order" (x). For Nandy, these bases then become sites from which to take back the question to the West. In a

chapter on "Modern Medicine and its Nonmodern Critics: A Study in Discourse",[37] he takes the reader through three spaces – one, that of what he calls "occult feminism", two, Gandhi's experiments with truth, and three, G. Srinivasamurthi's critical response to Western medicine from the perspective of Ayurveda. Occult feminism, which recognized in Western medicine and its cohort with modernity the semantic impoverishment of the feminine body, the inability of modern medicine to treat the patient as a woman of knowledge, and its inability to account for a plurality of bodies, took up on each of these strains, to push the limits of the system of modern Western medicine. Gandhi himself, says Nandy, declared that "[m]odern mechanistic civilization [and by extension modern medicine] is a disease because it violates the integrity of the body" (181). *Hind Swaraj* held modern doctors responsible for perpetuating the urban-industrial civilization by "disconnecting over-consumption from its bodily consequences" (185). In this philosophy, Nandy sees "a demand for a cognitive resistance to the gross appetite of modern science" (185). And Srinivasamurthi advances a critique of Western medicine from the vantage point of Ayurveda, centering on the "(1) the opposition between external and internal conceptions of disease [in Western medicine and Ayurveda respectively]; (2) the relationship between the disease and the patient [of great prognostic significance in Ayurveda]; and (3) the relationship between clinical and laboratory conceptions of disease [in Ayurveda and Western medicine respectively]" (189). In another chapter, "The Savage Freud: The First Non-Western Psychoanalyst and the Politics of Secret Selves in Colonial India", Nandy speaks of Girindrasekhar Bose, the 'father' of psychoanalysis in India, and his identification of the introspectional element of thinking in India as akin to psychology, but sees Bose not so much as identifying it as

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[37] Written with Shiv Visvanathan.

a(nother) method of psychology but as a method shared with the past of a community. Rather than read this "merely as an expression of nationalism … [Nandy would suggest that it] be read partly as a statement of intent, a construction of the past *oriented to* a preferred future and serving as a critique of an imperfect present" (143, italics mine).

If Nandy's polemics look to strengthen viable marginal vantage points – "remembered pasts" – not as romantic utopias but as suitable alternative bases to critique the existing social order as also the dominant categories – development, the nation-state, secularism – from which and into which critique is today allowed and co-opted, Prakash, picking up on some of Nandy's formulations, sees potentials in the negotiations between 'colonizer' and 'colonized' that disrupt the very binary oppositions they are meant to suggest. While "science's history", in his schema, is indeed seen as "a sign of Indian modernity", his interest is in "science's cultural authority as the legitimating sign of rationality and progress" (Prakash 1999: 7). This, he says, occurred through the act of translation that

> … required the displacement of the colonizer/ colonized binary and the undoing of the science / magic opposition. Indians had to be conceded the capacity for understanding if they were to be made into modern subjects, and science had to be performed as magic if it was to establish its authority. The irruption of this dislocation unleashed another, uncertain dynamic of translation, making possible both the indigenization of science and the formation of the Western-educated elite at the borderlines between cultures.
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> (Prakash 1999: 8)

Prakash is saying that Western science, Western medicine,[38] as knower of the colonized subject, functioned through its very failure to transmit completely its co-

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[38] There is a conflation happening here – between scientific and medical discourse. On the surface, it would seem that the clinical relation itself brings in the element of subjectivity to make for a uniquely individualized discipline. The point could be made that it is a unique 'technology of the self' where

ordinates. Here Prakash could be seen as re-reading as an intended failure of translation, the intended career for science in India (the British administrators' rhetoric of the 'failing of the people'). We could see, with Nandy, in the failure a refusal. Here then lies the tension in the interlocution between Nandy and Prakash that I have set up. If for Nandy the journey has been one from a personalization of science through (an Indian?) remembered past, to a marginalization or a failure to be captured in science's wondrous grasp, for Prakash it is the very indigenization of science with all its uncertainties, the failure to remain insulated from magic, that laid the foundations for its functionality.

Both Nandy and Prakash bring in the perspective of the indigenous way of knowing as 'outside' or anterior in some way – while Nandy starts from "The Alien Insiders" to science to arrive in later work at the other end, Prakash sees the production of a hybrid knowledge from the negotiations with Western science during the colonialist and nationalist moments (using, among others, the specific case of Gandhi's responses to technology). Here I reiterate my question on difference. One, if, for the production of an "irreducibly different modernity" that was constituted of science, a resistant anterior difference needs to be accessed in consolidated form, the only critique that can be made available is the "voice discourse" – resistance by a pre-given community. This is not to deny the possibility of anterior difference but to recognize its givenness and immutability. If, on the other hand, it serves as a vantage

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practice determines results more than any fixed theory. Foucault has, however (1994), shown beyond reasonable doubt that this "*restraint* of clinical discourse (its rejection of theory, its abandonment of systems, its lack of a philosophy; all so proudly proclaimed by doctors) reflects the non-verbal conditions on the basis of which it can speak: the common structure that carves up and articulates what is seen and what is said." (xix) In other words, the discourse of medicine, while hardly being a simple confrontation of a gaze and a silent body, neither is a liberal contract between "one man and another"; it simply sets up the individual in an objective frame.

point, as in Nandy, or a posterior event, it is still possible to step outside the externalist frame and address the cognitive content of science.

Further possibilities

If postcolonial theory, through its celebration of the 'recalcitrant native', proposes a rendition of the hegemonic that then lays the ground for voice discourses in subaltern studies, anti-development positions, and alternative knowledge frameworks – all critiques of modern science, the contextual liberal historiography that Raina wants to build purports to be affected by these discourses and to include other voices in a hitherto exclusive history in order to also build a better science. While the former set of positions advocates an "outside" critique of science, the latter proposes an evolutionary, collective epistemology that can be situated (socio-politically) as well as universal (epistemologically). I have suggested that the frameworks of critique in both these cases are problematic, residing as they do in the zone of the political but in an externalist frame. The issue, then, with a science critique in India, rests not in internalist histories or mainstream philosophies of science, but in the problematic development of the externalist frame itself.

Raina, in his proposal for a situated universal, also suggests that the "well-intentioned desire of scientists to hegemonize on epistemic grounds all forms of rationality and claims to truth [where t]he only form of culture … acknowledged as exemplar [is] the scientific one" (41) could well be the problem in Indian contexts. I will suggest a possible although tenuous connection here, between *scientism as a set of practices*, as *institutional power*, and *Science as hegemony*. Reading scientistic practice as well supported by institutional power, and in cohort with the mainstream

meanings of science, will provide a better picture of the hegemonic and 'enduring' image of science, as against either simple disaggregations or equally simple warnings of homogeneity. In that sense, I am proposing a critique of Science, not (only) scientism; there is no such thing as small, good, science that can be accessed once scientism has been taken care of. Science is also definitely a *disaggregated* entity, *but not non-hegemonic*, as I have attempted to delineate in my first chapter, and it is this connection that the postcolonial framework of hybridity fails to make.

This chapter, then, is an attempt to deal with the problems of the externalist framework as it developed in postcolonial reconstructions, rather than expressing dissatisfaction with the externalist or internalist frames per se. The externalist frame is not the 'outside' critique; both externalist and internalist critiques work toward better science or a radical revision of science whereas outside critiques would rather move toward a rejection of science-as-knowledge; both externalist and outside frames bring in the question of power, the latter does it more visibly. The postcolonials are actually vacillating between externalist and 'outside' positions; the impulse is 'outside', for which they fall back on an anterior, pristine, pre-given notion of difference, but the mode is often externalist, and in a way that fails to articulate the epistemo-political connection adequately – an articulation that would have to be the definitional commitment of the postcolonial.

The existing feminist frame, on the other hand, is strongly externalist, bordering on the outside, and yet it deals directly with the cognitive content of science, in some sense also upsetting the divide. It is this frame with its problems and possibilities that I propose to look at in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

CRITIQUES OF DEVELOPMENT: BETWEEN MODELS OF RESISTANCE AND REVOLUTION

Introduction

The stage for critiques of science in India has largely been set through the post-colonial framework of hybridity, as I have discussed in Chapter 3. This framework proposes to challenge the history of colonialism's triumphant progress, to question the imagined complete power of Western science over local subaltern knowledges, and to undermine the binaries that are entrenched in such a vision of power. In such a framework of hybridity-in-process, the postcolonials describe the hegemonic object of critique as a fragmented entity that *in spite of*, or precisely *through* this exercise of power, incorporates resistance in its interstices. Describing faithfully these interstices, then, as ruptures and discontinuities in the pattern of the hegemonic, has been taken up as the task, to show up the career of Western science in India, a career that operates through 'failure'. This is a task that actually purports to better describe the hegemonic. The framework does not, however, offer adequate suggestions on what might constitute the closures that could account for hegemony in this frame, nor does it explain how the description of never-ending and arbitrary negotiations that each of these interlocutors sets up offers space for a critique of the said hegemony. With respect to the vantage point of this critique, the postcolonials remain caught between an externalist framework that would want to produce a social history of science, and an 'outside' critique assuming a pre-existing, prior cultural difference rather than an anticipated one that the psychoanalytic framework that they rely on might support. I have demonstrated this in Chapter 3.

Despite the associated implicit claim to difference, these critiques have not clearly delineated the different *models* of scientific knowledge they set out, falling back either on "everyday technologies", on the pre-technological, or pointing to alternative *systems* as hosting this difference. They have then taken their critical task to be to provide faithful descriptions of these everyday technologies or other knowledge practices which somehow appear to seamlessly mesh with alternative systems, and that also exist seemingly independent of the institutional apparatuses that host propositional models.[1] This kind of theorization sits in a not uncomfortable alignment with hegemonic structures that thrive on a notion of horizontality in knowledge claims, as also on a notion of constant possibility, a contingent negotiation for power and place that characterizes this horizontality. This has as much to do with the existing temporal definitions of the 'postcolonial' (as coming *after* colonialism) as with the notions of resistance that inform the postcolonial framework.

Gender trouble has also been seen, in such a framework, as *resident interruption* in the interstices of power – and this is the place that has been encouraged for feminism in the larger Marxist metanarrative in India, as I have attempted to demonstrate in Chapter 2. This is an impulse seen specifically in critiques of mainstream development. These interstices are seen as breaks in the power exercised through institutional apparatuses; and as practices or perspectives that fail to be understood through models of Western science. A closer examination of the feminist critiques of science, or of other gender work, shows that they have largely concentrated on issues of power that *blocks access* to scientific knowledge, or on such instances of *institutional power* that exclude, through forms of violence, certain

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[1] By propositional models, I refer to the 'S-knows-that-p' model of knowledge that inheres in dominant knowledge systems, where the knower is separate from the object of knowledge, therefore neutral and objective.

knowledge practices – seen as embodied in third world women's cultural experience – that do not conform to standards of validity in the scientific community. This concentration on the questions of power and violence is also embodied in the stress on the terrors of technology that informs the critiques, or the magic of technology as it informs mainstream positions.

This chapter looks at the critiques of mainstream development as they have ranged themselves around this framework. This I do not only to look at development as a site where science and its critiques are operationalised, but primarily in order to interrogate a certain methodology of critique – political and epistemic – that is most visible in this space. The impulse of critique here is toward an overturning of the dialectic of development – a *revolutionary* impulse. The language of critique however is of *resistance* – a refusal of dominant technologies, a protection of the 'pre-technological subject', as it were, often seen as analogous to a 'pre-colonial past', or an indigenous science prior to Western science. I will present this gap at the outset in order to set out, in greater detail, the methodology that this thesis proposes as an alternative.

This, however, is hardly the time of the great 'development decades' as they had been steadily and inexorably progressing when these critiques first appeared.[2] Development as a catchword is not over; but its character as we knew it has definitely changed. Critiques of development have also shifted from the older notion of *development as all-powerful ideology*, underwritten by Science as a product of the Enlightenment, to one of *development as a practice* that is constantly being contested,

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[2] As opposed to Escobar's claim that "although the discourse has gone through a series of structural changes, the architecture of the discursive formation laid down in the period 1945-55 has remained unchanged, allowing the discourse to adapt to new conditions. The result has been the succession of development strategies and substrategies up to the present, always within the confines of the same discursive space" (Escobar 1995: 42).

tampered with, and made new. In their approach to science as underwriting development, too, then, these critiques have adopted moves to disaggregate western science, no longer wanting to address it as monolithic power. For my purposes, this means roughly categorizing the critiques as moving from a notion of strong hegemony to one of weak hegemony, a latter notion that at least aligns, if not allies with, the hybridity framework.[3]

There is the need, therefore, to engage more accurately with the phenomenon called development that *still* resides under *the name, but in all its disaggregations*, and such an impulse drives this chapter.

Mainstream development positions: from growth models to development economics and thereafter

In this section, I attempt to set down three trajectories in some detail – the shifts in meanings of development from the economic to the social, the coming into circulation of the Third World as an entity, and the shifts in Marxist-nationalist agendas in India that meshed with these trajectories. Through this exercise, I hope to lay down some of the contexts for the critiques of development and technology as they emerged in India, as also disaggregate these contexts in their delineation.

W.W. Rostow, economic theorist and historian, identifies the eighteenth century as the time of the birth of classical economics. 'Growth' as a subject of

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[3] I will clarify here at the outset that my use of the term 'hegemony', as also the use of the terms strong and weak, is completely provisional and entirely following on the often-inaccurate use of these terms in the critiques themselves. Any reference to the post-Marxist or subaltern debates around 'weak hegemony', for instance, therefore, are not relevant here, since by hegemony the development positions drawing from postcolonial theorizing most often mean only power, or generation of consent.

analysis, he states, was the chief concern for classical economists of the time, but as part of an attempt to discover and describe the "natural laws" that might govern man in society, rather than as a formal and isolated theory of economic development. In fact, economics as an academic and professional field came into being only much later, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. From David Hume and Adam Smith in the early part of the eighteenth century to J.S. Mill and Marx in the latter half of the nineteenth, all had growth at the centre of their analyses. In the time of Hume and Smith, this form of analysis had as its central task the problem of shifting from the Heavenly City of the thirteenth century to the earthly one of the eighteenth,[4] from the civic notion of virtue[5] to the civil;[6] it was essentially a social enterprise. The point these philosophers reiterated was that economic change, while being fundamental to socio-political change, was also in several ways dependent on it; the economic was, for them and for the time, *not a factor identifiably separate from the social*. The stimulus to economic change was often not a simple desire for the maximization of utility as has been made out in critiques of economism – "Hume's economic man is … no simple profit or utility maximizer … [but was often activated by] the desire for "pleasure", "action", and "liveliness"" (Rostow 1990: 19).[7] At any rate, the multifaceted image of human beings that Hume sets up seems to be the *starting point*

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[4] In conventional histories of Europe, this transition extends through processes and factors such as: the revival of Greek and Roman learning, the Renaissance, the slow break-up of feudalism, the rise of towns and urban societies, the scientific revolution, the arrival of Protestantism, the "voyages of discovery" and the resulting revolution in trade and commerce, the rise of the nation state, and the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century.

[5] This notion of virtue is the Machiavellian proposition that "the fate of a political unit (*Fortuna*) depended … on civic virtue … [which] in this context, demanded a body of citizen-warriors, equal in status, holders of landed property, totally devoted to the interests of the state, living an austere life whose satisfaction was substantially defined in terms of an absolute commitment to the state, transcending Christian morality … [o]n this spartan view, wealth and the pursuit of wealth, luxury, and idleness were paramount corrupting forces" (Rostow 1990: 15).

[6] "The locus of virtue shifted decisively from the civic to the civil, from the political and military to that blend of the economic, cultural and moral which we call the social for short." (J.G.A. Pocock, "Cambridge Paradigms and Scotch Philosophers", quoted in Rostow: 15)

[7] According to Rostow, pleasure, action and liveliness, as Hume articulates them, seem to have connections with Plato's notions of appetite and spirit, as well as later with Freud's ego and id, respectively.

of various economic changes. Hume was here working against the notions of 1] virtue being associated with austerity, and luxury with corruption 2] a favourable trade balance being the condition for a rich country and 3] the economic rise of poor countries being detrimental to the wealth of rich countries. With the availability of a wide spectrum of societies for examination, following the various voyages of discovery and early colonial activities, one of the questions posed was - "would the richer countries, applying more sophisticated technologies and more complex patterns of specialization and trade, be able to hold their lead: or would the poor countries with lower money wages catch up with them in time? … [a]bove all, … whether it was in the interest of a richer nation to frustrate, if it could, the rise of poor nations; was it a matter of indifference; or was it a positive interest of the rich nations to encourage the development of the poor?" (27). Hume, whose abiding concern was with the "rich country-poor country problem", proposed that "[i]n particular, poor nations have the capacity to catch up with the rich nations because they enjoy, in their period of transition, the advantage of lower money wages as well as a backlog of hitherto unapplied technology" (29).

Adam Smith's view of the economic man as "unconsciously doing public good by doggedly pursuing private advantage" (34), is also a more complicated picture than has been made out in critiques. Like Hume, his approach to 'non-economic' factors is far too *formative* of his theories of economic outcome – both of nations and individuals – to be ignored. Although Smith, like Hume, can be seen to be relying on the notion that 'men' help each other only in expectation of some return – a notion adopted by mainstream economists and pinpointed by critiques alike – both have as one of their recurring concerns non-economic factors like elementary education that can, in their belief, offer a counterpoint to the difficulties posed by the

alienating effects of the specialized division of labour in manufacturing societies. This is a concern also taken up in the latter half of the eighteenth century by Malthus, among others. Also, Smith's concern with 'unproductive labour', which he defines as all "labour which adds to the value of the subject upon which it is bestowed … as it were, a certain quantity of labour stocked and stored up to be employed, if necessary, upon some other occasion", in other words, exchange value is not easily read as a simple concern with maintaining class and sexual hierarchies as has been made out in critiques of modernity and Enlightenment Reason in general and of economic theories of development in particular. Rather, it is a (sometimes moral) concern with the loss of capital investment to consumption by unproductive labour,[8] for "if the quantity of food and clothing, which were thus consumed by unproductive [labour], had been distributed among productive hands, they would have re-produced, together with a profit, the full value of their consumption. The same quantity of money would in this case equally have remained in the country, and there would besides have been a reproduction of an equal value of consumable goods. There would have been two values instead of one" (Smith 1776, quoted in Rostow 1990: 40).

For both Smith and Hume, the driving moral imperatives – a possible fallout of Enlightenment Christianity itself – were a need for the triumph of good over evil, the problem of simultaneous poverty and affluence, the impact of the economy on the socio-political aspects of life, and the existing barbarism of mercantilism, and through this demonstration, Rostow's purpose is to reiterate the formative role of the socio-political setting within which these classical economists articulated the first economic growth theories. For "[e]conomic action is judged the outcome of a complex process

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[8] Which for Smith, "includ[es] the sovereign with his armies as well as general menial servants" (40).

of balancing material advance against other human objectives … actions which result in economic advance need not be motivated by economic goals" (5).

Rostow follows this argument in his reading of economists of later times, through Malthus and Ricardo in the late eighteenth-early nineteenth centuries,[9] to J.S. Mill and Marx in the nineteenth.[10] At the turn of the nineteenth century, however, this Big Sky picture had changed, and in watershed dates sometimes sited in the 1870s, sometimes earlier,[11] the "marginal revolution" had begun, taking economics from the labour theory of value to more integrated theories of value and distribution, consumer and firm. The *laissez-faire* concerns of Hume and Smith, and later, Mill, were questioned by concerns regarding the evils of the system and so towards a movement of social reform. Studies of rates of growth or output were replaced by studies of equilibrium. In effect, these meant that the strong links between the economic and the socio-political weakened at this time. Political economy became economics, and economics itself became more circumscribed, academicized, and a professional *discipline, concerned with a refinement of analysis* of short-term and micro-fluctuations, and with creating a formal theory of the same, while at the same time

[9] Malthus in his focus on basic human drives as part of his work on population and his stance on poverty, Ricardo in his determined participation in parliamentary reform, poor policies, and his concern for the impact of the introduction of machinery on labour. It was in the work of these two figures, however, that the "Big Sky setting" of Hume and Smith narrowed into the narrower intellectual setting of contemporary mainstream economics. Malthus was the first professor of political economy at Haileybury, the college of the East India Company.

[10] In fact, in juxtaposing Mill and Marx and their common sympathies with Socialism in response to society's ills, and further, in presenting Marx as a growth theorist, Rostow is drawing a comparison of sorts between Mill's notion of a quasi-stationary state and Marx's vision of a "utopic communism", both deeply rooted in Western culture and religion. Even as Mill speaks of individual freedom as the ultimate criterion for assessment of a system, and to that end advocates competition against monopoly, liberty against communism, *laissez faire* as opposed to state control, he recalls Marx and the latter's own ideas of humans as essentially wise, creative, and free. Rostow's larger project, however, is to isolate Marx's ideas as polemical and reactionary; and to suggest his inadequacy as contributor to economic theories of growth, the Enlightenment legacy being better traced from Hume and Smith to Mill.

[11] The first volume of *Das Kapital* had appeared in 1867, and Mill's *Principles of Political Economy: With Some of Their Applications to Social Philosophy* in 1871; work on marginal analysis came out in the early 1870s.

dealing with 'social problems' separately – often as vast tracts of empirical data that could fill the gaps between the new formal theoretical models and reality.[12] While formal models assumed "perfect competition and steady full employment … the dissidents [emerging from among the Populists, Grangers and Progressives in the United States, the Labour movement and liberals in Britain, the socialists in the Continent] dramatized the reality of monopolies and severe cyclical unemployment" (154), power hierarchies in employment, accidents, health and relative access to education, and other non-economic determinants of income distribution resulting from the histories of particular societies. The struggle between these groups, then, *both of whom, however, assumed an expanding, viable, economic system*, was what determined, according to Rostow, the shape of democratic politics in that age. In such a climate, an intellectual project like Marx's, that continued to tie the socio-political with the economic, met not with opposition, but indifference – for the task of economics had shifted from illumining the entire social to micro-examinations of economic cycles, and Marx's brand of political economy was out of step with the times.

An enumeration of the social reform measures that had taken centre-stage in order to deal with unemployment and the sharp drop in real wage post-1890s in the advanced industrial countries gives a sense of the 'development decades' to come. The proportion of GNP being set aside for social outlays increased significantly in the U.K., U.S., and Germany between 1870 and 1914; social insurance, for instance, began in Germany in the 1870s – against accidents, sickness, old age and invalidity. The war years, however, had their own effect; as large numbers of economists were

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[12] Rostow names five major schools of economic thought in the Continent – the Austrian School, the Stockholm School, the Lausanne School, the Cambridge School, and the American Institutionalists.

drawn into questions of public policy and asked to advise government, they were forced to devise strategies that could explain and remedy chronic unemployment, for one, and the Keynesian reshaping of macro-economic theory was one of these. This effect did not materialize in any major changes in the theory itself, however, or bring growth back to the centre of economic analysis. Another effect the war years had was the amassing of statistical data, parallel to and contributing to the practices of national income accounting. Following on this, the post-First World Wars years saw a closer set of links between economic theory and public policy, and here we see the precursors of early development practice.[13]

By the early nineteenth century, another important shift was taking place that was perhaps the pivot on which economic theories were to turn from the advanced industrial countries to the "Third World", and that signals the beginning of development economics. Demography,[14] or the statistical study of growth, changes in the size and structure of human populations caused by changes in the birth rate, death rate, and net migration rate, became a serious subject of study within the social sciences. Population analysis and census taking had been in place since the seventeenth century, although regular censuses began only in the eighteenth. Concern with population in the advanced industrial countries followed the three variables that linked it with growth theory – the notion of an optimum population, the demographic transition, the introduction of population-workforce variables in formal growth models. This concern ranged from worry over sluggish population growth and therefore less military manpower and labour force in mercantilist Europe, to concerns

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[13] Of course there was also fundamental intellectual opposition, notably in the form of Marshall who, in his response to Marx, collectivism, and socialism, failed to be convinced that socialism could generate the increased output and productivity needed to combat mass poverty. The bureaucratic character required in socialism, he felt, would inhibit individual creativity.

[14] The word was first used in 1855 by Achille Guillard.

over increased migrant fertility and the danger of native populations being "over-run" in the late nineteenth century. Malthus had already argued, in the early years of the eighteenth century, that "an increase in population is a powerful and necessary element of increasing demand" but not sufficient for the progress of wealth. In fact, "[t]he slowest progress in wealth is often made where the stimulus arising from population alone is the greatest" (Malthus, quoted in Rostow 1990: 56). It is Malthus' concern with a too-large population that is reflected in later development economics. From this pre-1812 concern around excessive population and, later, chronic unemployment, the population debate travelled to Keynes' confident projection of a stationary or declining population in the mid-1930s. Anxiety over this decline was most evident in Britain, Sweden, and the United States, in the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The stage had been set, therefore, for a combined anxiety regarding population decline or stagnation in the advanced industrial world and the predicted rise in unemployment, and the reverse for developing countries. With migration, colonization and nationalist anxieties in newly independent states on favourable conditions for development, problems and prospects on the population question in these states were beginning to be explored.[15] In India, the first population conferences

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[15] It should be noted that arguments about "excessive" population were linked, in both colonialist and nationalist thought in India, with anxieties regarding "indigenous birth practices", unhygienic methods of delivery, and high maternal mortality rates. Katherine Mayo speaks in horror of the untrained "*dhai*"-

> Further, no sort of training is held necessary for the work. As a calling, it descends in families. At the death of a *dhai,* her daughter or daughter-in-law may adopt it, beginning at once to practice even though she has never seen a confinement in her life. But other women, outside the line of descent, may also take on the work and, if they are properly beyond the lines of the taboos, will find ready employment without any sort of preparation and for the mere asking.
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> … It may safely be said that all these cases die by slow torture, unless they receive the care of a British or American woman doctor, or of an Indian woman, British-trained. Such care, even though it be at hand, is often denied the sufferer, either by the husband or by the elder women of the family, in their devotion to the ancient cults.

in Lucknow (1936) and Bombay (1938) marked the beginning of a focus on population that tied up with the political question it had by then become, with the British administration asserting that it was the cause of India's immense poverty, and the nationalists insisting that the responsibility lay with British imperialist policies instead. At any rate, with predictions of an "alarming" projected increase in population over the decade, nationalist leaders agreed that

> [i]n the interests of social economy, family happiness, and national planning, family planning and a limitation of children are essential; and the State should adopt a policy to encourage these. It is desirable to lay stress on self-control, as well as to spread knowledge of cheap and safe methods of birth control. Birth Control Clinics should be established and other necessary measures taken in this behalf and to prevent the use or advertisement of harmful methods.

(Nehru 1938, quoted in Rostow 1990: 206)

… and India was the first country in the world to put in place, in 1951, soon after independence, a national population policy. By this time, as is apparent, a strong connection between economic theory and policy had been re-established, although on different terms from classical economics.

We will return, briefly, to the population question. Before that, it is pertinent to note that, post-Second World War, growth theories took mostly three forms in Europe and America – "neo-Keynesian growth modelling …; statistical analyses of growth patterns …; and the analysis of and prescription for developing countries …"

… All the main statements in this chapter rest upon such testimony and upon my own observation.

(Mayo 1998: 141)

In continuity with this would be the "History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian civilization", that speaks of the time "[b]efore the adoption of the western medical system, … [when] the *dai* … was the sole arbiter in maternity cases … [t]he cleverer among [whom] … accumulated a certain amount of wisdom either from their predecessors or from their own experience … [though] [t]hey had no idea of the mechanism of labour … [and] used crude artificial force to induce the delivery, often with disastrous consequences" (Jaggi 2000: 199).

(4). Of these, growth modelling did not dominate the field, whether on account of its failure to capture the discontinuous, jerky growth that most societies – advanced or otherwise – exhibited[16] rather than a smooth, self-correcting path, whether on account of the failure to predict or explain the post-1945 boom in technology and terms-of-trade, or whether on account of it always being meant to deal with fascinating but limited disciplinary questions rather than large socio-political ones. Statistical analyses of the structure of growth provided statistical averages that proposed uniformities, and thus failed to take into account detailed social, political, and cultural histories of nations, as well as the unique contexts of each history. The alternative was a model that took these contexts into account, and the mandate of development economics suggested just this.

Before entering into the more contemporary debates on development, I will provide a compressed summary of the trajectory of the notions regarding these three factors that were constantly the bone of contention for growth. Did an increasing population help growth? Did the advancement of technology help or impede growth? Did social factors like education play a role?

As per classical growth theory, increased demand – that would eventually increase supply – was provided by, among other factors, an increasing population. With the development of classical theory, Malthus realised that an increased population was not enough of a stimulus to increase wealth. For Marx, it was not population but the workforce that was significant, but this was not a shift that took off for mainstream economic theory. Similar doubts were expressed regarding technology. Did technology, as earlier imagined, decrease productivity? Was

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[16] As Schumpeter, among others, have pointed out (Rostow 2000).

technological innovation a continuous process, or did the inventions of technology mean that development through technology was hardly cyclical and regular as Mill and Marx had foreseen, but a discontinuous, jerky phenomenon, as Schumpeter was later to suggest? For Mill, family size was related to real income, the liberation of women, and ultimately, a stationary state of population. These are some of the questions that should prove significant for the critiques of technology as well, as we will see.

The setting for development economics

Rostow identifies three conditions that made possible the birth of development economics in the early 1980s – wartime planning for the post-war period (this included the Bretton Woods conference, the institution of the Food and Agriculture Organization, the setting up of the regional commissions for Asia and the Far East), the years 1948-49 when the setting for policy and thought swung away from European reconstruction towards developing regions (the first loans being sanctioned, Truman's speech on the Trusteeship of Palestine in the 1948 UN General Assembly), and the Korean war, all of which meant that foreign aid took the form of security rather than development for about a decade. The 1950s were a period that saw the establishment of connections between development theory and policy, with major resolutions for the economic development of under-developed countries, and in the latter 50s, increased development assistance. The 1960s saw the Alliance for Progress for Latin American nations, and a 27% increase in official development assistance by OECD countries between 1960 and 1965. With increased growth rates but mass poverty and unemployment, there was also an intellectual revolt against the orthodox

development positions of the '60s, with a resultant mooting of the "basic human needs" strategy. The year 1969 saw publication of the *Partners in Development: Report of the Commission on International Development* that led to the Columbia Declaration of 1970. There was also the discovery of the second oil stock in 1979-80, and the Iranian revolution.

Mainstream theorists like Rostow saw the failure in the movement of analysis away from the Anglo-American nations as having to do with the parochialism of economists of US/ Europe who dominated the formal literature. Also, in the period 1870-1939, when economics became a professionalized and academized discipline, not much multi-disciplinary work – required for development analysis – was happening. From the 1950s, however, critiques of colonialism that associated its evils with those of capitalism began to dominate the scene, and the stage was now set for development economics at the periphery.

Two ways were mooted of moving to the periphery. One was by the dependency theorists.[17] The other talked of increased allocation of competitive pricing and of increasing decentralisation. What is evident especially post-OPEC[18] is the shift from straightforward economic indices of development to 'social' indicators – literacy, the quality of life, the condition of women, to name a few. Such a notion – of

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[17] Dependency theory worked with a notion of inequality between nations as a centre-periphery, metropolitan-satellite, or dominant-dependent model, proposing that these inequalities are perpetuated through the interaction between nations, and that underdeveloped nations are so because of this. This was against the notion of free markets where growth would be beneficial to all. Marxists among dependency theorists proposed that capitalist exploitation was the root cause of such inequality.

[18] The Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries was formed in 1973, comprising thirteen oil-producing countries in the Gulf region. It is interesting to see how development, hitherto synonymous with economic growth, and hitherto measured by hard-core economic indices like gross domestic product, began to additionally mean social indicators – education and literacy, health and nutrition, work participation rates, environment, and women. These were indicators of distribution as against wealth of nations. These were also indicators that the 'Gulf countries', catapulted into prominence – and equality with white nations – through the formation of OPEC and consequent wealth, were far from matching up to.

fresh indicators of development – had been put in place post-1945. While development as a category is said to have emerged around this time, when it was addressed to East European countries, latecomers to European industrialization, in literature originating from the Royal Institute of International Affairs (later this included Asia, and in the post-1960s, Africa), it was around the 1960s, with the beginning of the first development decade, that the shift in the official meanings of the word 'developed' became visible. And this shift accompanied another – the shift from a critique of state as hampering the market (the incentive to *laissez faire*) to a categorical conferring on it of the responsibility of containing the collateral effects of economic growth or skill specialisation. We have already seen in the classical economists, notably Mill, the impulse to press for education and a better status for women in this regard. The state now becomes the fundamental instrument in the process that can make this possible. And it is in this context that population policy and social indicators of the wealth of nations bring into focus a new notion of growth as development. A shift from the economic to the social in understanding development, in a scenario where the separation was already in place post-1870s, could now begin.

There was more happening. As Rostow and others (Kabeer 1994: 2) have identified, this was also the period of protests in the South against the prevailing economic order, protests in the North against racism and class oppression, civil rights and black liberties movements especially in North America, and the culmination of several third world liberation struggles.[19] Liberal feminism, the second wave, and the campaigns for what could be defined at the time as the particular interests of women –

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[19] Kabeer's work carries an excellent review of the Women in Development paradigm asking for inclusion of women in development agendas that came up around the 1970s and entered World Bank language in 1987, its theoretical underpinnings, its criticisms of mainstream development policy, its allegiances to liberal political philosophy and the neo-classical approach, and its silences.

access to abortion, equal pay for equal work – had reached their height in the US and parts of Europe.[20] These were movements for social space, for space within the social.

The identification of the social as a domain that housed problems was, then, well in place through these moves. Rather than strain the explanatory potential of the economic model of growth, however, it was, for the post-classical economic theories, the domain of collaterals that needed to be taken care of in order to ensure that growth progressed adequately. The only point of contention was the route through which these problems might be addressed.

In India, socialism was the prominent route through which development, or at least development policy, was conceived. Already, post-1945 and World War II, various nationalist struggles in the 'Third World' – identified as a cohesive space on the dubious plea of their greater population and colonization by western powers – were being re-read as anti-imperialist, and therefore as class struggles in the Marxist frame. This involved, of course, the recruiting into world history of this 'Third World', as against the ideology of 'non-historic' nations that had had to be brought into history by European explorers. It also imputed to struggles in this imagined Third World a moral weight that legitimized them, and demanded for them a relationship to the centre that was not exploitative. This form of third-worldism apparently emerged out of the crisis of Stalinism, and prospered mostly in the 1960s. In this movement to the periphery, therefore, it was important to mark the position of third world societies

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[20] These campaigns had also broken away from the left wing campaigns of the turbulent 1960s, when women in the movement realised that these could not be part of socialist commitments, at least in the US. It may be well to remember, however, that abortion rights, state responsibility for child care, or easy divorce laws, were among the earliest to come into effect after the revolution in Russia. What the socialist state failed to acknowledge, perhaps, was difference, not equality. Kollontai's marginalisation following her attempts to initiate debates around sexuality, or Clara Zetkin's famous debates with Lenin on the 'woman's question', come to mind. Difference was considered divisive, or bourgeois, or as espousing individualism.

in the universal scale of growth, as the 'stages theory' of as Amilcar Cabral does.[21]

Marxist readings of history had, by now, declared a science of history, where history

was a rigid evolution of economic conditions and a true realisation of the

Enlightenment ideals of Reason, progress and science, as against Marx's own method

of immanent critique. For Marxist theories, this meant classifying the means of

production in the Third World as feudal, semi-feudal, and so on, a debate that is

familiar enough in the Indian intellectual-political landscape.[22] While generally

Marxist theorists were divided on the question of whether it was the objective forces

of production or the subjective experience of the proletariat that would bring about

change, the Indian Left were deeply divided on the composition of the agents of

change as well – the national bourgeoisie, the working class, or the peasantry. Post-

Lenin, Marxist readings of the nationalisms in various parts of the Third World also

entered into a variety of relationships with non-Marxist nationalist elements,

addressing them as 'progressive' nationalism, rather than 'reactionary' nationalism.

This constituted the internationalism of Marxism, but it also often meant that the

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[21] "[Q]uite simply, "the nation gains its independence and theoretically adopts the economic structure it finds most attractive" …" (Cabral 1966, quoted in Munck 1986: 110).

[22] This is visible most famously in the shape of the 'mode of production' debates in the late 1960s – Rudra et al versus Utsa Patnaik on empirical realities of agriculture in India, and later on the accurate definition of the capitalist mode of production (1990). While Rudra et al concluded from their separation of "big" farmers from capitalist farms in Punjab that the transition to capitalism had 'failed' in India, Patnaik asserted from her own findings in Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Mysore, Madras, and Gujarat, that capitalist farms were indeed emerging in India in the late 60s, although there were specific factors impeding its development. Her observation was based on a definition of capitalism that, according to her, was reworked keeping in mind India's complex economic realities, and her understanding that transition must needs takes into account the relationship with the process of development in the "center country" – Britain. Chattopadhyay defined capitalism as the highest stage of commodity production where labour power itself became a commodity, and identified the two conditions of capitalism as i) commodity production being the general form of production and ii) production being performed by free wage labour. It followed that surplus value would be generated and reinvested. Patnaik responded by stating that in the Indian reality – where both state investment was poor, and reinvestment invariably took place in unproductive spheres like usury, trade, and the purchase of land to be rented out to peasants – it was important to add the condition of re-investment of surplus at the very site of its appropriation. Patnaik's impulse here was to also hint at the element of colonial exploitation – the revenue system, land settlement policies, etc. – that actually reinforced, in her view, pre-capitalist relations of production, thus 'blocking' the organic movement towards a capitalist time. This was a view, however, that was entirely refuted by Chattopadhyay, who insisted on a single definition of capitalism (1990).

'political core' of Marxist practice in these spaces became confined to a series of organisational and strategic questions (Seth 1995). The Indian Marxist model itself – once its political core had been redefined in this way – was divided on the correct mode of production represented in the Indian reality, a division that led to the two major splits in 1962 (the CPI and the CPI[M]) and 1967 (CPI[M] and CPI[ML]) among the political parties of the Left.[23]

But this hyphen between Marxism and nationalism was evident in the Indian nationalist movement itself. A version of Marxism pervaded Nehru's nationalism – one that espoused the "scientific, economic sense" of progress. Some of the emphasis the Indian National Congress placed on economic issues, particularly during the 1937 elections, was the direct result of Nehru's urgings. This changed after 1937, but Nehruvian socialism, inasmuch as it valued a materialist conception of history, or considered the economic as important in the last instance, continued to pervade nationalist agendas. Analyses of India's problems too were in this mode – "Parties [in an independent India] will be formed with economic ideals. There will be socialists, anti-socialists, zamindars, kisans and other similar groups. It will be ridiculous to think of parties founded on a religious or communal basis" (Nehru 1931, quoted in Seth 1995: 212). Nehru's stand on nationalism, by distinguishing between oppressor and oppressed nations, also legitimized certain nationalisms, while remaining critical

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[23] The cluster of conceptualizations continuing to place themselves under the name Marxism have since undergone many shifts, from this position of seeing development as class struggle and as a narrative of transition from pre-capitalist to capitalist modes of production (adopted by dominant Marxist theorists [Patnaik 1990] and within Left parties), to a re-reading of multiple class processes that challenge the 'capitalo-centrism' of traditional approaches (current theoretical debates among Marxist theorists like Fraad, Resnick and Wolff [1994] or Gibson-Graham [2001]). The Indian Marxist scenario, however, continues to be firmly anchored in the modes of production debate, with rethinking being sited in different modes of addressing the 'pre-capitalist' mode. We will keep this in mind when looking at the Marxist postcolonial.formulations.

of nationalism in general.[24] Needless to say, this vision of nationalism had rationalist Enlightenment thought as its underlying philosophy, and was also tied to internationalism[25] and progress – a progress that would bring socialism as a "saner ordering of human affairs" rather than as a "moral issue" (Nehru 1987, quoted in Seth 215). To that end, the scientific temper, as Nehru reiterates again and again, is the requirement.[26] And to realise that requirement, Nehru did take up the philosophical debate, apart from his policy efforts, by pointing to "the essential basis of Indian thought for ages past … [which] fits in with the scientific temper and approach" (Nehru 1946, quoted in Chatterjee 1986: 139). For this version of nationalism, this temper informed analyses of colonialism, cultural difference, religion, and industrialisation; each of the first three were attributable to economic backwardness and disparity, and the removal of these disparities, accompanied by the development of 'big' science and technology, was the answer. As far as Nehru was concerned, the colonial state was the enemy of such industrialisation, partly owing to its own selfish commercial interests, but more importantly because such interests went against universal models of economic growth wherein developing nations also needed to grow in order to keep the rich nations healthy. For his version of scientific socialism, then, a critique of colonialism could not simultaneously be a critique of reason or modernity – colonialism was 'wrong' primarily because it did not fulfil the

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[24] To identify overarching standpoints within oppressed nations was also therefore, problematic in this frame, for, "[d]o we place the masses, the peasantry and the workers first, or some other small class at the head of our list? Let us give the benefits of freedom to as many groups and classes as possible, but essentially whom do we stand for, and when a conflict arises whose side must we take? (Nehru 1987: 4-5)

[25] "Differences [in national realities] there are but they are chiefly due to different stages of economic growth" (5).

[26] "It is better to understand a part of the truth, and apply it to our lives, than to understand nothing at all and flounder helplessly in a vain attempt to pierce the mystery of existence … It is the scientific approach, the adventurous and yet critical temper of science, the search for truth and new knowledge, the refusal to accept anything without testing and trial, the capacity to change previous conclusions in the face of new evidence, the reliance on observed fact and not on preconceived theory … not merely for the application of science but for life itself …" (Nehru 1946, quoted in Chatterjee 1986: 139).

requirements of modern growth. Clearly, for Nehru this also involved certain expectations of the national bourgeoisie who would provide political leadership. What confounded him, therefore, were the 'spontaneous' peasant uprisings, as also the Gandhian philosophy of development that was singularly in conflict with his own notions of progress. Both of these meant for Nehru a shift not only from reason to unreason, but, as a parallel movement, from the political to the utopian.

Chatterjee (1986) suggests that Nehru solved the problem by granting to Gandhi a stage in the 'passive revolution' – an intervention – where, once the stage had been set for the real political battle, the 'masses' could be won over to the larger nationalist cause through faith, emotion, or other such means both incomprehensible and vague in objective (to Nehru). The larger nationalist cause was the promotion of large-scale industry over small-scale or cottage industries, since "the world and the dominating facts of the situation that confront it have decided in favour of" the former (Nehru 1946, quoted in Chatterjee 1986: 144). The 'masses', by whom Nehru usually meant the peasantry, needed to recognize, like the rest of India, that small-scale industry in these "dominating facts of the situation" could only function as a "colonial appendage" (413). Industrialisation and expert knowledge were what were needed for progress and a modern nation. After independence, this project of the modern nation was taken up by planning, what Chatterjee calls the new systems-theorists' utopia. In this scheme of things, once political independence had been achieved and independent state control set up, economic disparities would gradually disappear, for the only real problem would be one of access, a technical rather than political issue. Planning, as far as Nehru was concerned, would take care of this. Planning involved experts, and an approach to individual concrete problems at a practical level, not a political philosophy. "Planning essentially consists in balancing" ... (Nehru 1957, quoted in

Chatterjee 1986: 159) and "co-operation in planning was particularly soothing ... in pleasant contrast to the squabbles and conflicts of politics" (Nehru 1946, quoted in Chatterjee 1986: 160). Further, "[s]cientific planning enables us to increase our production, and socialism comes in when we plan to distribute production evenly" (Nehru 1962, quoted in Chatterjee 1986: 159). Socialism too, rather than being a system of thought or a violent class struggle, becomes, in such a formulation, the pragmatic planning of a national economy – one that, if adequately planned, would automatically produce the "classless society with equal economic justice and opportunity for all, a society organised on a planned basis for the raising of mankind to higher material and cultured levels, to a cultivation of spiritual values … ultimately a world order" (Nehru 1936, quoted in Chatterjee 1986: 161). For Chatterjee, this selective appropriation of scientific Marxism was how the reason-unreason binary was precipitated, giving rise to a different politics for the elite and the subaltern in mature nationalist thought. In the next section I will try to demonstrate how this formulation of Chatterjee's was one of the foundations from which the critiques of development too took off.[27]

My point in elaborating these debates here is to cull from them both the routes taken in development thinking, and the contexts for postcolonial approaches to the science and technology question. Marxism, in its early nationalist avatar, presented an approach to science that involved its accurate interpretation, application and access, rather than any critique. As is evident from the debates between Nehru and the Communist Party of India (CPI),[28] and Nehru's own writing on the subject,[29]

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[27] Seth (1995) has concluded, differently from Chatterjee, that this was not a simple appropriation of scientific Marxism, leaving its political core alone.

[28] See Rajani Palme Dutt and his efforts to bring together the communist movement, the democratic camp and the nationalist movement (1949). Nehru's truck with the communists more or less dissolved

colonialism was equal to capitalism, the anti-imperialist struggle of the Indian masses was the route to independence, and the change in forces of production would needs must bring about a change in the means of production. For Nehru then, the nationalist agenda consisted at least in part of bringing to the third world access to technology and a transformation in the forces of production that would address poverty and unemployment. In the Marxist-nationalist space, the debate was about what would be the agent of change – the nationalist bourgeoisie or the working class; also whether it would be forces of production by themselves or the subjective sense of the proletariat.

Cabral, in his analysis of the trajectory of third-worldism speaks of the shift from a 'revolutionary' third-worldism to a reformist agenda, the latter of which works with a picture of the third world as ex-officio revolutionary, virtuous, and exploited. This latter provided the impulse for state intervention and development policy. Nehru's own turn to development policy in independent India may be usefully read in this frame. This translated later into the Non-aligned movement, the Soviet line, etc. Later, however, this too died out, with a movement into peaceful co-existence, dependency instead of non-alignment, and so on. Reformist third-worldism too had come to an end.

And between here and the effort at *Swaraj* is where the postcolonials come in.

In this section, I have presented the state of economic theories of growth in Europe and America, and the legacies they offered to later development thinking, as

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around the response to the August 1942 revolution and the dissent over relations with the Muslim League.
[29] At his second Presidential address to the Indian National Congress in Lucknow on April 12, 1936, Nehru repeated some of his earlier commitment on this, "I am convinced that the only key to the solution of the world's problem and of India's problem lies in socialism, and when I use the word I do so not in a vague, humanitarian way but in the scientific, economic sense." From Jawaharlal Nehru, *Selected Works*, vol. 7, p. 180, quoted in Seth 1995: 222.

well as the trajectory of that thinking in its movement away from the Anglo-Saxon world to its former colonies. These legacies included social reform agendas, the sense that increased population is not enough stimulus for growth, the attitude towards 'unproductive' labour, the shift in discussions on population from the metropole to the periphery, and the insight that development is a discontinuous rather than an organic phenomenon. The legacies also belong more to classical economics than to the later neo-classical phase. The point is partly to clarify, through this disaggregated picture, the slippery terrain of the 'economic' that is often straightened out in the critiques of development and modernity. Do economic theories of growth necessarily embody rationality and a scientific temper? This section also presents in broad strokes, the three major bones of contention – population, 'social factors', and 'science and technology', as and when they appeared in economic theories, and their transition into development economics. More pertinently, in the Indian context, it is about identifying the Marxist-nationalist legacies (with or without the hyphen) that transformed into the later postcolonial critiques of development and western science. With this picture in mind, let us now proceed to look at the critiques.

Post-development positions

Both third-worldism and Indian nationalism had other, powerful and different approaches to the same questions – the analysis of colonialism and the required response, the question of technology, the concept of the state/cultural difference, than the ones we have been discussing. For post-development positions like that of Arturo Escobar, the visibility of the social had been some time in gestation. Escobar notes:

As a domain of knowledge and intervention, the social became prominent in the nineteenth century, culminating in the twentieth century in the consolidation of the welfare state and the ensemble of techniques encompassed under the rubric of social work. Not only poverty but health, education, hygiene, employment, and the poor quality of life in towns and cities were constructed as social problems, requiring extensive knowledge about the population and appropriate modes of social planning (Escobar 1992a). The "government of the social" took on a status that, as the conceptualization of the economy, was soon taken for granted. A "separate class of the poor" (Williams 1973, 104) was created. Yet the most significant aspect of this phenomenon was the setting into place of apparatuses of knowledge and power that took it upon themselves to optimize life by producing it under modern, "scientific" conditions. The history of modernity, in this way, is not only the history of knowledge and the economy, it is also, more revealingly, the history of the social.

(Escobar 1995: 23)

Having critically read the separation of the economic from the 'social' in the nineteenth century, Escobar suggests, following Foucault, that the social was being created, conceptualised, *produced through* strategic interventions.[30] The social here was produced as *pathological*, and poverty as a social evil related to the pathologies in question, both therefore justifiably constituting domains of intervention and exclusion, with the modes of exclusion acquiring new meaning. With the flowering of this "governmentalisation", and the beginning of the process of "developmentalisation" post-1945 with the definition of two-thirds of the world as poor, Escobar feels, not only was the link between poverty and the social made self-evident, one was made responsible for the other, and turned therefore into a justified

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[30] Escobar is here important in that he aligns himself alongside critiques of colonialism. He draws heavily on Foucauldian notions of power/ knowledge and Said's work on Orientalism to make the point that what is needed is a different regime of truth other than the ones in place. What that might be he does not offer clear clues on, and this is the space where post-development critiques have repeatedly faulted.

zone of intervention (Escobar 1995). Women too, in this ever-expanding frame, came in as a group requiring governance in the interests of development.

For Escobar, this 'making' of the third world, or the social, as a zone of intervention for the hegemonic, activated a response that included both a micro-politics of *negotiation* with the hegemonic, and the need to reclaim the third world as *resistant*. Such a position, that categorises itself as 'post-development', offers a critique of western science as hegemonic, and also makes the case for a re-making of the third world. Applied in straightforward fashion to development agendas in India, what would such a remaking involve?

The National Population Policy draft 2000 suggests that local traditional knowledges must be incorporated in reproductive health initiatives, to "fill in gaps in manpower at village levels" (12). A study of the "medical world of the tribals" that includes case studies of *suine* women or midwives offers the following justification for its work:

> … [t]hus a study of ethnomedicine from a symbolic and meaningful
> perspective will definitely lend great insight into the medical beliefs and
> practices of the tribals and be of great use in developing and shaping health
> care and health education programmes.
>
> (Tribhuvan 1998: viii)

The answer would find them, as part of the contemporary discourse of development, highlighting the traditional birth attendant, the *dai*, the *suine* … and other people not yet granted the epistemic privilege of a name; allowing them to come from a heterogeneous array to a name, a category. For post-development positions like Escobar, while category formation may indicate an appropriation into the hegemonic, the activation of epistemic privilege is important, and the formation of

uncontaminated categories a possibility. Feminist and gender work like that of Gibson-Graham[31] too has engaged in this task, asking for a greater attention to marginalized groups working despite dominant strategies (2001).

The point here is that it is not always clear how these (Escobar and others') critiques of development build; how Escobar imagines that "[t]hinking of development in terms of discourse makes it possible to maintain the focus on domination …" (1995: 6); how "clear principles of authority were in operation" through this discourse; in other words, how the closures to discourse were operating to render domination successful. In the event, the assertions often slip into an earlier form of ideology critique, not the least because it takes the route of adequate representation for a third world that exists *prior to* the representation.

For critics like Gibson-Graham who point to the capitalo-centrism of existing positions, however, it seems more of the consciousness problem – are these groups or hitherto unacknowledged categories going to be able to effect transformation, or are they forever doomed to the interstices, the position of the resistant but not necessarily counter-hegemonic? To both perspectives, however, Ajit Chaudhury's eloquent response sums up the problem:

> Labour reacts, resists, launches the counter-offensive, smashes the world of objects and the machine – his principal enemy. But this is not inversion. This is turning things upside down, which is different qualitatively. The inversion of a function implies an interchange in the places of the arguments – in this case of the master and the servant. The qualitative space of capitalism precludes the possibility of a functional inversion because of the absence of a concrete master visible to the servant – in this case the worker.

> (Chaudhury 1987: 250)

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[31] Katherine Gibson and Julie Graham, who write under the single name Gibson-Graham (2001, 1996).

Although Chaudhury makes the argument in the light of the specificity of workers' rebellion as different from peasant rebellion, his general argument in this essay has to do with understanding the 'outsideness' of Lenin's socialist consciousness with respect to concrete labour, or the worker. He is at pains to demonstrate that resistance to the capitalist frame cannot be understood in terms of a physical turning upside down. Such a turning upside down, he wryly remarks, cannot effect a downside up, that is, a standing of *capitalism on its head*. In the event, marking physical rebellion may mark resistance to the framework, but not revolution;[32] we have encountered this problem in postcolonial theorizing, and we will encounter this problem again in the articulation of the 'subaltern' in critiques of technology.

What were the other methodologies of critique? As I will discuss in the two later sections, the frameworks of hybridity and disaggregation that have informed much postcolonial and gender work in India since the major development decades, have attempted to steer clear of ideological critique; in doing so, they display their own set of difficulties vis-à-vis their explanatory potential for a robust reading of hegemonic systems.

Let us go on, however, to examine other nationalist responses, and the ways in which they have informed postcolonial and other approaches.

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[32] Physical rebellion, therefore, will likely give rise to "what has come to be called anarchy or nihilism … [while] replacement … can be a new idiom in the revolt of the working class at a mature stage" (Chaudhury 1987: 250).

Speaking of a different system

> Pandit Nehru wants industrialization because he thinks that, if it is socialized, it would be free from the evils of capitalism. My own view is that evils are inherent in industrialism, and no amount of socialization can eradicate them.
>
> (Gandhi 1940, quoted in Chatterjee 1986: 88)

> Instead of welcoming machinery as a boon, we should look upon it as an evil.
>
> (ibid: 87)

> Division of labour there will necessarily be, but it will be a division into various species of body labour and not a division into intellectual labour to be confined to one class and body labour to be confined to another class.
>
> (ibid: 92)

> But where am I among the crowd, pushed from behind, pressed from all sides? And what is this noise about me? If it is a song, then my own *sitar* can catch the tune and I join in the chorus, for I am a singer. But if it is a shout, then my voice is wrecked and I am lost in bewilderment. I have been trying all these days to find in it a melody, straining my ear, but the idea of non-cooperation with its mighty volume of sound does not sing to me, its congregated menace of negations shouts. And I say to myself, "If you cannot keep step with your countrymen at this great crisis of their history, never say that you are right and the rest of them wrong; only give up your role as a soldier, go back to your corner as a poet, be ready to accept popular derision and disgrace.
>
> (Tagore 1921, quoted in Bhattacharya 2005: 56)

The Tagore-Gandhi debates – as a window on the contestations between the ambivalent 'modern' somewhat removed from the mainstream of nationalist politics, and the recalcitrant 'pastoral' within the same stream – perhaps give a better idea of the responses to modernity and science than the Nehru-Gandhi dialogues or the

former's reading of the latter's philosophy. In a series of letters exchanged between 1929 and 1933, and earlier, in debates conducted in the pages of *Young India* and *Modern Review*, Gandhi and Tagore spoke to each other of rural reconstruction, of the possibilities and limits of handicraft industries and the *charkha* programme, of the discourse of science as opposed to that of religiosity. Although a lot of the dialogue between them is neither direct nor addressing the other's concerns fully, both had blueprints for rural programmes of self-sufficiency; both were opposed to heavy technology, both were opposed to state views on education. For both thinkers, the anti-colonial struggle was symbolised in the protest against foreign cloth, heavy technology, or government-sponsored education. This protest, in the form of the call for *swaraj*, differed in nuance in Tagore and Gandhi, but essentially it signified a moral freedom from the West, a dignity of human labour, a protection of the intellect from colonization. *Swaraj* would involve, for both, a reconstruction of life – the moral as well as the material. For both, the moral and the material were inextricably linked; the difference seems to be in the stress on attaining material freedom through the moral in Tagore, and on attaining moral freedom through material activity in Gandhi's thought. Nowhere was this more evident than in the different systems of schooling, both outside the state-sponsored system, which Gandhi and Tagore both set up, in Wardha and Santiniketan respectively. Both had different and powerful analyses of the hegemony of western science, and consequently different views on the nature of oppositional practice. A point Akeel Bilgrami has noted about Gandhi's thought may be true of both thinkers here, namely, the integrity of their thought, the difficulty of picking out strands of it regarding particular issues, or of separating their political impulses from their epistemological ones (Bilgrami 2006). Let us, for our purposes, however, force such an initial strand, and take up the programme/ metaphor

of the *charkha* as "cottage machine"[33] to look at the debate around development and technology that ensued around it between the two thinkers.

For Gandhi, the *charkha* programme was a symbol for rural cooperation – a "non-co-operation … neither with the English, nor with the West [but] with the system the English have established" (1921, 'The Great Sentinel', addressed to Tagore). That system indicated the broad sweep of Western materialism, expressed in hugely consumptive desires, and for Gandhi, the *charkha* stood for a rejection of this exchange value for use value – self-sufficiency. Gandhi's early proposals around spinning the *charkha* offered an alternative programme of rural construction, particularly the exercise of self-sufficiency. These were followed up in 1921 in the laying down of indispensable conditions for *swaraj* (Bhattacharya 188-9). Later, he stood firm through Tagore's qualified scepticism and other critiques, moving from the larger programme to *charkha* as spiritual metaphor; "to the perplexed", he said that "I do regard the spinning-wheel as a gateway to *my* spiritual salvation, but I recommend it to others only as a powerful weapon for the attainment of *swaraj* and the amelioration of the economic condition of the country" (Gandhi 1958, quoted in Chatterjee 1986: 108). In response to the poet's chagrin at the requirement of all to spin, "I do indeed ask the poet and the sage to spin the wheel as a sacrament. ... The call of the spinning wheel is the ... call of love. And love is *swaraj*. The spinning wheel will 'curb the mind' when the time is spent on necessary physical labour can be said to do so. ... I do want growth ... but I want all these for the soul. ... A plea for the spinning wheel is a plea for recognising the dignity of labour." (Gandhi 1921, quoted in Bhattacharya 2005: 88-9). That growth of the soul, that spiritual salvation, the

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[33] As Gandhi refers to it in a rejoinder to Tagore's criticism of the "cult of the *Charkha*" in "The Poet and the *Charkha*", *Young India,* November 5, 1925).

actual realisation of *swaraj*, meant for Gandhi the rejection of the 'system' – the moral force that made it irrelevant. That system included the railways and hospitals, which, however, Gandhi was not "aiming at destroying … though [he] would certainly welcome their natural destruction … Still less … [was he] trying to destroy all machinery and mills" (Gandhi 1921, quoted in Bhattacharya 2005: 33).[34] For he made the conventional acknowledgement that "[m]achinery has its place; it has come to stay. But it must not be allowed to displace the necessary human labour ... I would welcome every improvement in the cottage machine but I know that it is criminal to displace the hand labour by the introduction of power-driven spindles unless one is at the same time ready to give millions of farmers some other occupation in their homes" (Gandhi 1925, quoted in Bhattacharya 2005: 125).

Was Tagore too as clearly opposed to heavy technology? The *yantra danava* – the monster machine – is a recurring theme in his poetry, and even at the time of his critique of Gandhi's *charkha* programme, he was writing, in plays like *Mukta Dhara* and *Rakta Karabi*, searing critiques of the effects of technology on people's lives.[35] As far as the rejection of the West went, also, he was with Gandhi, holding him up as the "Mahatma [who], frail in body and devoid of material resources, should call up the immense power of the meek …" (Tagore 1921, quoted in Bhattacharya 2005: 55), and reminding his readers that "I have seen the West; I covet not the unholy feast, in which she revels every moment, growing more and more bloated and red and

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[34] Gandhi's critique of these articles of faith of the scientific world, then, couched as it was in moral language, was clearly outside the thematic of nationalist politics, and more an attitude of selfness. While Nehru, for different reasons, had ambivalent responses to nationalism as an ideology, his responses were within the ambit of Enlightenment critiques of nationalism – a position Gandhi was clearly out of.

[35] *Mukta Dhara* – Free Current – on the question of construction of a large dam as symbolizing 'man's' desire to control nature, and *Rakta Karabi* – Red Oleander – the story of a cruel king who lives behind an iron curtain while his subjects, working under terrible conditions in underground mines, suffer untold cruelties meted out by him, both speak of displacement, of the facelessness of technology, of power, of dehumanizing impulses in technology.

dangerously delirious …" (ibid, 55-9). His was not the mode of Non-Cooperation, however, for this movement, with its "noise", its particular strategems that instrumentalised, made "barren and untrue" the spirit of the Mahatma's words, failed to provide for him the 'melody' he needed.[36] On the *yantra* itself, Tagore clearly had ambivalent views, for on other occasions in his poetry he offers what might be *homage* to the instrument – *yantra namah*.[37]

While the withering critique of railways, doctors and lawyers in *Hind Swaraj* exemplifies at least the early Gandhi's views on these symbols of modernity and the need for their unconditional rejection,[38] Tagore reacted again and again to such a view, particularly to the moral element shoring it up, complaining, for instance, about the principles of the *charkha* programme - "economics is bundled out and a fictitious moral dictum dragged in its place" (Tagore 1921, 'The Call of Truth'). While being opposed to heavy technology, Tagore refused to accede to the "magical formula that foreign cloth is impure" (Tagore, 'The Call of Truth'). "*Swaraj*", he says "is not concerned with our apparel only – it cannot be established on cheap clothing; its foundation is in the mind ... in no country in the world is the building up of *swaraj* completed ... the root of such bondage is always within the mind. ... A mere statement, in lieu of argument, will never do. ... We have enough of magic in the country ... That is exactly why I am so anxious to re-instate reason on its throne" (ibid, quoted in Bhattacharya 2005: 82).

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[36] Probably the sentiment Tagore experienced when he expressed his abhorrence of an instrumentalist view of satyagraha which he felt was being used as a "political gamble [while] their minds [continued to be] corroded by untruth …" Tagore's 'Call of Truth', *Modern Review*.

[37] I am grateful to Prasanta Chakravarty for this useful insight.

[38] So that Romain Rolland calls *Hind Swaraj* 'the negation of Progress and also of European science' (Chatterjee 1986: 85).

What, then, of his critique of Western materialism? "You know that I do not believe in the material civilisation of the West just as I do not believe in the physical body to be the highest truth in man. But I still less believe in the destruction of the physical body, and the ignoring of the material necessities of life. What is needed is establishment of harmony between the physical and spiritual nature of man, maintaining of balance between the foundation and superstructure. I believe in the true meeting of the East and the West. Love is the ultimate truth of soul. We should do all we can, not to outrage that truth, to carry its banner against all opposition. The idea of non-cooperation unnecessarily hurts that truth. It is not our heart fire but the fire that burns out our hearth and home" (Tagore 1921, quoted in Bhattacharya 2005: 59).

In this sense, there was an affinity between Tagore and Nehru – with respect to desirable national attitudes to faith, unreason, or imperialist policy. For Tagore, *Swaraj* was, as he wrote to Gandhi, "*maya*, … like a mist, that will vanish leaving no stain on the radiance of the Eternal. However we may delude ourselves with the phrases learnt from the West, *swaraj* is not our objective." (Tagore 1921, quoted in Bhattacharya 2005: 54)[39]

On the ability of the *charkha* to bring about rural reconstruction, Tagore avers – "The discussion, so far, has proceeded on the assumption that the large-scale production of homespun thread and cloth will result in the alleviation of the country's poverty. ... My complaint is, that by the promulgation of this confusion between

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[39] This, from a Tagore who consistently held an anti-statist position, on the grounds that unlike in Europe, the State was never a central entity in the life of the Indian nation, and that further, in the present time, i.e. in British India, the state is external to society, rather than a part of it. "Our fight" as he puts it, "is a spiritual fight … to emancipate Man from the meshes … [of] these organisations of National Egoism … We have no word for Nation in our language. When we borrow this word from other people, it never fits us. For we are to make our league with *Narayan* …" (Tagore's reflections on non-cooperation and cooperation, *Modern Review*, May 1921).

swaraj and *charkha*, the mind of the country is being distracted from *swaraj*."(Tagore 1925, quoted in Bhattacharya 2005: 118). "One thing is certain, that the all-embracing poverty which has overwhelmed our country cannot be removed by working with our hands to the neglect of science. … If a great union is to be achieved, its field must be great likewise ... the religion of economics is where we should above all try to bring about this union of ours" (ibid, 104-6-7). What Tagore perceived as happening in the *charkha* programme, on the other hand, was the "raising of the *charkha* to a higher place than is its due, thereby distracting attention from other more important factors in our task of all-round reconstruction" (112).

Tagore had other problems with *charkha* and its being tied to *swaraj*. For one, the 'cult' of the *charkha* would not work for *swaraj* because it is an "external achievement", apart from being a call to obedience that only recalled slavery in its worst form.[40] For another, the isolationism enshrined in the act of rejecting foreign cloth only seemed to bring back the "sin of untouchability" in the guise of the *charkha* versus 'impure' foreign cloth. Further – and here Tagore raises his most eloquent objection – he fails to see a difference between the *charkha* and the high machine that introduces repetitive activity, boredom, and alienation in human labour. "Humanity", he says, "has ever been beset with the grave problem, how to rescue the large majority of the people from being reduced to the stage of machines. ..." (104-5). The discovery of the wheel signified, for Tagore, "[t]he facility of motion … given to inert matter [which] enabled it to bear much of man's burden … [and t]his was but right, for Matter is the true *shudra*; while with his dual existence in body and mind, Man is a *dwija*. … Thus, whether in the shape of the spinning wheel, or the potter's

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[40] Those for whom authority is needed instead of reason, will invariably accept despotism in place of freedom. ... (Tagore 1925, quoted in Bhattacharya 2005: 82).

wheel or the wheel of a vehicle, the wheel has rescued innumerable men from the *shudra's* estate …" (Tagore 1925, quoted in Bhattacharya 2005: 104). Therefore, it may be argued, "spinning is … a creative act. But that is not so; for, by turning its wheel man merely becomes an appendage of the *charkha*; that is to say, he but does himself what a machine might have done: he converts his living energy into a dead turning movement. ... The machine is solitary ... likewise alone is the man ... for the thread produced by his *charkha* is not for him a thread of necessary relationship with others ... He becomes a machine, isolated, companionless" (ibid). And why is this? Tagore refers back, here, to the discus of Vishnu, which signifies the "process of movement, the ever active power seeking fulfilment. … Man has [therefore] not yet come to the end of the power of the revolving wheel. So if we are taught that in the pristine *charkha* we have exhausted all the means of spinning thread, we shall not gain the favour of Vishnu … If we are wilfully blind to the grand vision of whirling forces, which science has revealed, the *charkha* will cease to have any message for us." (Tagore 1925, quoted in Bhattacharya 2005: 104). Therefore we must realise that "*swaraj* will advance, not propelled by the mechanical revolution of the *charkha*, but taken by the organic processes of its own living growth" (Tagore 1925, quoted in Bhattacharya 2005: 121).

Tagore refers, again and again in his polemic, to the dynamicity inherent both in the truth of Vishnu, and in the progress of science, as against the dead burden of "rites and ceremonials" that have produced in "India's people" the habit of relying on external agencies rather than on the self. The *charkha* embodies for Tagore such an external, static, object. Is he then subsuming the wheel and its dynamicity in the discourse of science? A careful reading of Tagore's polemic seems to suggest that his point is rather in examining the nature of material activity and making the connection,

through dynamicity, without which neither science nor the *charkha* might have any value.

There were other differences. Tagore recognized that for Gandhi, productive manual work, such as that embodied in the *charkha*, was the primary means of intellectual training (1937). The sort of oneness that such collective occupational activity may create for Gandhi, however, fails to move Tagore, for whom the act is a performance of sameness and stagnation. *Charkha*, he says, in one of his many tirades against the programme, is "a befogged reliance on … narrow paths as the sole means of gaining a vast realisation." (Tagore 1925, quoted in Bhattacharya 2005: 114). As such, the philosophy of *swaraj* as it was being enacted, along with the programme of Non-cooperation and rejection of the West, only produced an isolation, a soliloquous discourse, a "struggle to alienate our heart and mind from those of the West … [that could only be] an attempt at spiritual suicide … India has ever declared", he said, "that Unity is Truth, and separateness is *maya*. This unity … is that which comprehends all and therefore can never be reached through the path of negation … Therefore my one prayer is: let India stand for the cooperation of all peoples of the world. The spirit of rejection finds its support in the consciousness of separateness, the spirit of acceptance in the consciousness of unity" (Tagore 1921, quoted in Bhattacharya 2005: 62). More disturbing for him was the violence enshrined in the principle of Non-cooperation. "The idea of non-cooperation is political asceticism. ... It has at its back a fierce joy of annihilation which at best is asceticism, and at its worst is that orgy of frightfulness in which the human nature, losing faith in the basic reality of normal life, finds a disinterested delight in an unmeaning devastation ... [non-cooperation] in its passive moral form is asceticism and in its active moral form is violence. ... The desert is as much a form of *himsa* (malignance) as is the raging sea

in storms, they both are against life" (ibid, 57-8). Tagore was, perhaps, making a stronger critique, here, of the violence embedded in political collectivities, and the moral questions contained in non-violence as a practice.[41]

Gandhi responded to the polemic in several ways. At pains to explain to the poet the relevance of the *charkha*, he reminded the latter, in some exhaustion, "I do not draw a sharp distinction ... between ethics and economics" (Gandhi 1921, quoted in Bhattacharya 2005: 90). Elsewhere he clarifies in no uncertain terms:

> I am always reminded of one thing which the well-known British economist
> Adam Smith has said … he has described some economic laws as universal
> and absolute. Then he has described certain situations which may be an
> obstacle to the operation of these laws. These disturbing factors are the
> human nature, the human temperament or altruism inherent in it. Now, the
> economics of khadi is just opposite of it. Benevolence which is inherent in
> human nature is the very foundation of the economics of khadi. What Adam
> Smith has described as pure economic activity based merely on the
> calculations of profit and loss is a selfish attitude and it is an obstacle to the

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[41] Tagore draws parallels with his reading of the negativity of Buddhism to make his point – "*Brahma-vidya* (the cult of Brahma, the Infinite Being) in India has for its object *mukti*, emancipation, while Buddhism has *nirvana*, extinction. It may be argued that both have the same idea in different names. But names represent attitudes of mind, emphasize particular aspects of truth. *Mukti* draws our attention to the positive, and *nirvana* to the negative side of truth.

Buddha kept silence all through his teachings about the truth of the *Om*, the everlasting yes, his implication being that by the negative path of destroying the self we naturally reach that truth. Therefore he emphasized the fact of *dukkha* (misery) which had to be avoided and the *Brahma-vidya* emphasized the fact of *ananda*, joy, which had to be attained. … Therefore, the idea of life's training was different in the Vedic period from that of the Buddhistic. … The abnormal type of asceticism to which Buddhism gave rise in India reveled in celibacy and mutilation of life in all different forms …" (Tagore's reflections on non-cooperation and cooperation, *Modern Review*, May 1921, quoted in Bhattacharya 2005: 57). A significant difference in Tagore's and Gandhi's approach to the 'moral' seems to be in evidence here – while for the former it is a need for creativity that will be stifled by subjection to any constraint like collective action without the conviction of the reasoning intellect – be it ritual or any other "unreasoned creed" (The Call of Truth), for Gandhi, it was about self-denial – "Our civilization, our culture, our *Swaraj* depend not upon multiplying our wants – self-indulgence, but upon restricting our wants – self-denial" ("The Conditions of *Swaraj*", *Young India*, 23 February 1921, quoted in Bhattacharya 2005: 189). More than a simple separation of reason-unreason between the two thinkers as some commentators have made out, this may be read as a comment on the political that was reiterated by Tagore again in his repeated references to the separation between truth and the "barren stratagems of the political", and moreover, the violence constitutive of the latter. In that respect, Gandhi's later frustrations, and stepping away from the movement, may suggest a greater overlap between their positions.

development of khadi; and it is the function of a champion of khadi to counteract this tendency.

(Gandhi 1958, quoted in Bhattacharya 2005: 90)

Further,

> … I have asked no one to abandon his calling, but on the contrary to adorn it by giving every day only thirty minutes to spinning as sacrifice for the whole nation. … The Poet thinks that the *charkha* is calculated to bring about a deathlike sameness in the nation and thus imagining he would shun it if he could. The truth is that the *charkha* is intended to realise the essential and living oneness of interest among India's myriads … All I say is that there is a sameness, identity or oneness behind the multiplicity and variety. And so do I hold that behind a variety of occupations there is an indispensable sameness also of occupation

(Gandhi 1925, quoted in Bhattacharya 2005: 124)

Does that involve a separation from the world, an isolationist discourse? Perhaps not … for

> the message of Non-cooperation, Non-violence and *swadeshi*, is a message to the world ...[through] Non-cooperation [which] is a retirement within ourselves … [for i]n my humble opinion, rejection is as much an ideal as the acceptance of a thing. It is as necessary to reject untruth as it is to accept truth. ... I make bold to say that *mukti* (emancipation) is as much a negative state as *nirvana*. ... I therefore think that the Poet has been unnecessarily alarmed at the negative aspect of Non-cooperation. We had lost the power of saying 'no'

(Gandhi 1921, quoted in Bhattacharya 2005: 66-7)

As to the rest of the world, "I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any ... Mine is not the religion of the prison house. It has room for the least among God's creation. But it is proof against insolence, pride of race, religion or colour" (ibid: 64).

Elsewhere, in response to alternative positions like that of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, who believed the absence of cultural attributes had resulted in India's subjugation by the British, Gandhi spoke, rather, of the disjuncture between the prevailing politics and the morality of the community that had resulted in the same. Chatterjee presents the moment of Gandhi in nationalist politics as the moment of manoeuvre, proposing that Gandhi's critique of civil society and representative democracy emerges through his reworking of the relationship between the moral and the political. Without going into the merits of Chatterjee's formulation here, we could try to understand this separation that Gandhi makes, in order to better understand his accompanying take not only on the value of science, but on a necessary relationship between its use and the morality of the community.

Again and again, in response to industrialisation, in response to the work of doctors of medicine, in response to "much that goes under the name of modern civilisation" (quoted in Chatterjee 1986: 80), Gandhi reacts. "I overeat, I have indigestion, I go to the doctor, he gives me medicine, I am cured. I overeat again, I take his pills again. Had I not taken the pills in the first instance, I would have suffered the punishment deserved by me and I would not have overeaten again. The doctor intervened and helped me to indulge myself" (ibid: 84). And so with history, and so with the law, all of which are the record of visible illness rather than of the truth. In Gandhi's world, it would seem that "[t]rue knowledge [which] gives a moral standing and moral strength" (ibid: 119), can be the only basis for any politics. To that extent, Non-cooperation or *satyagraha*, as "intense political activity" rather than passive resistance, but in the form of a negation of the existing political frameworks, was born. The "disobedience" here was not only of the British administration, but also of existing modalities of resistance. The positive content of the programme was that

of rural construction through khadi and the *charkha* programme, which for Gandhi would be the true method of non-violent *swaraj*. This too, however, needed the abdication of the state from responsibility. The collectivity that Tagore found so suspect in this regard was for Gandhi an experiment in the modalities of non-violent mass resistance. And to Tagore's eloquent argument against the *charkha* on account of its staticity, what more eloquent answer than this – "It is a charge against India that her people are so uncivilized, ignorant and stolid, that it is not possible to induce them to adopt any changes. It is a charge really against our merit. What we have tested and found true on the anvil of experience, we dare not change" (ibid: 96).

How does this rich polemic help us to understand positions on science and technology? Is Gandhi a pastoral philosopher or a peasant intellectual proposing a separate epistemic realm from that of the West? Can he be labelled a Luddite? Is he caught, like the European Romantics were, in the dilemma between Reason and Morality? Or is he making a fundamental distinction between truth and the knowledge encompassed in disciplines like science and history, and could we draw on him to suggest that truth cannot strike but elsewhere from knowledge? While the answers to each of these may be difficult, while individual examples for each of these arguments may be found in Gandhi if not seen as part of the integral picture, and while any attempt to intellectualise his thought may be doomed from the start, I might perhaps attempt to say that there is, here, a critique of existing knowledge systems, of which scientific knowledge is one, that calls for a fundamentally new theory of knowledge, a theory of knowledge inextricably linked with morality, rather than a choice of alternate system from the 'West' or any other.

The (postcolonial) Marxist shift[42]

In the previous section, I attempted to demonstrate, through the Gandhi-Tagore debates, the responses to science and technology that did not follow the dominant trend in Marxist-nationalist responses. By the dominant trend, I refer to the consensus on high industry, heavy technology and top-down development that was put in place, post-independence, through planning. The Marxist position continued to follow the 'means of production' argument, concentrating on which would be the 'correct' agents of change. By the early 1980s, Marxist readings had moved from modes of production to class as pivotal to the phenomenon of development. Since Marxist-postcolonial approaches to science and responses to technology have usually accompanied the resolution of this question, as a way of approaching the shift in the science question, I briefly trace the 1980s shift in Marxist thinking in India in this section.

Ranajit Guha, writing in 1982, was the first to ask the question within Indian Marxism, of the structure of subaltern consciousness. Questioning the incidental place given to the peasant in what I have called Marxist-nationalist frames, Guha proposed a re-cognition of the subaltern – here the local peasant – as political and politicised, and not merely as a cog in the wheel or an included member of a revolution conceived by the vanguard. Not only that, in re-conceptualising the political through the domain of the subaltern, the Subaltern School, up until the time of Subaltern Studies IV,

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[42] Like the Marxist-nationalist, my use of the Marxist-postcolonial is not to suggest a coalition between approaches so much as a shift in Marxist trajectories themselves, as also a marking of positions that could be identifiably separated otherwise. In this case, Marxist trajectories would seem to be in conflict with postcolonial ones; what I mark here, however, are the postcolonial accessing of Marxist arguments particularly in the subaltern turn.

offered an analysis of colonialism that challenged early and neo-colonialist historiographies, as dominance *without hegemony* in at least the first fifty years of its existence. This suggested that colonial power had not only *not* worked with the active consent of 'the people'; it had placed everything before colonial time in the zone of non-history, and by extension, in the zone of the pre-political. Nationalist historiographies had followed the same patterns in addressing the peasant, thus leaving out the "politics of the people" (Guha 1982). What the Subaltern Studies School did, until Subaltern IV, was the following: raise the question of subaltern consciousness; uncover the "role of the peasant in nationalist movements" as the subaltern domain of politics – a domain separate from the "elite" nationalist domain – rather than an un-political "sticks and stones" activity; re-read colonialism as a discourse of dominance without hegemony, while recognizing elite and subaltern domains of politics as separate; challenge existing 'elite historiography' - both colonialist and nationalist; make these moves through a different mode of history writing that took into account unconventional sources, and used different methodologies, producing, on that account, a different history.

I will not go into the two significant challenges to the Subaltern School that came up with the publication of *Subaltern Studies V* in 1987.[43] For my purposes, the early Subaltern phase, in its shifts from the Marxist-nationalist moment, is important for the ways in which it aligns with, rather facilitates, various critiques of technology that permeate critiques of development today, and sometimes seek alliances with Gandhian philosophies in doing so. Needless to say, all of these relied for their

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[43] Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak on subaltern agency (*Can the Subaltern Speak?*), and Ajit Chaudhury (*In Search of a Subaltern Lenin*) on the Subaltern Studies' dismissal of Lenin's notion of outside consciousness as 'elite'. In effect, both essays challenged the *empirical subalternity* on which Subaltern Studies perspectives seemed to stand, asking, in Spivak's case, for a more nuanced understanding of voicing, in Chaudhury's, for a more robust reading of Lenin and the so-called elite domain in the latter's writing.

critique on the vantage point of the subaltern. That subaltern was an empirical category or condition as set out in Subaltern Studies.[44] I examine, here, two of three spaces where this shift from earlier Marxist to subaltern perspectives is most visible – the popular science movements, the post-trade-union movements, and the critiques of technology available in the postcolonial school.

Popular Science Movements

> The **Science and Rationalists' Association of India** (name of the organization in Bengali is *Bharatiya Bigyan O Yuktibadi Samiti*) established on 1st March 1985, our organization is made up of like minded people coming from different professions. We are not affiliated to any political party.
>
> **Our aim** is to eradicate superstition and blind faith, which include religious fanaticism , astrology , caste-system, spiritualism and numerous other obscurantist beliefs.
>
> **Our view** is that rational way of thinking shall be spread among the people as against spiritual or religious teachings, and that alone can bring about social change.
>
> (Science and Rationalists' Association of India)[45]

The Medico Friends Circle was set up in 1974 at a national level, to critically analyse the existing health care system in India and "to evolve an appropriate approach towards health care which is humane and which can meet the needs of the vast majority of the people in our country"(medicofriends.html). With an emphasis on the necessary role of the state in providing such health care, it demanded "that

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[44] "The word 'subaltern' … as a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way". And the work of the Subaltern Studies School therefore relates to "the history, politics, economics and sociology of subalternity as well as to the attitudes, ideologies and belief systems – in short, the culture informing that condition" (Guha 1988: 35).

[45] See Appendix for further details of the activities of the Rationalists' Association from their website.

medical and health care be available to everyone irrespective of her / his ability to pay … that medical intervention and health care be strictly guided by the needs of our people and not by commercial interests"; it asked for "popularisation and demystification of medical science and … the establishment of an appropriate health care system in which different categories of health professional are regarded as equal members of a democratically functioning team". Alongside, it also decided to push for "active participation by the community in the planning and carrying out preventive and promotive measures", for "a pattern of medical and health care adequately geared to the predominantly rural health concerns of our country … a medical curriculum and training tailored to the needs of the vast majority of the people in our country", and asked, further, that "research on non-allopathic therapies be encouraged by allotting more funds and other resources and … that such therapies get their proper place in our health-care". It also asked that we be attentive to the role of "curative technology in saving a person's life, alleviating suffering or preventing disability" (medicofriends.html).

Community Development Medicinal Unit, an independent non-profit voluntary organisation, was set up in 1984, to "achieve the basic societal need of facilitating access to essential medicines", to "provide unbiased drug information to health professionals and consumers, to weed out spurious and "irrational" drug combinations from the market through consumer information and pressure on government, to "negotiate with the Government to formulate people-oriented drug policies and weed out irrational and hazardous drugs from the Indian market, [and to] … conduct community-oriented research on drugs" (http://www.cdmubengal.org/aboutus.html).

These are only a few of the many organisations that grew in the 70s and 80s to nurture the 'social', 'civil', 'cultural' space. Alongside other organisations like the *Janakiya Samskarika Vedi* (*Democratic Cultural Forum*) in Kerala, these determinedly claimed an autonomous, non-profit *guardianship of "the people"*, reacting as much to the violence in the political life of the entrenched Left as to the vanguardism of the same.[46] Their primary aim, therefore, was to increase access and availability not only to the fruits of scientific knowledge, namely drugs and curative technologies, but to that knowledge itself, so that programmes of 'popularisation and demystification', rural needs, and 'alternative system use', were incorporated and taken up in the activities of local science clubs. On the other hand, the stress was on "active participation", which did not need an unpacking of knowledge systems or knowledge-making, but rather an involvement at the level of knowledge-dispensation, and was also an extension of the WHO slogan "(think globally) acting locally". But the stress on active participation itself possibly had other histories. Autonomous or otherwise, these organisations came out of what Raka Ray has called the "hegemonic field" of the Left, in Bengal and Kerala, among other spaces. In attempting to move away from the notion of vanguard party and the 'mass', 'the people' of a democratic state became the organizing metaphor for these 'movements' that not only "took science to the villages", but admonished technology for its inattentions to the people. Appropriate technology and best practices, then, were the logical next step, as also the accompanying challenge to big dams – all manifestations of technology that suppressed subaltern voice. While the *Bigyan O Yuktibadi Samiti* may be the most caricaturable version available today, most of the people's science movements did

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[46] Another element of the organizational perspectives is a certain divide between the political and 'other' activities that this period saw. Paralleled by the base-superstructure divide, or the massline versus military line was this socio-cultural activity versus political activity, a debate well demonstrated in the history of the Janakiya Samskarika Vedi (Sreejith K. 2005: 5333-7).

rely on associations between "rationalist" and scientific ideas, using the one to bolster the other, or, in the later turn to the Popular Science Movements (PSM), accuse the one on account of the other. In this later turn, the PSM shares the philosophy of the anti-development positions, in their attention to the vantage point of the subaltern as an empirical identity from which to critique the existing knowledge frames. Part of the expectation from such movements, that they would eliminate "nativism" and challenge "fundamentalism", then, were obviously not met in the later turn.

> Why have PSMs not taken the fight to the priests and the temples? … I believe that the nativist turn by an important segment of Gandhian social activists and intellectuals made it unfashionable to question tradition and religion. It became almost obligatory to defend the "wisdom" of the masses, as opposed to the "violence" of modern scientific ideas themselves. This kind of thinking moved the focus to "safer" targets, like big development projects, MNCs and such in which "modern" technology and modern institutions were the main culprits and people's traditions the source of resistance (I am not suggesting that the Left should not oppose MNCs and big development projects, as and when they need to be opposed. But they have to be opposed while defending a progressive, secular worldview; not in order to defend the "people's wisdom" which contains many inherited prejudices and superstitions). Science movements imbibed the populism and cultural traditionalism of leading Gandhian/postcolonial intellectuals who took a highly anti-modernist position for nearly three decades, starting around late 1970s (coinciding with Indira Gandhi's emergency).
>
> (Nanda 2005)

Postcolonial hybridity and the 'terrors of technology' argument

> Everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it.
>
> (Heidegger 1949: 279)

By the very nature of its instrumental-managerial orientation to Indian society, modern science has established a secure relationship with the philosophy and practice of development in India. Indian developmentalists are now faced with the obvious fact that the developmental vision cannot be universalized, for the earth just does not have the resources for the entire world to attain the consumption levels of the developed west. It does not have such resources now, nor will it have them in the distant future. The developmentalists, therefore, have a vested interest in linking up with the drive for theatrical science to create the illusion of spectacular development, which, in essence, consists of occasional dramatic demonstrations of technological capacity based on a standard technology-transfer model. Under this model, highly visible short-term technological performance in small areas yields nation-wide political dividends. This model includes a clearly delimited space for 'dissent', too. While some questions are grudgingly allowed about the social consequences of technology – about modern agronomy, large dams, hydel projects, new dairy technology, modern health care systems, space flights, Antarctica expeditions, et cetera – no question can be raised about the nature of technology itself.

(Nandy 1988: 9)

Science and technology have sustained various forms of systemic violence … [p]lanned *obsolescence*, with its de-skilling of communities, … [s]ocial *triage*, a rational framework for treating vulnerable communities as dispensable, … *extinction*, …[m]*useumization* of tribals and other defeated and marginal groups who are unable to cope with modernity and development", … the violence of *development*, including internal *displacement*, … the violence of the *genocidal mentality*, … [n]*uclearism* … [m]*onoculture* … [e]*xclusion* or *enclosure* … as central to the globalisation process … [i]*atrogeny* … in which the experts' solution increases the endemic violence or suffering of a community … [and] the violence of *pseudo-science*, or antitechnological movements …

(Visvanathan 2003: 170-2)

Grassroots movements in India have suggested the ideas of "cognitive justice" and "cognitive representation." Cognitive justice … holds that knowledge, especially people's knowledge or traditional knowledge, is a

repertoire of skills and a cosmology that must be treated fairly in the new projects of technological development. Cognitive representation, which is a corollary, presupposes that in the act of science policy-making, the practitioners from various systems would be present to articulate their concepts, theories, and worldviews. Both concepts seek to pre-empt the liquidation of certain forms of local or marginal knowledge.

(Visvanathan 2003: 165-6)

Modern science began as a powerful dissenting imagination, and it must return today to becoming an agent of plurality, of heretical dissent.

(Visvanathan 2002: 50)

The philosophies of anti-development, as is evident from some of the positions quoted above, have largely turned on the metaphor of violence. The violence of technology, the violence of science, the violence of reason, the violence of the market. The starting premise of most of anti-development has been the correlation between the ideologies of these phenomena – science, reason, the market,[47] and their collective exclusion of experience. The question of science itself has been charted through the question of technology.[48] These connections have permeated western as well as nationalist and postcolonial critiques of mainstream development, with violence being seen as constitutive of scientific knowledge rather than simply an effect of scientific practice or policy. This position is, of course, built by challenging the premises of scientific knowledge as objective, value-neutral, verifiable, and unified. Shiv Visvanathan, Vandana Shiva, and others challenging these premises of scientific

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[47] "… both science and market are amnesiac communities, … hegemonic groups that force products, processes and communities into obsolescence. Both are seen as progress. But what is progress but a genocidal word for erasure, for forgetfulness" (2002: 43).

[48] There are many sides to this debate between whether the scientific and technical traditions were two streams that, for most of recorded history, run apart from each other. For most of postcolonial practice, which wants to work against a simple version of the technological as applied science, a connection is sought to be made between the two that is, however, not explored or explained carefully, except when referring to the everyday technologies, where, paradoxically, the *separation* of the scientific and the technological is what is drawn on, to suggest the value of one over another.

knowledge, suggest that an exclusionary violence is constitutive of such knowledge that activates a subject-object dichotomy[49] although its claims to objectivity are shown up to be false in its imperializing tendencies; further, that it works with a systematization "wherein science becomes an organizer of other mentalities, [affecting] … the domains of work, education, sex, and even memory" (Visvanathan 2003: 164). Like Shiva, Visvanathan marks western science as dualistic, as imbued with a knowledge-power nexus, and as vivisectionist. While Shiva makes a strong proposal for choosing pre-existing alternative knowledges as against reductionist modern science, which she defines through her identification of the ontological and epistemological assumptions of reductionism, traced to Descartes, Visvanathan, however, is reluctant to consider a simple return, looking, rather, for an "escape from the dualism of Luddism versus progress" (2003: 172). He refers to the 'chaos', 'play', or uncertainty that science traditionally allows but that gets disallowed once it enters the text. For Visvanathan, the scientific self is one without shadows, cut off from the moral one, as well as from the playful, spiritual, anarchic self of its initial imagination. The scientific community is merely an "epistemologically efficacious" one that has no internal filters to exercise "ethical restraint", to confront the "perpetual obsolescence that science and markets impose on a community" (2002: 43).

He asks, therefore, at a conceptual level, for a return to a more ambivalent, anarchic self, to play, to a place for grief,[50] to memories of change in a community; at the policy level, for a plurality and democratization among skills and knowledge systems. Such a return to what Visvanathan names a sacred root, is a rescue from the present homelessness of modern science in its secular, proletarianized form – a

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[49] Vandana Shiva would make this case particularly with respect to nature, which, she says, is treated as passive in the western scientific knowledge binary of subject-object.
[50] "The tear may transform the scientific 'eye/I'" (2002: 46).

condition where science is treated as apart from and above a culture instead of being embedded in it. On the other hand, "[m]odern science began as a powerful dissenting imagination, and it must return today to becoming an agent of plurality, of heretical dissent" (2002: 50). Such 'play', such an anarchy of perspectives, such a form of democracy, embodied for him in "grassroots movements" like the popular science movements of the 70s, where the citizen is seen as a "person of knowledge", and where those "currently designated scientists" become "prisoners of conscience", is what could effect a response to what he calls the secularization and proletarianization of science. He charts a series of exercises that might make this possible – renunciation of science, cognitive indifference to it, a different cognitive justice being among them. "One wishes one had a Gandhi or a Loyola to construct … a book for science, with exercises which, while spiritual, are also deeply cognitive and political. I think in this lies the real answer to the Cartesian meditations or to Bacon's *Novum Organum*" (2002: 47).

While Shiva makes fairly straightforward substitutions between science and technology in her critique, citing the violence of one to indict the other, Visvanathan suggests, at various points, that *technicity* (2002: 41) – by which he refers to an attitude that treats the human as immortal, nature as resource, and technology as both instrument and nearly universal antidote - *is the problem with a science* that might otherwise have been better. "Everyday technologies", on the other hand, being embedded in cultural requirements and practices, release science from expertise.

My purpose, in charting these positions, is partly to identify this peculiar connection, or substitution, between science and technology that most of the critiques stand on in pointing to the violence of mainstream development. The "will to power"

of technology in these positions seems, more often than not, an obverse of the "will to mastery" over technology in its most instrumental sense, which is why the debates seem to hover endlessly over technology being beneficial, devastating, or a judicious mixture of the two. The pre-technological appears free of the instrumentality of technology; "everyday technologies" seem to offer respite in the shape of an embeddedness in community; at the very least, they appear to possess the mythicity, the poiesis, that Visvanathan so wistfully regrets the absence of in modern science. And these two – everyday technologies and the pre-technological – in their common possession of such poiesis, such anarchy, seem organically tied, providing a natural vantage point for a critique of the modern technological.

All these critiques, then, try to offer a release from the 'instrumentality' of technology, but by attaching themselves to a certain instrumental view of technology itself. An instrumental view might be, as Heidegger puts it, the correct view, the fundamental characteristic of technology; is it the true (essential) one? The correct view of technology – in other words, what technology is – for Heidegger, is the instrumental and anthropological view, namely, technology as a tool and means to an end, and technology as human activity.[51] To move from the correct to the true requires an understanding of instrumentality itself, and Heidegger takes up the task of this movement in trying to understand 'man''s relationship to technology. To understand instrumentality is to understand the early Greek sense of responsibility, a bringing forth. "The principal characteristic of being responsible is this starting something on its way into arrival", i.e. an occasioning or an inducing to go forward (Heidegger 1949: 283). This is the essence of causality in Greek thought, and not a moral or

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[51] "We ask the question concerning technology when we ask what it is. Everyone knows the two statements that answer our question. One says: Technology is a means to an end. The other says: Technology is a human activity. The two definitions of technology belong together" (Heidegger 1977: 252).

agential sense, as populates these and other critiques.[52] This bringing forth is basically a revealing, demonstrates Heidegger, an entry into the realm of truth – *aletheia*. "Bringing-forth, indeed, gathers within itself the four modes of occasioning-causality and rules them throughout. Within its domain belong end and means, belongs instrumentality" (ibid: 284).

What of the difference between the older sense of craft and modern technology? Can it be said that this sense of revealing, bringing into unconcealment, is true only of Greek thought, and can be applied at the most only to the "handicraftsman"? Heidegger holds that modern technology too is to be understood in its essence as a revealing; with the difference that in modern technology, the revealing becomes a challenging that perhaps converts nature into resource, a "setting-upon" rather than a "bringing-forth". "But the revealing never simply comes to an end. Neither does it run off into the indeterminate … [r]egulating and securing even become the chief characteristics of the challenging revealing" (288).

A turn to Heidegger, then, at least seems to imply that a simple description of technology as instrumental and therefore somehow morally evil cannot be the basis of critique. Whatever the difference between the pre-technological or the everyday on the one hand, and modern technology on the other, both the fundamental characteristics and the essence of technology remain the same; further, techné as a form of knowing is hardly, in its originary sense, reducible to the 'machine', defined in opposition to a romantic vision of 'man'. Although both ecofeminist and postcolonial critiques have declared themselves apart from such a Luddite view, they

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[52] "Today we are too easily inclined either to understand being responsible and being indebted moralistically as a lapse, or else to construe them in terms of effecting. In either case we bar to ourselves the way to the primal meaning of that which is latter called causality. So long as this way is not opened up to us we shall also fail to see what instrumentality, which is based on causality, actually is" (283).

fail, in their persistent definitions of technology, to sufficiently separate themselves from it.

This 'man'-machine opposition also follows on the debate around a clear separation between the two. In the various engagements with technology, or rather with the machine, we see attempts to bring it around to terms of friendliness with 'man', or to humanise it, or to get it to mimic 'humanness'. Artificial intelligence projects look for the anthropomorphic answer – look in the mirror – to understand intelligence; science fiction longs for the monster machine that can be made human. The critical debates on the Artificial Intelligence project too, insist on some 'extra', some remainder, in human consciousness, that *must* escape computation – an "essence" in Searle, the search for a likeness in Nagel, a methodological mystery for Chomsky and others. For more external critiques, questions of machine learning, representing 'man' adequately, or emotive capacity, take centre stage. It is not too difficult to trace continuities between these positions and the postcolonial ones I have just delineated above, with the development that the frail 'human' rendered even frailer in subalternity now takes centre-stage; and it seems that in both, keeping alive the sacred boundary between 'man' and 'machine' is at stake. Haraway, speaking from within the late-twentieth century scientific culture of the United States, refers to this now "leaky distinction … between animal-human (organism) and machine" to suggest that "[p]re-cybernetic machines could [also] be haunted; there was always the spectre of the ghost in the machine. This dualism structured the dialogue between materialism and idealism that was settled by a dialectical progeny, called spirit or history, according to taste. But basically machines were not self-moving, self-designing, or autonomous. They could not achieve man's dream, only mock it. They were not man, an author to himself, but only a caricature of that masculinist

reproductive dream. To think they were otherwise was paranoid. Now we are not so sure. Late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and art)ficial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert" (Haraway 1991: 152). The technological determinism that drives socialist feminist critiques of science and technology, then, and offers natural collectivities of women, or class, in their empirical connotations, as vantage points, is re-opened, so that the fact of destruction of 'man' by 'machine' no longer suffices as critique. Putting together Heidegger and Haraway, it is clear that it never did, and that boundaries are indeed the sites on which control strategies function, rather than the integrity of natural objects. With such a view, it is obvious that neither questions of vivisection nor of representation stand, with their reliance on wholeness and organicity.

Finally, following Sanil V., it might be said that the history of technology *is* the history of culture.[53] A critique of technology arising from culture, therefore, as the postcolonials seem to articulate, particularly, as I have demonstrated in Chapter 3, in their accessing of anterior difference, is hardly a useful, or sound, critique. It is, moreover, an instrumental critique, as caught in the thrall of technology as the mainstream itself, indeed more so. The necessity might be to recognize the impurity in the separation itself, rather than in, as again the hybridity framework seems to suggest, the negotiations with technology by culture.

To sum up this and the preceding few sections, therefore, I put down telegraphically the following steps. Predominant critiques of science in India that

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[53] Sanil 2008.

continue to have valence today have been voiced as critiques of technology. These have drawn partly on Gandhi's critique of technology as instrument, and have articulated the empirical subaltern as seat of resistance to technology, retaining, in this move, the commitment to the 'human' of liberalism that they also purport to critique. Such a subaltern is also seen as having cultural continuities, in whatever inchoate fashion, with an anterior difference – an immutable past. When such a 'subaltern-as-resistant' is purported to offer crisis to western science, as the hybridity framework suggests, resistance is asked to carry the referent of revolution, without fulfilling the promise of inversion of the dialectic that revolution, to merit the name, must carry. I would suggest that, in such a case, resistance remains the Kuhnian anomaly, without converting to crisis.[54]

Feminist alternatives? Vantage points of gender practice and perspective

Gender work on development, including feminist work, reflects the change from the more obvious ideological critiques of development to post-development positions. From earlier feminist critiques suggesting that 'woman', or the 'woman's body', has been the grounds of colonialist discourse, and drawing continuities between this and development language,[55] we now see a movement to gender work

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[54] See Chapter 3 for a discussion of this point.

[55] To offer a compressed window on work in this direction - Escobar has made the case for the continuities between development discourse and the "civilizing mission" ("Orientalism, Africanism, and Developmentalism", Escobar 1995), identifying both as discourses *employing similar principles*. He points to how, "[a]s Western experts and politicians started to see certain conditions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America as a problem – mostly what was perceived as poverty and backwardness – a new domain of thought and experience, namely, development, came into being, resulting in a new strategy for dealing with the alleged problems …", how "[t]his regime of order and truth is a quintessential aspect of modernity and has been deepened by economics and development", how "[t]he production of discourse under conditions of unequal power … entails specific constructions of the colonial /Third World subject in/ through discourse in ways that allow the exercise of power …" (6-9). Along the way, scholars like Prakash (1999) have used the purported links between (western) science, modernity, and colonization as the backdrop for investigations into "science's history as a sign of Indian modernity"

that points to both the absolute heterogeneity of the experiences of women in the 'third world' and the active contribution of these experiences in constituting a response to development policies. This later gender work, largely hosted in anthropology and happening in the 90s, has taken on the task of describing the ambivalent relationship that women's lived experiences have had with science as an institution, and so with development as underwritten by science; they have taken up issues of context or location, personal experience, and marginalization, at each point attempting to reverse the devaluing of women's experiences. The attempts have ranged from rationales for inclusion in development programmes, to descriptions of negotiation, to declarations of independence from development logic. I have roughly

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(Prakash 1999: 7), identifying processes by which science-reason translated into the indigenous idiom. Nandy (1988) has pointed to the shift from science being a tool of the colonizer to justify domination, to a science that, along with development, becomes a "reason of state" (1). Rajni Kothari sees the abuses committed by the modern-repressive state as a vehicle of development, as he puts it (1997).

Investigations in this direction have also, of course, had to take into account the ambivalences of nationalist discourse, so that nation-building and development range themselves against exploitative colonizing moves. One of the arguments has been of the (more apparent) *separation* nationalist discourse makes from the colonialist, making an economic critique of colonialism as an exploitative force failing to allow development, which is necessary to the well-being of the nation (Chatterjee 1993). Satish Deshpande (2003), in his sociological look at contemporary India, discusses development planning as ideology, to talk of the tie between socialist development planning and "its liberal-Western analogue, development economics … [that] were particularly amenable to translation into a specifically *nationalist* idiom" (66). He goes on to suggest the construction of the economy as standing in for the nation itself, through an emphasis on 'physical planning' – dams, steel plants, power stations (the new temples of India) – in the Second Plan. (Deshpande has some interesting suggestions here – the imagining of the economy is not pitted against the 'social', rather is the site for the action of the latter; moreover, he weaves together a notion of the figuring of the economy *through* the cultural that may have accounted for the seeming inclusiveness of Nehruvian developmentalism for as long as it did.) The tracing of overlaps, then, has been at many and varied levels.

At a related level, critiques of colonialism have often focused on the figuring of woman in colonialist (and nationalist) discourses, going further to suggest that particular kinds of figuring played a *constitutive* role in these discourses. Lata Mani's work on the discourses around sati (1993), Partha Chatterjee's suggestion regarding the "nationalist resolution of the women's question" (1999), and Spivak's notion of the "brown woman who must be saved from her traditions" (1988) come to mind, each pointing to the woman as bearer of 'culture' in these discourses. Can the case be made for such a figuring in development discourse? If one accepts the suggestion of a continuum with the 'civilizing mission', the case could be made easily enough for the third world woman as bearing the onus of cultural capital, as continuing to carry the mark of "culture", the "third world", the "indigenous". Elements of the impulse are available in Nussbaum's concern for the relation between the universal and "culture" (2000), as also in the "New Communitarian" discourses in England and the US where women are being cited as social capital, bearers of community values, preservers of community networks.

grouped, for ease of discussion, the kinds of gender work – not all of it calling itself feminist – that addresses questions of development, in the following manner:

- The **global universalist approach** that concerns itself with gender and the local, believes in development logic but is concerned with its accurate rendition, and actually names the 'third world woman' as allegory of the local. Martha C. Nussbaum, who sees her work as an example of feminist political philosophy, is the best example of this approach (2000).

- The **political reproach to universalist feminism** is in absolute opposition to such a position, relies on the absolute heterogeneity of experiences of women in the third world that disallow any naming of 'third world woman', points to the exclusions inherent in such a naming, and takes instead the commonality of struggle that might offer the only basis for coalition. Chandra P. Mohanty is a good example of this approach (2003).

- The **local, soliloquous approach** is also in opposition to the global position, and, in an act of recovering the local, takes modern science to be by definition violent, reductionist, capitalist, with an exclusionary attitude to the experiences of women in the third world, and therefore advocates a return to the women-nature combine as a response. Vandana Shiva's ecofeminist approach is an example (1993).

- **Global gender work** disdaining the universalist approach that works toward identifying contingent moments of resistance in women's lives. This work is in alignment with postcolonial

approaches that propose a framework of hybridity-in-process, where they describe the hegemonic object of critique as a fragmented entity that *in spite of*, or precisely *through* an exercise of power, incorporates resistance in its interstices. These interstices are described faithfully as ruptures and discontinuities in the pattern of the hegemonic, to show up the 'failure' of Western science/ modernity/ capitalist processes in India (Van Hollen 2003, Rozario 1998,[56] Ram 1998, 1994, 2001). This is a task that actually purports to better describe the hegemonic. Post-development approaches also align somewhat with these approaches.

- Variations on the radical feminist positions taking on a 'world of the third' approach are keenly aware of the universalism of global feminist approaches, but neither prefer a soliloquy of 'local' experience nor consider the horizontality of contingent negotiations as a possibility. This is what I set up as a possible **feminist standpoint position**, and a useful position for critique today.

I will consider these specific positions in greater detail in the next chapter, where I go on to engage with the varied interpretations of women's lived experiences in the feminist and gender work positions in the Indian context.

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[56] Who, during case studies of *dais* in Bangladesh, finds unpardonable the luxury of "mythologizing and romanticizing the process of 'natural childbirth' and of projecting this image on to a Third World context where it is not always appropriate" (Rozario 1998: 144).

CHAPTER 5

TOWARDS A DIFFERENT METHODOLOGY OF CRITIQUE:

LEARNING FROM FEMINIST STANDPOINT EPISTEMOLOGIES AND

MARXIAN APPROACHES

Introduction

I have been attempting, in the last three chapters, to trace the critiques of science in the Indian context, and in so doing, also to trace a methodology of critique itself that animates the political in India. I have shown the ways in which these critiques access anterior difference (as in connections drawn in postcolonial work between the 'resistant' past as anterior or prior to colonialism and an 'other' modernity produced within colonialism), the ways in which they posit resistance as providing the crisis to closure of Western science seen as hegemonic (through the appropriation of the language of resistance of Subaltern Studies into the hybridity framework), and the ways in which this resistance fails to meet the promise of crisis (the crisis being a reference to the Kuhnian understanding of crisis that might signal the fall of a paradigm). It follows that the sometimes implicit claim for the rise of alternate systems of knowledge also fails since the criteria for paradigm shifts is not met.

The discussion in this chapter turns on two axes. One is that of the political, within which I will try to place the various arguments within feminism and gender work that try to examine and explain science as a political institution, and the options available to negotiate with its power. These arguments understand the political as contained in a discussion about power; they also chart shifts from the responses to power as coherent, singular and monolithic, to a more disaggregated notion of power

itself that also then demands a disaggregated response. The basis for this discussion I have set up in Chapter 2, where I also talk about the parallel shift from a politics based on ideology, based on an understanding of structure, to one that proposes an attention to micro-negotiations, that proposes a thick description of these negotiations as the alternative. It is such an alternative that pays attention also to context or situation, as also to experience, and along my second axis in this chapter – that of the epistemological – I examine the case for situated knowledges, for experience as the situation of knowledge-making, and the possible movement from here to the articulation of a standpoint epistemology.

In attempting to ask the question of criteria of knowledge through the allegory of what I have called women's lived experience, I adopt in somewhat mutated form the strategy of the 'outside' consciousness, something that has received much attention, in different ways, in orthodox Marxist and subaltern literature, as an empirical something, a socialist consciousness that can or cannot bring to revolutionary consciousness the 'mass';[1] also in feminist literature, at times as the empirical excluded, at others as the sign of the 'outsider within' who may challenge dominant formations.[2] At all points in the history of these formations, the translation of formulations of the outside has been at the level of the empirical. A link possibly exists here between this kind of translation and the apparent difficulty of attaching the political with the epistemological in any useful way. Politics, in such a translation, has either been about championing the entry of the empirical outside, or about championing the knowledge attached, ex-officio, to the situation of outsideness. I will, in the formulation I am about to offer, work with an understanding of exclusion

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[1] I have made the reference to the outside consciousness as explicated by Lenin in Chapter 4.
[2] The idea of the 'outsider within' was first mooted by Dorothy Smith (1987).

to which inclusion in this sense is not the answer. In order to do so, I would also then, beginning with a formulation akin to that of the 'outsider within', attempt an allegorical description of the way in which such an outsider('s) perspective (I bracket the apostrophe in an attentiveness to the difference between the abstract and the empirical here) might offer a response to the act of exclusion.

I am aware as I say this that the first task is to provide a theory of the exclusion itself; in the case of science, to 'prove' that it is constituted by exclusionary acts. I have given exhaustive accounts, in Chapters 3 and 4, of the work that has unconvincingly done this. For more convincing accounts, I rely partly, and in somewhat unrepentant fashion, on certain clues available in the work of 'western' feminist epistemological thinkers – those 'global' feminist accounts that for the first time enabled a possibility of thinking gender analytics outside Marxist frames in Bengal, while remaining hegemonic to the gender analytics themselves, as I have detailed in Chapter 2; partly on the allegory of the *dai,* whose engagements with the reproductive health system in India I explore in some detail,[3] and partly on a different case for the 'outside' made in the work of a Marxian[4] thinker in Bengal.

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[3] The *dai,* or village midwife, or traditional birth attendant as she is referred to in the development literature, is usually considered the repository of experience and practice in terms of "traditional systems" who might be called upon to fill certain gaps in manpower (not in knowledge) in the reproductive health apparatus. I refer to her, her responses, and her experience, in this chapter, not as repository of knowledge of the traditional canon, but as the aporia, the impasse to the narrative of science. My attention thereafter is not to the discovery or description of such an impasse, but rather to what lessons we may derive from here in a re-cognition of the narrative.

[4] I attempt here to make a distinction between Marxist and Marxian in the sense of the former referring to organizational frameworks, practices, attitudes, and theorizations that claim allegiance to texts of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Marxism is in that sense a closed system of theory. By Marxian I refer to theoretical formulations originating in Marx, but engaging with other texts and methodologies as well, and not always in agreement with official or conventional Marxist thinking. I draw from Marx's own statement "I am not a Marxist", made in despairing criticism of the many entrenched positions that were being put out in his name. In a letter to C. Schmidt on 5 August 1890, Marx's fellow-author Friedrich Engels wrote, "As Karl Marx used to say about the French "Marxists" in the 1870s, 'All I know is that I am not a Marxist'" (Marxist CD Archive 2003).

To summarise, I attempt, in this last chapter, to offer an understanding of the political that moves from ideology toward standpoint, and an accompanying move from one knowledge not to alternative or many knowledges, but towards a standpoint epistemology.

Notes from a consultation, and from a conversation

The consultation

Tumi ki roj tablet khao? Do you have the pill everyday?

> Do *You* (the doctor and authority) have the pill everyday?
>
> Do you have to have the pill *everyday*?
>
> Do you *really* have to …

Aamake niye katha hocche na … Its not *me* we're talking of …

> *I* am not objectified body; *you* are.
>
> I am separate from you, elsewhere.
>
> Actually, I'm the one who should be asking you the question.[5]

The conversation

In April 2002, I attended, as a medical doctor, a training programme for 'traditional birth attendants' – *dais* – who had come from various parts of the island to

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[5] I will come back to this vignette from the family planning clinic of a state referral hospital, for now only wishing to draw attention, through the emphases I have placed in the conversation , to the putting to work not only of institutional and knowledge hierarchies, but also constitutive elements of the propositional models of knowledge that are hosted here. For each part of the conversation, therefore, I have set down these constitutive elements in the indented paragraphs – those unspoken, seemingly bizarre, yet constitutive elements. I will also say, in continuation of this point, that the somewhat bizarre turn this conversation takes, and that I wish to point to, is not entirely attributable to the apathy or non-personalized nature of care-giving that is the feature of most large state hospitals.

attend an intensive 6-day training programme organized by a non-governmental organization. This was a group of women who had varying degrees of experience with births at which they had assisted. They had been divided into two groups, with one doctor trained in western medicine to conduct the training schedule in each of them. The group I had been assigned consisted of 46 women. The youngest member was 28, the oldest around 60. The programme had the stated objective of imparting up-to-date and accurate scientific methods (adaptable to the field) of attending to pregnant women going into labour, that should be introduced into the village so as to help women with limited access to hospital facilities in rural areas. Local traditional practices could also be taken into account and legitimately incorporated where useful. In the event, it also sought to draw the line between right and wrong practice so that the *dai* could decide when and in which case to seek the help of the local health centre.

"To fill in gaps in manpower at village levels", as the National Population Policy draft (2000) says. The *dai*, in her own words the *mukkhu sukkhu maanush*,[6] as yet uninitiated into 'method', has the key to a vast field of experience at births, a field waiting to be tapped usefully in development. Her know-how, which is 'practical' rather than 'propositional', means that she has no value in existing frames as epistemological agent; hers is the voice of experience that with a degree of training and modification can apparently be made useful to the task in hand.

In the time and frame within which I had inserted myself into the picture, I was able to concentrate largely on the level of the gradients of power operating, mostly at the general/macro level, between the *dai* (the "subject[s] of enunciation that

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[6] The unlearned people.

subtend epistemology"), the "development expert", the NGO, the local male quack

doctor. The NGO of course had targets to meet – so many women over so many

villages covered this year. I was doing 'research', and this was one of the ways I

could listen in. I was there, however, as the 'doctor', the authority. The *dais* knew

there was something in this for them. The kits that would be distributed at the end of

session, the legitimation of their knowledge by the *sarkar*[7] – they were now trained

dais, not just *dais* – the meanings this would hopefully carry in trying times when the

local (male) quack, armed with the 'injection'[8] and assorted other drugs, in short with

a sometimes more than fair working knowledge of allopathic medicine under his belt,

had all but edged them out of their already meagre income.

Prior to introductions, the *dais* were asked to give a written test, where, with

the now standard multiple choice questionnaire, they were asked to respond to

problems generally faced during the delivery of a child. Later, through lectures,

models, role-playing, and video films, the 'new', scientific methods were introduced

and explained.

The schedule had been planned by the non-governmental organisation and the

dais informed accordingly. We started the programme with a short discussion on the

availability and advancement of scientific knowledge in the current setting, and the

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[7] Government. It is a case in point that for the *dai*, the analytic separation between government and non-governmental organization does not exist. The space of civil society that the NGO conceptually occupies as separate from the state is unavailable to her; both represent the call of legitimate authority that have brought her here. And yet, does her turn to authority have an element of the conscious? Puti di (Puti Jana, one of the economically more disadvantaged of the group, also one of the most attentive and eager to imbibe the new) approached me the day after the video film showing a trained *dai* at work in Rajasthan. She had watched the *dai* in the film fill up her register with the details of each birth she attended, and report to the municipal office, and had come with a request for us to arrange something similar for this group. So that, as she understood, they could make an honest (and just) living, for in such a case payment to the *dai* would presumably be fixed and commensurate to her efforts.
[8] Oxytocin, used (under strict monitoring in hospital settings) to induce uterine contractions, and used freely by these practitioners when called in to assist at delayed labour, with effects ranging from the magical to the disastrous.

consequent responsibility incumbent on those responsible for health issues to avail of this knowledge. Parallely, the dangers of succumbing to uninformed traditional practices were also touched upon. A format had been prepared by the organisation for our guidance in conducting the training; further, members of staff were available around the clock to help us communicate with the *dais*, many of whom spoke local dialects completely different from urban Bengali.

Each class day started at around nine in the morning after breakfast. We generally started the day with a new topic, discussing it from both ends, that of Western Science as well as the perspective of the local traditional knowledges apparently employed by the *dais*, the problems they faced therein, their interactions with local 'quack doctors' at the time of a birth, the increasing presence and authority of this group, and so on. I would generally question them as to why they employed a particular practice, explain – in logical terms – why the scientific method was better, and then go on to demonstrate the functioning of the female body, as understood in (Western) medical literature, with a ritual of endless repetitions – I even had a wooden duster to bang the table with when the humming got too loud – for the women were hardly used to the attention spans demanded of them. In the event, it did happen that practices or understandings forwarded by the *dais* afforded me glimpses of knowledges that did not conform to (or compare with, sometimes) the western episteme I was working with; but such difficulties I (had to) set aside for the purposes of my work. And following me, so did the *dais*.

While planning on ways to communicate with the women, both of us (health professionals working with the two groups) had come to the conclusion that visual models, role-playing etc. would be good methods, since a large number of the

participants were not only non-literate in the conventional sense, but unused to conventional methods of classroom learning. The "students" indeed took to these with enthusiasm; having overcome initial inhibitions, they enthusiastically took on the roles of woman in labour, *dai*, mother-in-law, husband, doctor at the local health centre, to enact the scenes as they should from now on be played out, as I watched in satisfaction – the *dai* had come of age.

The first question that the *dais* asked me when I arrived in their midst was whether I was married. If so, how many children I had. As I realised that I was alone in a room full of mothers, I felt the beginnings of an unbridgeable gap; I might pick up the local tongue, I might sit down with them and attempt to erase authority, but I did not share what they shared with most other women, the kind of experience they valued (or considered necessary for authority). As the classes wore on, this became a little joke amongst us – every now and then, one of the older women would stop proceedings to ask – *Accha, tomaar to nei, tumi eto jano ki kore*?[9] And I would counter sagely – *Aaro jaani*.[10] Finally they settled for – *Aare eto rugi dekheche, ekta abhigyata hoy ni*?[11] An experiential referent had been found, however clinical, and that was something!

The turn to experience – from consultations to conversations

I have no names (of protected confidentiality or otherwise) to offer for the women in both the episodes I report above; neither was part of an ethnographic study,

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[9] How do you know, having none of your own?
[10] I know that much and more.
[11] She's seen so many patients, surely she must know something.

and both are offered more as plausible accounts of a situation, and contexts within which feminist approaches to experience have materialized.

The consultation was with a recalcitrant mother who had been put on the contraceptive pill following the abortion of an unplanned pregnancy and had returned for follow-up with a continuing carelessness regarding its intake. The entire consultation, as is evident from the report, lasted two sentences, leaving the female physician irritated, and the patient engaged in a certain conversational response – the kind of response that comes the way of the physician every day, but is nevertheless the kind of response that is illegitimate, aporetic. Enough has been said about power-knowledge nexuses that promote one knowledge – in this case the Western medical – as high, as singular. This is the kind of response that, through its own aporicity – neither appropriate, nor oppositional, nor even alternate – makes visible, and bizarre, the positioning of medical knowledge as objective, unanchored to experience, and on *that count authoritative*. It is also the kind of response that does not sit well with liberal feminist approaches that would wish to mediate authority through information, choice, or consent.

Feminist politics in India, in response to this authoritative stance, initially took a 'more women-in-science' position; it asked for *increased presence of women as professionals* in the scientific enterprise, for *increased access for women* to the fruits of science and technology, as also to information. It was hoped that changes in gender composition at the professional level would both bring in women's perspectives, and in so doing transform the disciplines through such inclusion.[12] The entire gamut of women's right to health campaigns articulated this position. This is a route that has

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[12] As suggested in the manifesto of The School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University, 1988.

been taken in later state development agendas as well, where, after the World Bank clauses requiring clear commitments to gender appeared in 1987, states put in place protocols to include women's perspectives in development.[13] This was a position that stayed with one-knowledge theories, wanting, along with one knowledge, adequate *dissemination* of the products of such knowledge.

The 90s saw a clearer shift to a politics of 'third world women's experience', from authoritarianism to alternatives. This shift talked about bringing back 'low' knowledge, of re-reading marginality as a place for knowledge-making, and of making the 'third world' – geographically understood – an empirical site for the same. Eco-feminist moves like those of Vandana Shiva are a case in point. There are a couple of things I would like to point to here. On the one hand, this shift was not so much a chronological as perhaps an ideological shift, and populated more of the rhetorical than the clear-cut theoretical articulations of the turn to experience. It was a turn that allowed a *re-making of the third world*, for post-developmentalists, from the WID (women-in-development) initiatives that exercised only inclusion rhetoric. It was also a shift that informed a politics of the time – a politics of location, a politics that allowed a community to speak for and in itself on account of being in a marginal relation to what was perceived as hegemonic, that is, the West. This was a politics of

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[13] World Bank operations evaluation study reports on 'gender issues in World Bank lending' have divided the period from 1967 to the 1990s into the reactive years – 1967 to 1985, and the pro-active years – 1985 to the 1990s. The reactive years, says the document, displayed a consistent failure to draft clear directives (for borrower nations), to have separate chapters on gender, and generally include gender perspectives in policy formulation. No separate department had been allotted for 'Women in Development' (hereafter WID) till 1987, the existing WID advisor had few powers and fewer funds, and it was as late as 1980 that higher-ranking officials in the Bank first used the phrase 'women in development'. But voices, within the Bank and outside, had begun to speak, since the early 1970s, of the absence of the perspective of women in development projects around the world. While the single most landmarked work in development literature in this direction has been that of Ester Boserup (*Woman's Role in Economic Development*), documents titled "Recognizing the 'Invisible' Woman in Development: The World Bank's experience" (1975) or statements extolling the "immensely beneficial impact … from educating girls" (McNamara, World Bank president, 1980) have been making their appearance since 1975.

oppositional difference, a politics of resistance, a politics that was born out of and needed, for its continuation, hierarchical difference, a politics that said, "I know mine, you know yours, there can be no dialogue". But it was also a move that populated rhetoric more than theory or practice, at least in Indian contexts, not always enjoying full status alongside 'one knowledge' theories, so that "empowerment alongside perspective" became the more acceptable motto. Such an attempt has perhaps been best articulated philosophically in the work of Martha C. Nussbaum, who talks at the same time of a uniqueness to women's perspectives *and* of the need to raise them to the common level "human". Difference – either cultural or sexual – was not the motive force in this attempt; rather, it was something that needed to be marked in order to be transcended. Finding a commonality to women's experiences and raising them therefore to the universal level was the task. Knowledge was still one and singular, but a *democratization in modes of arrival* at such knowledge was the important goal. "We all know, together" – such would seem to be the motto.

Such a democratization did not obviously require ideological buttressing, and anthropological work that began in the 90s, calling itself gender work but spurning feminist stances, drawing upon women's practices, critiquing trends in globalization but not naming capitalism, marked a new shift in the turn to experience. I will go into these in greater detail in a later section.

It is in the context of these shifts that I see the turn to experience in feminist and gender work. In using the allegory of the two reports I provide, I also wish to mark my own shift – a shift that I call a re-turn to experience. The particular relationship between the *dai* and the doctor could be and has been read as a case of "I know, you do", where the *dai*, in her own words the "*mukkhu sukkhu manush*" – the

unlearned person – is brought in as experienced but non-knowledgeable, as probable representative of "indigenous health systems" that fit, makeshift, into the overcrowded field of reproductive health care, with the distinction alive at all times between Western medicine and such systems that are neither standardized nor adequately tested for efficacy and safety (NPP 2000). This is the orthodox 'high knowledge' position that works well with simple policies of inclusion. In response, both feminism and gender work have attempted to chart a politics of third world women's experience, to present an alternative picture, as I have briefly delineated. I will, in some detail, categorize two of these moves.

The global feminist making of the Third World Woman: building capability, fostering agency

(The 'typical' breast-feeding mother as depicted in Community Health posters)[14]

Feminist political philosophy has frequently been sceptical of universal normative approaches. I shall argue that it is possible to describe a framework for such a feminist practice of philosophy that is strongly universalist, committed to cross-cultural norms of justice, equality, and rights, and at the

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[14] As is evident from the poster, breastfeeding is part of the exercise of third-worlding that is promoted by development agendas and globalist feminist rhetoric alike. Shorn of any talk of natural birthing or mothering that such a move would be accompanied by in the West, it is nevertheless promoted – ideologically in theory, and pragmatically in practice, as the battle against the bottle and artificial feeds, as the alternative to global Capital making the third world mother self-sufficient provider of nutrition, and as the metaphor for responsible motherhood.

same time sensitive to local particularity, and to the ways in which circumstances shape not only options but also beliefs and preferences.

(Nussbaum 2000: 7)

The first day of the typical SEWA education program for future union and bank leaders is occupied by getting each woman to look straight at the group leader and say her name. The process is videotaped, and women grow accustomed to looking at themselves. Eventually, though with considerable difficulty, they are all able to overcome norms of modesty and deference and to state their names publicly.

(17, fn. 20)

> By women as a category of analysis, I am referring to the crucial assumption that all of us of the same gender, across classes and cultures, are somehow socially constituted as a homogeneous group identified prior to the process of analysis. This is an assumption which characterizes much feminist discourse. The homogeneity of women as a group is produced not on the basis of biological essentials but rather on the basis of secondary sociological and anthropological universals. Thus, for instance, in any given piece of feminist analysis, women are characterized as a singular group on the basis of a shared oppression. What binds women together is a sociological notion of the "sameness" of their oppression. It is at this point that an elision takes place between "women" as a discursively constructed group and "women" as material subjects of their own history.

(Mohanty 1991: 56)

Vasanti and Jayamma[15] entered the development literature when the imperative to attend to the local gained legitimacy, as quintessential representatives of

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[15] Stories of "two women trying to flourish" as perceived and told by Martha Nussbaum. "Unlike Vasanti, Jayamma has been examined previously in the development economics literature … I am very grateful to Leela Gulati for introducing me to Jayamma and her family and for translating." (Nussbaum 2000: 17, fn. 21). Leela Gulati, known for having brought anthropological perspectives to bear for the

poor, "illiterate" women caught up "in particular caste and regional circumstances in India" (Nussbaum 2000: 21); women situated, especially, on the lower rung of sexual hierarchies, and yet "trying to flourish" (15).

> Despite all these reversals (and others), Jayamma is tough, defiant, and healthy. She doesn't seem interested in talking, but she shows her visitors around, and makes sure that they are offered lime juice and water.

(19)

Persistent take-off points, they, or their names at any rate, have gained iconic currency as the 'real' local women who can now speak of the sufferings they endured till they moved from the 'informal sector' or a place "marginal to economic activity" (15, fn. 14) to the avowedly different and more agential category of 'self-employed'. Of Vasanti it is said, "She now earns 500 rupees a month, a decent living" (17, contrasted in the text with the Rs. 180 per month allotted to destitute women under the Indian Criminal Procedure Code in 1986). In a world where "letting the women speak for themselves" (17) is the task at hand, and one that is entirely possible, they speak. They break sanctions, form political alliances, *learn to name* themselves. And it is as a first step toward making possible this movement *from the local particularity to the universal value* that Nussbaum works hard to prepare the ground for herself as justified observer of Vasanti's and Jayamma's struggles. Such a universal will render possible for these women choice, the capability to make that choice, the right to demand political rights according to needs. For Nussbaum, detachment coupled with concern and familiarity is the ideal (and achievable) point from which this is possible.

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first time on seemingly economic issues, was the first to discuss widow and brick-kiln worker Jayamma in her work on widows in India (appearing in 1998, in Martha A. Chen, edited, *Widows in India: social neglect and public action)*, and also in other work on women's studies perspectives.

Speaking to the local

Nussbaum, therefore, begins her discussion on development, women and social justice by stating and grounding her primary focus on "the case of India, a nation in which women suffer great inequalities despite a promising constitutional tradition" (9). It is also a country she is familiar with, and this, she says, helps her "write on the basis of personal observation and familiarity, as well as study" (9):

> … I went to India to look at women's development projects, because I wanted to write a book that would be real and concrete rather than abstract, and because I knew too little to talk about the problems of poor working women in a country other than my own. *I had to hear about the problems from them.*

> (ix, italics mine)

Drawing on Jawaharlal Nehru's concept of "One World that can no longer be split into isolated fragments" to host her project, she also, however, describes being "both a foreigner and a middle-class person", and thus "doubly an outsider vis-à-vis the places about which" she writes. Nonetheless, a certain mixture of "curiosity and determination" helps "surmount these hurdles – especially if one listens to what people say". As a foreigner, Nussbaum believes she possesses a "helpful type of neutrality amid the cultural, religious, and political debates" that a local scholar would not be free from. "In a situation of entrenched inequality", she feels, "being a neighbor can be an epistemological problem" (10).

Speaking of tradition, Nussbaum finds it "impossible to deny that traditions, both Western and non-Western, perpetrate injustice against women". But though traditions – "local" or otherwise – cannot be denounced as "morally retrograde" through "hasty judgement", it is important not "[t]o avoid the whole issue" and "stand

around in the vestibule" refusing to "take a definite stand on any moral or political question" (1999: 30), because "there are universal obligations to protect human functioning and its dignity, and … the dignity of women is equal to that of men." Referring to what she calls Western tradition, an example of sexual harassment at the workplace shows that "[c]learly our own society *still* appeals to tradition in its own way to justify women's unequal treatment"(1999: 30, italics mine). But although "there is no country that treats its women as well as its men … [d]eveloping countries … present *especially urgent problems*" (2-3, italics mine). In such a situation, the need for a cross-cultural universal becomes imperative. As a possibility, it is already in place.

The urgency mounts with paragraph upon paragraph listing the "uneven achievements" of developing nations with respect to areas considered necessary to women's quality of life – female employment statistics, rape statistics, workplace harassment statistics, literacy, health, nutrition. One must of course be careful, says Nussbaum, even where favourable statistics are concerned, for "local governments tend to be boastful."

And through the increased magnitude of the problems, only vestiges of which apparently "still" contaminate the West, does one glimpse the spectre of the white woman who takes on the onerous responsibility of saving the brown woman from her traditions? Of course, armed with curiosity and the determination to satisfy it, the "neutral" foreigner, the disinterested observer who is not embroiled critic, can serve, apparently, as trusted confidante for the 'innocent' subaltern – a sensitive alliance, as it were, between the concerned intellectual and the yet-to-be-capable-agent – the

moment not yet *realized* in representation.[16] The brown woman "scholar", despite her however tenuous commonalities with Jayamma or Vasanti, might here be, by very virtue of her "enmeshed"ness, more suspect than the "unimplicated" foreigner.[17]

It is at this secure subject who is sought to be arrived at or revived on the premise that she exists somewhere before context, and must be reinstated, or given voice, that Nussbaum's capabilities approach is directed.

Working on the local

The "capabilities approach" has been proposed by Nussbaum in basic agreement with Amartya Sen.[18] Nussbaum talks of the capabilities approach as a "foundation for basic political principles that should underwrite constitutional guarantees" (70-1), and draws on "Aristotle's ideas of human functioning and Marx's

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[16] It would be important to note here that the 'subaltern' is another space of contestation. Is the subaltern a person with a pre-given identity? Does there exist a subaltern consciousness? Can the subaltern be known? Can the subaltern be 'developed'? The answers to all these questions within development discourse, and especially in Nussbaum's version of critique, would be yes.

[17] Is one allowed to turn that virtue on its head and talk of enmeshedness, for instance, as one reason among many for the local scholar to begin to understand or build "ethical singularities" (to use Spivak's phrase) with the subaltern? Spivak clarifies that "I have no doubt that we must learn to learn from the original practical ecological philosophies of the world. Again, I am not romanticizing … [this] can only be attempted through the supplementation of collective effort by love. What deserves the name of love is an effort … which is slow, attentive on both sides … mind-changing on both sides, at the possibility of an unascertainable ethical singularity that is not ever a sustainable condition" (1999: 383). Enmeshedness may not be enough for critical intimacy; is it necessary? What would I mean by enmeshedness? An involvement, both historically and existentially, with the issues at hand. This is not to say enmeshedness is enough, or can be looked at in isolation. It would be in an intersection with location. And location would be understood not only as historical or geographical context but as relational, between worlds, where the question of consistently perpetuated structural inequalities between 'first' and 'third' worlds would come up, where the implication of white feminism in defining issues on the global feminist agenda would have to be faced. It is a different story, however, when I, "local brown woman scholar" (and the scare quotes might remind me of the politics of identity implicit in that self-naming), essentialise both my *geographical* location and my "scholarship" to ground representative status for myself. Then again, local scholars always stand the chance of over-compliant alliances with the coloniser. It would also be useful to remember that this is not to initiate a battle over representation, as it too often turns into.

[18] An Indian economist, Amartya Sen is known for his contributions to welfare economics including his work on famine, human development theory, understanding the underlying mechanisms of poverty, gender inequality, and political liberalism. In order for economic growth to be achieved, he argued, social reforms, such as improvements in education and public health, must precede economic reform. Sen was called the "conscience of his profession". He has addressed problems related to individual rights (including the formulation of the liberal paradox), justice and equity, majority rule, and the availability of information about individual conditions, and has inspired researchers to turn their attention to issues of basic welfare.

use of them" (70). It is proposed as a universal and ethical approach that must nevertheless "focus appropriately on women's lives" (71) in order to be relevant, that is, it must "examine real lives in their material and social settings" (71). Premised on the "intuitively powerful", "core idea … of the human being as a dignified free being who shapes his or her own life in co-operation and reciprocity with others" (72), an "awe-inspiring something" that is "above the mechanical workings of nature" (73), the capabilities approach moves primarily in the direction of looking at each individual as an *end* in her own right, and endeavours towards promoting "central human functional capabilities", that is, capabilities that deliver readiness to make (certain) choices regarding functioning in 'multiply realizable' ways that are "truly human" (72), and living "a life that is shaped throughout by these human powers of practical reason and sociability" (72). These capabilities are to be promoted, and social and political institutions so structured, so that at least a threshold level, a "social minimum", of these capabilities may be attained. It is the idea of this threshold that Nussbaum concentrates on, stating that "we may reasonably defer questions about what we shall do when all citizens are above the threshold, given that this already imposes a taxing and nowhere-*realized* standard" (12, italics mine).[19] "On the other hand," says Nussbaum, "… [one is] not pushing individuals into the function; once the stage is set, the choice is up to them."

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[19] Based on an approximation of "what seems to be part of any life we will count as a human life" (Nussbaum 1995: 75), Nussbaum lists, provisionally, what are "basic functional human capabilities … 1. Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length … 2. Being able to have good health; to be adequately nourished … 3. Being able to avoid unnecessary and non-beneficial pain … 4. Being able to use the senses; being able to imagine, to think, and to reason … 5. Being able to have attachments to things and persons outside ourselves … 6. Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's own life. … 7. Being able to live for and to others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings … 8. Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature … 9. Being able to laugh, to play … 10. Being able to live one's own life and nobody else's … 10a. Being able to live one's own life in one's own surroundings and context." (Nussbaum 95: 83-85). Each of these are, stresses Nussbaum, "*separate components* [such that] [w]e cannot satisfy the need for one of them by giving a larger amount of another one" (81).

There is a distinction drawn, and stressed, between capability and functioning. The concept of capability is generally discussed in conjunction with rights, and the State is seen here as guarantor of these rights, not an enforcer of discipline. The presence of capability, then, is taken as reflection of a developed State, and the presence of functioning flowing from this capability as reflection of a good State that encourages citizens to express the choices they have been initiated into. Nussbaum says, "Thus, we want soldiers who will not *simply* obey, when an order is given...."

But in cases where functioning is considered important, like casting one's vote once the capability has been given, citizens might be forced into exercising their given capabilities – that is, into functioning. This argument is extended to innumerable situations, including children who need to function in a particular manner to make for capable adults, the spheres of health, maintenance of environments, literacy, nutrition, citizens' responsibilities like the paying of taxes, and others. "In general, the more crucial a function is to attaining and maintaining other capabilities, the more entitled we may be to promote actual functioning in some cases, within limits set by an appropriate respect for citizens' choices" (92). "Even compulsory voting would not be ruled out, if we were convinced that requiring functioning is the only way to ensure the presence of a particular capability" (93).

In attempting to arrive at a normative theory of social justice, Nussbaum considers state policies and principles of development in the third world as faulty not inasmuch as they do not take into account the perspectives of *women in an essential sense*, but inasmuch as they neglect women "as people who suffer pervasively from acute capability failure" (6). A focus on "women's problems … will help compensate for the earlier neglect of sex equality in development economics and in the international

human rights movement" (6-7). Her approach to development, therefore, is from the point of view of asking for recognition and inclusion in the category of the "truly human", and towards producing the ability to deserve it. Capability building and agency are, to this end, essential components, as is also the taking into account of the lived everyday experiences of women in the third world, that reflects on the absence of this capability.

Before addressing the several questions begging to be asked on universalist values endorsed by Nussbaum, I will briefly go into what implications such a position might have for a response to science. Nussbaum sees in her listing of "central human functional capabilities" the potential to suggest a normative ideal of bodily health, as well as a principle that has been applied in definitions of reproductive health:

> The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) adopted a definition of reproductive health that fits well with the intuitive idea of truly human functioning that guides this list: "Reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and its processes. Reproductive health therefore implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when, and how often to do so." The definition goes on to say that it also implies information and access to family planning methods of their choice. A brief summary of the ICPD's recommendations … "1. Every sex act should be free of coercion and infection. 2. Every pregnancy should be intended. 3. Every birth should be healthy."

> (Nussbaum 2000: 78 n. 83)

Following from the general notion of capability, this approach has a critique of modern medicine and development with regard to inclusion, taking as neutral and commonsensical the definitions of health or illness; the key question then is one of

building the capability to make informed choices on contraception, for example. For women vis-à-vis development programmes, the question would not be about the resources available at their command, or their satisfaction with those resources (the Rawlsian account), but of what part of those resources – medical facilities – they are capable of using – "what her opportunities and liberties are" (71). The argument then is one for access and inclusion into an apparently universal(ly understood) framework.[20]

Nussbaum's position runs immediately, as she is well aware, into charges of colonialist, imperialist and universalist attitudes, and this is where it might be useful, as a first step, to recall a critique like Chandra Mohanty's, on "third world women and the politics of feminism". In her innumerable pointers to the "Western eye", Mohanty[21] has pointed to the construction of the archetypal and "average" third world woman in Western feminist work, as also in other kinds of feminist discourse sited in the universalist frame. Such an archetype, in her argument, is the constitutive difference that makes possible the image of the Western feminist herself. This archetype is constructed through a slippage between the analytic and descriptive categories "Woman" and "women" respectively. "The relationship between "Woman" – a cultural and ideological composite Other constructed through diverse

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[20] There is also, of course, an elision between sex and reproduction in the third world here; how it follows from the ICPD recommendations that a satisfying sex life is being talked about is a mystery.

[21] Although the arguments quoted here are from Mohanty's text (1991) published well before Nussbaum's, and although Mohanty's critique is specifically based on the Zed Press 'Women in the Third World' series of publications (as being "the only contemporary series … which assumes that "women in the third world" are a legitimate and separate subject of study and research" [75, endnote 5]), Nussbaum has already been expressing her position vis-à-vis the capabilities question from the 1990s itself, drawing on Aristotle as a resource for an account of human functioning. Further, Mohanty's work seems to read directly, critically, and powerfully into some of the concerns in Nussbaum's self-avowed feminist political philosophy, particularly her writing on women in the third world that largely follows the women-in-development approach. Mohanty has been one of the more vociferous and visible critiques of first world feminism, and as such, it is necessary to engage her critique at this point. There are also significant ways in which Nussbaum's text shows up shifts in thinking in first world feminisms themselves, and it is with these in mind that I juxtapose the two.

representational discourses (scientific, literary, juridical, linguistic, cinematic, etc.) – and "women" – real, material subjects of their collective histories", states Mohanty, "is one of the central connections the practice of feminist scholarship seeks to address … [and is] not a relation of … correspondence or simple implication" (53). The feminist writings of the Zed Press that she analyses, Mohanty suggests, "discursively colonize the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the third world, thereby producing/ re-presenting a composite, singular "third world woman" – an image which appears arbitrarily constructed, but nevertheless carries with it the authorizing signature of Western humanist discourse." (53) As part of this effect, Mohanty traces "the similar effects of various textual strategies used by writers which codify Others as non-Western and hence themselves as (implicitly) Western. It is in this sense", she says, "that I use the term *Western feminist*" (Mohanty 1991: 52), thus clarifying both her separation from the geographical sense, and the ways in which certain articulations, positioned alongside others, acquire a particular sedimentation of meanings that constitute Eurocentrism. Mohanty traces some of these discourses – colonial anthropological,[22] western feminist, developmental, multinational capital – as addressed in the Zed Press publications to make her point, and following her argument, it is possible to also trace the continuities between these discourses.

Such an archetype, Mohanty points out, rests on the presumption of sexual difference as primary to the oppression that women in the third world might suffer – "that stable, ahistorical something that apparently oppresses most if not all the women in these countries" (53-4). For one, it takes as stable and before the event 'third world women' as a sociological category, an "automatic unitary group", (7) building on this then to show up their 'victimization' under "underdevelopment, oppressive traditions,

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[22] With its nativization of the "third world woman" (32).

high illiteracy, rural and urban poverty, religious fanaticism, and "overpopulation" of particular Asian, African, Middle Eastern, and Latin American countries" (Mohanty 1991: 5-6). In doing so, it irons out the absolute heterogeneity of the lived experiences of women in the third world.

So there is a "third world difference" too that is naturalised in and through this archetype, and thereafter, an easy connection made between "third world women" and feminism.[23] Mohanty herself, following Dorothy Smith (1987), points to a more productive way of looking at colonialism as *processes of ruling* instead of as a fixed entity, and suggests ways in which multiple contexts for the emergence of contemporary third world feminist struggles may be traced. These include the configurations of colonialism, class and gender, the state, citizenship and racial formation, multinational production and social agency, anthropology and the third world woman as "native", and consciousness, identity, writing.[24] Mohanty would therefore ask for the delineation of a more complex *relation between struggles* rather than sexual difference as a primary origin for the category of third world women, if at all it can be deployed – and that deployment she is not entirely against. "What seems to constitute "women of color" or "third world women" as a viable oppositional alliance", she says, "is a *common context of struggle* rather than color or racial identifications … it is third world women's oppositional *political* relation to sexist, racist, and imperialist structures that constitutes our potential commonality" (7). The

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[23] "First, there are the questions of definition … Do third world women make up any kind of constituency? … Can we assume that third world women's political struggles are necessarily "feminist"? How do we/ they define feminism? … Which/ whose history do we draw on to chart this map of third world women's engagement with feminism? How do questions of gender, race, and nation intersect in determining feminisms in the third world?" (2-3). Needless to say, these questions are by now commonplace in any discussion of feminism, and the question of 'how' may perhaps be a more useful one to attempt to answer.
[24] Where, for Mohanty, the writing of testimonials as public record, rather than autobiographies, becomes the space not merely for recording and recovery, but formation of subjectivities of resistance (34).

Woman-women connection, then, as she sees it, needs to be adequately historicized, set in context. And the category of Third World Woman has to be seen, in order to be useful, as a process of subject formation through these multiple conjunctures rather than as a pre-existing victim category.[25]

In pointing to the absolute heterogeneity of the experiences of third world women,[26] Mohanty does not, however, give up on the idea of domination or hegemony. What she suggests, instead, is that in understanding the "complex *relationality* that shapes our social and political lives … it is possible to retain the idea of multiple, fluid structures of domination which intersect to locate women differently at particular historical conjunctures, while at the same time insisting on the dynamic oppositional agency of individuals and collectives and their engagement in "daily life"" (13). The parallels with Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity are here apparent, and indeed Mohanty herself points to the parallel (75, n. 3), both in promoting a more complex notion of hegemony than that offered by easy binaries of colonizer and colonized, and in identifying the ways in which multiple negotiations in "daily life" can constitute resistances that are intimately imbricated with the hegemonic.

Mohanty's critique of such a difference as suggested by the naming of a 'third world woman' is then, in sum, a reference to the hierarchization on which it stands; in a more useful sense, it is part of an attempt to define "context" in a conceptual manner, and it is this attempt that I will take up in greater detail in the last section.

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[25] I have mentioned the Marxist trajectories that are one of the contexts underlying development critique, and this would include the experience of becoming feminist in Marxist spaces. This experience included, after the first enabling encounter with Western feminist texts, the recognition of that qualifier – Western – and my contention would be that it was the peculiar co-presence of postcolonial Marxist discourses rather than direct experiences of oppression or marginalization that made possible the primary recognition of this qualifier, as against others. I am, then, somewhat in disagreement with Mohanty's argument on colonialism as a straightforward condition of possibility for third world feminisms.

[26] I would like to clarify that throughout this discussion I am referring to third world women as referenced by Mohanty.

Let us, however, also examine Nussbaum's own account of such charges and her subsequent defence of the universal. Nussbaum considers three arguments generally offered against universalist values – "the argument from culture", the "argument from the good of diversity", and the "argument from paternalism". The argument from culture apparently presents a different set of norms as constitutive of Indian culture – norms of "female modesty, deference, obedience, and self-sacrifice that have defined women's lives for centuries" (41); norms that need not definitionally be bad, norms that work, presumably, for Indian women, and norms that may actually be preferable to Western norms that promote individualism for women. Nussbaum responds to her reading of the culture argument in several ways. For one, she talks of the cultural diversity of India, both temporal and spatial, that hardly allows for reference to such a homogeneity of norms – there are women who resist tradition, for instance. Therefore, "[c]ultures are dynamic … and [c]riticism too is profoundly indigenous … to the culture of India, that extremely argumentative nation" (48). Further, such norms would be acceptable if women had choices about adhering to or rejecting them, which women like Vasanti or Jayamma do not, in her opinion. They do not even endorse the norms they adhere to, and this strengthens her argument against simply accepting a relativist thesis on norms. After all, "[w]hy should we follow the local ideas, rather than the best ideas we can find?" (49) And a position of moral relativism also fails when one realises that a relativist position, conceptually, is not one that is tolerant of diversity or of other cultures.

Regarding the argument from the good of diversity, Nussbaum feels that cultural values that are different from the ones we know still demand a judgement of and decision-making on which ones to endorse and which to reject. "And this requires a set of values that gives us a critical purchase on cultural particulars … it does not

undermine and even supports our search for a general universal framework of critical assessment" (51).

As for the argument from paternalism, which would object to any effort at "telling people what is good for them" (51), Nussbaum responds by saying that "a commitment to respecting people's choices hardly seems incompatible with the endorsement of universal values … [specially] the value of having the opportunity to think and choose for oneself" (51). Further, she says that every law or bill does this, "telling people that they cannot behave in some way that they have traditionally behaved and want to behave" (53), which is "hardly a good argument against the rule of law" (51), particularly when it is required to protect some from the behaviour of others. Also, in order to build the "material preconditions" of choice, "in whose absence there is merely a simulacrum of choice" (51), law notwithstanding, it might indeed be necessary to "tell people what to do", something that obviously requires a universal normative account – what Nussbaum will call 'political' rather than 'comprehensive liberalism'.

Does the build-up of Nussbaum's argument for intervention in "the particularly urgent problems of developing nations" then indeed, after reading her defence, seem to constitute West-centrism? Is she, as postcolonial critics of universalism and third world feminist engagements would have it, and as I have also been tempted to flag in her text, marking an archetypal third world woman who needs rescuing? Are her 'universal values' constituted by such an archetype?[27] Although her conversations are with women who are typically poor, tradition-bound, victimized, yet defiant and speech-worthy, for a philosopher like Nussbaum, the archetype is marked *so as to be*

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[27] Let me clarify that rather than being a digression in the debate on possible feminist critiques of development, these questions are relevant to where the positioning of such a possible critique could be.

transcended, shed, saving the brown woman from those of her traditions that are constricting, transforming her, through an accurate application of universal principles, into ideal human and citizen. To this end, Nussbaum also needs to demonstrate that victimhood is not the essence of 'woman', just as difference in any form is not. Indeed, essence or difference will find no place in her philosophy, and her painstaking description of cultural particularity is merely a preamble to then argue for commonality – these are features of "women's lives everywhere", where the seeming oddities are only differences in manifestation of stereotypes of women and men, rather than being signs of an "alien consciousness" (23). She also quotes 'local' scholars to endorse their views on the undeliverability of "a representative, authentic Third-world woman … [e]ven in India, there is no such thing as *the* Indian woman – there are only Indian women. And the individuals are far more interesting than any assumed stories of authenticity" (Indira Karamcheti, quoted in Nussbaum 2000: 47). However, "the body that gets beaten is in a sense the same all over the world, concrete though the circumstances of domestic violence are in each society" (23). In that sense, India, with its extent of poverty and difference, merely offers the model 'case study'.

Nussbaum sees herself, then, in a peculiar relationship with these women. Her primary interlocutor is not so much the feminist sited in the third world, who has attempted to offer an interpretative edge to the naming itself. The purported conversation is, instead, directly with the poor, tradition-bound, victimized, yet defiant and speech-worthy third world women, each different from the other, at the most mediated by a Leela Gulati, the anthropologist in the field. There is no absence of commonality between women here and women elsewhere; there is, however, a value to the 'local' that the feminist political philosopher needs to acknowledge, a specificity to the problems that, though identifiable in "women's lives everywhere",

asks for the exercise of a *non-imperialist universal* recognition of the particular *before it can be represented*. It is this impulse that produces the insistent declaration that her proposals are based on and grew out of her experience of working with poor women in India. The ghost of colonialism, once it is shaken off, can produce for Nussbaum the reality of the 'third world'. It is this "defence of universal values" that can be adequately represented by her (34), and that is enacted here.

What rests on this exercise of delineating Nussbaum's position and challenges to it? I would suggest that the problem, at least in so far as current global feminist analyses identify it, lies elsewhere than economo-centrism and the non-attention to difference. For Nussbaum, the chief interlocutor is in fact the field of development economics that does take into account various non-economic indicators. Victimhood is no longer the critical discourse, if it ever was. Nor is homogeneity of experience asserted, although commonality indeed is. In fact, both Nussbaum and Mohanty are aware of and attempting to nuance binaries here – Nussbaum to challenge the 'West as evil' image and development as a totalizing discourse by pointing to the problem as one of bad practitioners, and Mohanty working on the other arm of the binary, to point to the impossibility of "third-worlding" in any simple sense. Mohanty's critique of universalism is accurate inasmuch as she points to the binariness of certain existing critiques. It fails, however, in her insistence on historical and socio-political heterogeneity as the necessary context of category formation; any category, no matter how minutely contextualized, is by definition nominalist, unintended to capture the entirety of experiences, and to that extent, presence of heterogeneity *per se* can hardly constitute a critique of category formation. Nussbaum's categories are, by her own admission, provisional, nominalist, *stable*, and hence not philosophically subject to this particular charge of rigidity.

But … the charges of the "Western eye" are not merely charges about faulty practitioners, as Nussbaum would have it, nor, surely, can proof of resistance to norms be proof of their absence? Further, the "third world" that Nussbaum names in the plural and as a non-essentialist category, yet needs delineation in a manner that pointing to *practices of bias* cannot begin to get close to. It is in the assumptions of the unimplicated foreigner, then, that Nussbaum's universalism lies, as in her complete indifference to the anchoring "sample populations" on which the ideal citizen, or the neutral definitions of reproductive health, for example, have been built. Herein lies the validity of Mohanty's charge of "ethnocentric universality" (53). While Nussbaum's arguments actually clarify for us that universalism in its ideal description is hardly the problem, there is a double move in the delineations of the universal *and* the particular in her writing, and in other work in this frame. Vasanti and Jayamma are clearly not, in Nussbaum's lexicon, victims of the mute kind. They have been, despite the unavailability of infrastructure and mechanisms that could reverse hardship, negotiators and survivors. They are 'lacking' apparently only in the capabilities that would allow them to access legal and economic structures. And yet, embedded as they are in their "particular caste and regional circumstances", their negotiations with those circumstances are tied to their bodies in ways that seem to embody their very specificity. A putting together of body-situation-circumstance that makes up 'third-worldness' as a category of description for Nussbaum and her fellow-universalists, be it the embodied images of 'mothers of colour' breastfeeding their newborn, or the detailed physical descriptions of Vasanti and Jayamma and their surroundings, then, is not incidental to the narrative of their flourishing; *it is, singularly, the narrative of the particular*. In a frame of lack of capability, Vasanti or Jayamma can hardly be expected *not to have a body*; and they can hardly be expected

to produce analytic statements. As a "political explanation", therefore, when Jayamma says that "[a]s a [domestic] servant, your alliance is with a class that is your enemy", her "use of the Marxist language of class struggle" must be taken with a pinch of bemusement – "whether one endorses it or not" [19]. It is after this particularity has been described in its entire nuance that Nussbaum can set out to draw her comparisons with "efforts common to women in many parts of the world".

A useful critique of universalism would mean, as Mohanty begins to suggest, an attention to context, a beginning of knowledge *and of categories* from enmeshment rather than outsideness, although it would require a movement from that enmeshment to a form of objectivity – the movement from perspective to story that Lorraine Code speaks of, in her work on feminist epistemology.[28] It would also require, and here Mohanty's and other critiques of first world feminism fall short, a recognition that *relationality* between struggles in what I continue to provisionally call the third world will also mean a space between them that is hardly ever *common* in the sense of a happy relation. It will, then, involve the recognition that such struggles are sited in different *worlds*, and will, in their cohesion, also mean a movement away from each other. It is only in the attempt to interpret this movement that a discursive space of negotiation with the 'first world' can perhaps be forged.

To such a universalist position, ecofeminists have replied with the following:

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[28] I have discussed this argument in chapter 2. I will elaborate on the possibilities inherent in this formulation, in my suggestion towards a feminist methodological critique of development, and science, in the last section of this chapter.

A soliloquy of the local – 'I know mine, you know yours, there can be no dialogue'

The 'third world woman' as perspective *to speak from* has perhaps not been articulated as clearly anywhere else as in Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva's writing on ecofeminism, and this work is also evidence of the ways in which development becomes a powerful organizing metaphor for 'third world feminism'. Building on the notions of organicity, wholeness, and connectedness as the primary postulates of ecofeminism, Mies and Shiva thereafter take up certain cultural characteristics associated with the Third World to offer a picture of third world women as already in convergence with nature, as upholders of the subsistence economy as against the "capitalist patriarchal" system, and as offering perspectives for resistance to such an economy of the Same. Critiquing both Western science and development, they endeavour to demonstrate the reductionist and universalist paradigms that the former occupies. For these critics, the mechanicity that Western science relies on, the ways in which it dominates nature-women-third world, treating and re-producing each of these as a dead object, are symptomatic of a subject-object dualism that is carried over into development philosophies too. Western science, says Shiva, is philosophically embedded in dualisms[29] of subject-object, which allow for such a possibility only vis-à-vis nature or any researched object. The neutrality that this apparently guarantees the researcher is however a false one, since the universal position from which it emanates is itself anchored in Western paradigms. Mies traces continuities here from Francis Bacon onwards – "scientists since Bacon, Descartes and Max Weber have constantly concealed the impure relationship between knowledge and violence or

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[29] There are strong ecofeminist positions on duality, however, that this approach fails to take up. See Plumwood, 1993.

force (in the form of state and military power, for example) by defining science as the sphere of a pure search for truth … [thus lifting] it out of the sphere of politics … [a separation] which we feminists attack [as] based on a lie" (46). This scientific principle, constructed through "violently disrupting the organic whole called Mother Nature" (46), became then the route to knowledge, creating the "modern scientist [as] the man who presumably creates nature as well as himself out of his brain power … [after] a disruption of the symbiosis between the human being, Mother Nature, and the human mother … [and this is] the link between the new scientific method, the new capitalist economy, and the new democratic politics" (47). Similar to this, asserts Mies, is Immanuel Kant's evolution of a concept of knowledge and rationality through an extrusion of emotion.

The masculine character of Western science, constituted through such an extrusion of emotion, such a "subjection of nature and women", was also associated with a violence that is evident in all technologically advanced societies. Mies and Shiva cite the examples of military, new reproductive and biotechnologies that accompany new globalized economies, pointing out that such technology is never neutral but functions through the "principle of selection and elimination" that provides the "main method of conquest and control" over what will survive and what will not be allowed to (195).

Development, Shiva asserts, has in its overall philosophy followed the principles of Western science. It would follow that development has then always been about 'catching up' with a universal model that has apparently worked in Western countries to provide a good quality of life, freedom from poverty, hunger, illness, and so on. The socialist states were the first to set up the model, and despite strong evidence

contradicting its effectiveness even in those states, it has remained the model in dominance today.

But Shiva has more than the ineffectivity of the model to offer as critique. The accumulation model, she asserts, is built on the premises of colonialism and capitalist patriarchy, that "interpret[s] difference as hierarchical and uniformity as a prerequisite for equality" (Mies and Shiva 1993: 2). "This system emerged, is built upon and maintains itself through the colonization of women, of 'foreign' peoples and their lands; and of nature, which it is gradually destroying" (2). Technology is one of the tools of such colonization. Technological advancement is accompanied by externalization of costs, so that workers in colonized peripheries are treated differently and paid less than workers in the metropole. The "colonization of women" involves the unpaid labour of women – the "free economy" of mainstream economics – that shores up the market economy.[30] The "hidden costs generated by destructive development … [include] the new burdens created by ecological devastation, costs that are invariably heavier for women, in both the North and South" (75).

Although this ecofeminist approach, like the other kinds of gender work I have highlighted that negotiate science or development, speaks of the need for "a creative transcendence of … differences" between women the world over in order to offer resistances little or large, it is also in dissonance with them in proposing a far more fixed position – a philosophy already embedded in 'the people', here the women by virtue of *being woman*. The intensification of the local provided in Mies and Shiva's ecofeminist approach,[31] then, separates itself somewhat from other approaches to the local as a critique of development. Such an intensification is not in the frame of stark

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[30] For more work on this, see Fraad, Resnick, and Wolff, 1994.

[31] There are ways in which the third world as local is re-produced in this discourse, even in the "transcending of differences" among women the world over that it proposes.

cultural difference that would, in Mies and Shiva's opinion, produce a cultural relativism, nor is it interested in distilled essences of the local or the "romanticization of the savage" (150) that appear in globalized market discourse, but rather in a connection between the spiritual and the material – a relation of soil-nature-subsistence that is somehow to be found in the practices, intuitions, and indeed protest movements of third world women. In so doing, ecofeminism of course exposes itself to the standard critique of essentialism.[32] What is important for our purposes here is the need to recognize that ecofeminism is far closer to old ideological positions in the spectrum between these and the new dynamic local or hybrid, and as expected, discredited for the same reasons in the current climate. The understandings of colonialism and capitalism that animate Mies and Shiva's version of the ecofeminist project are, insofar as they are spelt out, inadequate as provisional arguments. Further, the manner in which the category of 'third world women' is activated through a reference to the organicity and wholeness of their practices, fails to give an adequate account of how this may happen; as such, it continues to fall into the trap of romanticization that it seeks to avoid. A philosophy that is intuitive and already in place, along with the interpretative ability to put it into practice through various movements of resistance, fails to provide any evidence of its assertions.

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[32] This is a critique that ecofeminists counter with the view that it stems from a dualistic thinking on the historical-materialist Left that considers that nature is also socially constructed, and that any attempt to say "body" is automatically reverting to biology and some form of naturalism. On the other hand, "[f]emaleness is and was always a human relation to our organic body [and] [o]nly under capitalist patriarchy did the division between spirit and matter, the natural and the social lead to the total devaluation of the so-called natural … a necessary integration of both [ecofeminist and social ecologist] views … would not be possible [they say, following Mary Mellor] 'without reconstructing the whole socialist project'" (160).

A disaggregated (third) world: women negotiating meanings

But there is another kind of scholarship now in currency that negotiates meanings of gender differently. Global gender work disdaining the universalist approach takes on the hybridization argument and works toward identifying contingent moments of resistance. This scholarship is in alignment with postcolonial approaches. Anthropological investigations into midwifery and childbirth practices exemplify this position. This is what I call the space of not-feminist gender analysis. I take up, in this section, a particular text that is fairly representative of such analysis, and that, to begin with, marks its separations from post-development positions like Escobar's,[33] concentrating instead on the heterogeneity of experiences as well as the disaggregated nature of institutional apparatuses that apparently make a description of hegemony difficult,[34] and further, on the impossibility of even identifying such a hegemonic role for Western science in the Indian context.[35] Of course, having made this argument against the hegemonic nature of Western science, in this case Western medical frameworks, this kind of global gender analysis also carries with it the imperative to separate itself from universalist positions, both in justifying the impulse

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[33] "Arturo Escobar has proposed that development is first and foremost a discourse, a coherent system of representation that creates the "reality" of its objects and exerts control over them. … This Foucauldian approach accomplishes a radical relativization of development discourse by showing it to be a distinctively modern and Western formulation. It suggests, as well, that the logic of development discourse is fundamentally cohesive. Ethnographic research, however, highlights the gaps in what appears to be a totalizing development discourse. The perspectives and experiences of both the people who are constituted as the "objects" of development as well as the people in the institutions that implement development locally point to a much messier and often contradictory experience of development. Akhil Gupta describes this experience as the "complex border zone of hybridity and impurity." In short, we cannot assume that the logic of development discourse as produced by official reports, studies, and programmatic statements necessarily structures the way that development is used and experienced at the local level" (Van Hollen 2003: 168).

[34] "… anthropologists have begun to examine the diverse and uneven ways … [in which] childbirth is being biomedicalized throughout the world" (ibid: 15).

[35] "Unlike the situation in the United States and many parts of Europe, the biomedical establishment's control over childbirth in India can by no means be viewed as hegemonic" (ibid: 55).

of choosing subjects of research[36] as well as in declaring a detached commitment to such research.[37]

On culture and the local

Cecilia Van Hollen – who is fairly representative of a body of work in anthropology (see Rozario 1998,[38] Ram 1998, 1994, 2001, and a large number of other anthropologists working especially on reproductive health issues in India) – begins her argument at the site of a shift she identifies as useful in anthropological work, from a reading of practices as reflection of a culture, to a reading of culture as "in-the-making" through everyday practices. Using this "processural view of culture-in-the-making", she clarifies that her anthropological approach does not seek to imply "one monolithic thing that we can call "modern birth" in the contemporary world order" (5). For her, it is important "to stay within the specific ethnographic field of [her] own research and to underscore [her] point that biomedicine always takes on a unique form at the local level" (8). At the very moment of her refusal to call it monolithic or by a common name, however, she is speaking of the re-interpretations of the global project of biomedical knowledge at the "microphysical level by individual actors, collectivities, and institutions", and it is in this re-interpretation and the possibilities of hybridisation and reconfiguring along caste, class and gender axes through it that she is interested. In her case, she finds it important to "view[ing]

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[36] The impulse being an avowedly a personal one – "My initial decision to carry out this research in Tamil Nadu … had more to do with my own personal history in the state than with a purely scholarly interest in filling a lacuna in academic research" (ibid: 18).

[37] "My intent is not to criticize from afar the work of so many hardworking and dedicated health care providers and policymakers. In fact, I am keenly aware of the historical legacy of the damning depiction of maternal and child health care in India by colonial discourse to legitimise colonial rule. So I present these criticisms with a certain amount of discomfort about my role in perpetuating this discourse in the postcolonial era, despite the fact that I strive to show how international and globalizing forces are intricately implicated in women's critiques" (ibid: 9).

[38] Who, during case studies of *dais* in Bangladesh, finds unpardonable the luxury of "mythologizing and romanticizing the process of 'natural childbirth' and of projecting this image on to a Third World context where it is not always appropriate" (Rozario 1998: 144).

reproduction itself as a key site for understanding the ways in which people *re*-conceptualize and *re*-organize the world in which they live" (5). She has a similar approach to gender ideologies, hierarchies, or practices, and is at pains to demonstrate the impossibility of cross-cultural assertions that do not take into account these practices and their different sedimentation of meanings.

Such a disciplinary move is accompanied, perforce, by the need to challenge the clear separation of biomedical technological systems and indigenous practices of healing that has characterized earlier analyses of Western medicine and by extension, science. It is accompanied by a challenge to the notion of development as totalizing discourse philosophically anchored in the geographical West (and hence the separation from Escobar). It is accompanied by a challenge to the need to identify resistance in a straightforward rejection of Western medicine or technology. In doing this, then, it is also avowedly a move away from those feminist readings of the agency of third world women as sited in the 'natural', the 'cultural', or the 'indigenous', and of Western biomedical practices as controlling of women (15). This means a re-cognition of the 'local' as itself multiply constituted and constantly in flux. And it is accompanied by the mandatory recognition, akin to Nussbaum's, of the problem of being the Western feminist and intellectual who must constantly strain towards transparency. Here, of course, the anthropologist's new requirement of self-reflexivity has manifested as an expression of near-guilt – a moral problem.

The agency question gets taken up differently from Nussbaum in such an analysis that invokes the 'local' but at a more avowedly involved level. There is a pattern to this kind of scholarship that affirms the burden of a feminist re-invocation of experience while needing to disavow existing feminist modes. Van Hollen has, for

example, attempted to speak of the marginalization of women's labour within modern medical systems. So "ethnographic stud[ies] of how modernity was impacting the experiences of poor women during childbirth in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu at the end of the twentieth century" become a part of the attempt to understand "how the relationship between maternity and modernity is experienced, understood, and represented" (4).

While feminist activism and scholarship has done much to point to "medicalization" in Western medicine – "the process by which medical expertise "becomes the relevant basis of decision making in more and more settings" … the process whereby the medical establishment … incorporates birth in the category of disease and requires that a medical professional oversee the birth process and determine treatment" (11), anthropology has avowedly contributed to a disaggregation of biomedicine itself as it is practised in the 'Western world', through descriptions of how it is actively redefined in the 'third world'. Van Hollen states that such disaggregations challenge "those feminist studies that view all the controlling aspects of biomedicalized births as derived from a Western historical legacy of the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution and that present a romanticized vision of holistic "indigenous" birth, or "ethno-obstetrics", as egalitarian, "woman-centered", and non-interventionist" (15). As she proceeds to unravel the "historical and cultural specificity of the transformations in the experience of childbirth" (15), it is clear that she sees resistance as embodied in these specificities; moreover, she sites resistance in the bricoleur-like response to various biomedical allopathic procedures rather than in a soliloquous 'natural therapy' movement. And this difference between, say, the African home birth movement and the individuated responses in Tamil Nadu, signals what she calls cultural specificity.

What happens to the agency question in this exercise? Clearly, empowerment here is through frames other than the modified inclusions suggested by Nussbaum. Any use of the modern, states Van Hollen, is bound to refigure it in ways that bear back on the definition of the modern. Anthropological exercises such as Van Hollen's see themselves as different from 'postcolonial' studies that focus on rural areas and that, like feminist work, tend "to depict childbirth practices as relatively untouched by allopathic institutions" (8). By locating her own investigation in metropolitan Madras (now Chennai), for instance, Van Hollen prefers to home in on more central locations for allopathy, aiming to look at "the central role which allopathy plays in women's decisions regarding childbirth and … how women choose from among different allopathic options as well as non-allopathic practices." In other words, the hybrid, mixed bag of tradition-and-modernity, also a bag that is being negotiated in a way that avoids "falling into the trap of representing others simply as victims" (10).

With such a frame in place, Van Hollen proceeds to look at the various negotiations made by women in Tamil Nadu vis-à-vis allopathy.

After ideology

In the shift from a notion of strong hegemony to a description of disaggregated discourses – which is actually a different exercise from suggesting hybridity as a *model* – Van Hollen acts, then, as representative of a position that determinedly embeds itself in the local, in the category "women", in experience, to propose weak and diversely articulated structures of power rather than a singular monolith. Rather than express these as 'binaries', Van Hollen finds it a more fruitful exercise to concentrate on the processes of modernization that, for the purposes of her study, "impact childbirth in Tamil Nadu: 1) the professionalization and institutionalisation of

obstetrics, 2) transformations in the relationship between consumption patterns and reproductive rituals, 3) the emergence of new technologies for managing the pain of birth, 4) the international mandate to reduce population in India, and 5) development agencies' agenda to spread biomedical conceptions of reproductive health for mothers and children. These processes," she contends, "taken together, have transformed cultural constructions of reproduction and social relations of reproduction in myriad ways" (6). She is also interested in "assess[ing] how the five processes of modernity mentioned above, in relation to other factors, influence the "choices" poor women and their families make about the kind of care to seek for childbirth-related needs." In referring to choice, she clarifies that "the decision-making process is never a matter of the free will of rational, value-maximizing individuals, but, rather, it is always enacted in political-economic contexts and shaped by socio-cultural factors such as gender, class, caste, and age" (7).

How exactly does Van Hollen undertake this project? Her conversations with the women she meets in her two primary field-sites in Tamil Nadu produce for her a vast collection of words that are in common conversational usage in terms of negotiations (between modernity and *shakti*, for instance), are also part of the canon of Hinduism, and the subject of much critique. For Van Hollen, the feature to be noted is the ways in which these words travel and acquire a rich concatenation of meanings – *which* concatenation, she will contend, is what actually constitutes culture – an act of bricolage.[39]

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[39] Levi-Strauss has used the word 'bricolage' to suggest the origin of myths from tales put together, to abandon "all reference to a *center*, to a *subject*, to a privileged *reference*" (Derrida 1978: 286), and to separate method from truth. In French, a bricoleur is a jack-of-all-trades. Derrida, critical of the value of the distinction between the bricoleur and the engineer, sees in the ethnographic impulse the pressure to interpret, arrive at "a truth or an origin which escapes play and the order of the sign" (292).

What, then, does such an anthropological exercise achieve? Is it, in also shifting from the earlier ethnographic impulse, talking about the bricolage that constitutes culture? Van Hollen is definitely building up a glossary of words – *vali, maruttavaci, shakti*, and so on, but these are words that she refers to as the *originals* in the analyses she makes. It may be that the particular word referred to in translation may travel to the reader of her text against the grain as well, as alternative interpretations of the words she has heard and put down. In the act of simply putting down vis-à-vis western concepts of pain etc., however, there is no suggestion towards such a move, and the glossary seems to act more as evidence of fidelity to the 'object of knowledge', namely the "poor women of Tamil Nadu"; like Nussbaum, a way of "listening to what they are saying". Reflexive anthropology, in this case, makes the claim to transparency as much as the earlier ethnographic exercise, with the difference that it wants to do this through the insertion of the researcher into the frame, as against earlier forms which unapologetically museumized the cultures being studied as exotic, other, and as object of knowledge separate from the anthropologist.

What does such a position offer in terms of furthering the understanding of hegemony, or, as Van Hollen herself puts it, of "how modernity was impacting the experiences of poor women during childbirth in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu at the end of the twentieth century" (4)? What does the shift from a notion of strong hegemony to a description of disaggregated discourses mean for conceptual strategies to read the same? The disaggregated picture that Van Hollen describes, the hidden corners it uncovers, all mark ways in which childbirth is viewed differently, as also ways in which seeming centres of power – institutions and policies – are negotiated. In her invocation of the different relationship to labour pain or *vali* – for instance the idea that "poor women in Tamil Nadu" seem to have a relationship of attachment to,

practically a summoning of, suffering as a necessary constituent of childbirth, as against standard mainstream moves and feminist calls for painless labour – she also wishes to point to different ways in which both culture and gender may be constituted as dynamic practices, rather than as an identity or reserve that is drawn upon, or as *structures* of domination and resistance. In any useful extension of her project, then, it would be necessary to say that the categories of domination and resistance are themselves difficult to define. Why? Is it because of their contradictory nature? Their ambivalence? Van Hollen, as indeed more and more anthropologists, performs the task of description with fidelity and often with ingenuity. This task of description is expected to offer a critique of macro-analyses, as also of rigid, monolithic descriptions. In what often turns out to be a misunderstanding of macro-analyses with generalization, of structural understandings with rigidity, however, the task of description does not, as Van Hollen would have us believe, offer a model of hybridity as a framework of hegemony. The engagement I set up between Mohanty and Nussbaum shows us the same slippage.

There is something else happening here. While Van Hollen strains to clarify that she does not wish to refer to an authentic and fixed notion of a culture, or a cultural past, her use and interpretation of her glossary terms falls back on relating conversational usage to the canon in some form. Such a method might well, as postcolonial theorists have attempted, recall a notion of repetition rather than origin. Van Hollen's stress is on difference, however, and in articulating this difference, it is a stable notion of culture that she falls back on, still associating with cultural essentialisms while always disavowing them. As such, the easy transposition of dichotomies like public-private that make sense in Western intellectual contexts, to

conversations Van Hollen has with these women is in itself a simulation of the local that hardly works.[40]

In the notion of a 'gap' or a 'failure' to understand or hegemonize the local, this kind of anthropological analysis aligns with the framework of hybridity put forward by the postcolonial school. It does not, however, do the same work in even attempting a conceptual strategy, merely ranging itself alongside instead.

Bringing the economic back home

In the influential and important 1991 World Bank report on *Gender and Poverty in India*, principal author Lynn Bennett announces:

> … now, researchers, women's activists, and government departments are reaching a new consensus. … [W]omen must be seen as economic actors – actors with a particularly important role to play in efforts to reduce poverty.
>
> (John 1999: 105)

There is another difference from other anthropological work that Van Hollen asserts, and offers as a more strident critique of globalisation than isolated cultural analyses. This she does by bringing in questions of consumer practices and globalisation, and the various changes in birth practices in the light of changes in the economic; in so doing, she re-configures third world women as important economic actors.

'Third world poverty' is here a significant allegory. For Nussbaum it is a condition to be resisted along with sexual hierarchies; for Van Hollen, economic

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[40] The analysis of *vācal* (translated as doorway), for instance, as metaphorically separating the private and the public. Why is it not simply a description? At the very least, what are the disciplinary methodologies by means of which anthropology, for instance, seeks to apply this semantic construction?

disparities and changing forms of the economy create different conditions of possibility for changing cultural practices. In both, there is a sense that economy is being brought back into the discussion, after a period of much-vaunted culture as the last instance of difference. In both, then, the 'economic' becomes a metaphor for connection (Nussbaum will say that the lives of poor women are the same everywhere; Van Hollen will refer to the 'politics of globalization') as well as difference, in some sense actually regaining importance, as it were, in causal frameworks.

The World Bank report itself drew entirely on the findings of the 1988 *Shramshakti* report on the condition of women in the informal sector, compiled after extensive field surveys in different parts of the country. The *Shramshakti* report, states Mary E. John, "was intended to show women's extremely vulnerable working conditions across diverse occupations under high levels of discrimination, as well as the range of health hazards women were exposed to on an everyday basis. The recommendations of the report addressed to various ministries … included enlarging the definition of work to encompass all women engaged in production and reproduction, recognizing women's position as major rather than supplementary wage earners, and finding strategies to enhance women's control over and ownership of resources" (John 1999: 112). This is a finding that is set up, in the World Bank report, to actually say that these are women who are more efficient resource managers, and therefore better negotiators of poverty, *than their men*. In that turn, in the shift from *exploitation to efficiency* (as John points out), in the shift in focus from the *formal to the informal sector*, and in the *examination* of poor third world women in this space as a given rather than as a problem (94% of the informal sector is constituted by women, but this is not considered the problem, as is not the conditions of employment that

prevail in this sector), a fresh image of the "third world woman" is constituted – enmeshed but not mired in her cultural practices, poor but a survivor, and an important economic actor, as a glance at the literature on social capital or New Communitarianism will also show.[41]

What does a moment when such a report was appearing alongside a vast literature on the micro-politics of negotiation by women of third world countries, ask to be read as? Clearly, negotiation as a strategy of power and economic resources, encouraging a re-inscription of the 'third world' as agential, sits in a not uncomfortable alignment with a concentration on the problem of development as a 'third world problem' – something mainstream development language has always done. Further, the move from ideological critique to description, finds another parallel, in an apparent move from politics to self-help.

And after feminism

We have seen, in Van Hollen's text, the impulse to move away from feminist articulations. Feminism here is, of course, seen as the ideological stance that is both epistemically unreliable in its monolithic description of social conditions, and vanguardist in not taking into account women's spontaneous consciousness/ negotiations. Given such an understanding of feminism, the only alternative would be to move away from feminism to women, sometimes positioning women as ex-officio knowers, sometimes as learning through living, never as a coherent community, and never as subjects of feminism. Apart from being the new and acceptable micro-politics in the new globalised economy, this could also be read as a response to rigid

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[41] Also referred to as progressive conservatism, this proposes a political economy embedded within local communities, as a buffer to the continuing collateral damage of capitalist economies. Needless to say, this relies on community networks already in place, including patriarchal ones.

ideological stances in feminism that read *both women and science* in homogenous frames. It is also, in other words, a movement from 'difference' – both the hierarchical difference that was promoted in Marxist perspectives on gender and the feminist call to a different perspective to break free of Marxist methodologies – to differences.[42] We would do well, I believe, not to simply label this the backlash against feminism, for it has not merely resulted in an antagonistic positioning of feminist and other kinds of gender work vis-à-vis development; there are significant overlaps, too, in the two movements. The turn to autobiographical/ ethnographic narrative as experience, for example, has driven much feminist analysis that struggled to shed rigid ideologies, as we have seen at least in part above. The most significant overlap here with non-feminist gender work would be the need to build a *narrative of experience* against that of Reason, or Culture, or the concomitantly named hegemonic entity. In this sense, the task in both later feminism and gender analysis has been to turn to experience, as it were, and describe it faithfully, in its diversity and heterogeneity.

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[42] I have examined, in Chapter 2, how legacies of Left critique worked for those 'growing up feminist in Marxist spaces' in Bengal in the '80s. My hypothesis is that this legacy actually shaped the methodologies of feminist work on science and development, including the shift from 'access' to 'terms of access', as a parallel reading of the shift in Left approaches to science and technology from the nationalist to the postcolonial moments would suggest. This is not to suggest a relationship of bonhomie or emulation between feminist and Marxist practice in Bengal, but rather a fraught and largely unacknowledged relationship of antagonism. In Left spaces in Bengal, the positioning of the 'feminine' as inchoate and perspectival, as *experienced but non-knowledgeable*, shores up Marxist discourse, rather, is necessary to the articulation of a Marxist standpoint, and it is from here that I propose that, in our contexts, feminist methodologies too have at least partly been fraught with the need to retain the element of 'perspective' as a particular, sometimes limited 'way of looking', an experience addressed to and *contained within* the hegemonic – here masculinist Marxist practice – rather than an interpretative tool that could provide both a knowledge of dominant systems, as well as a better account of the world.

Alternatives? From situated knowledges to standpoint epistemology

> One should expect control strategies to concentrate on boundary conditions and interfaces, on rates of flow across boundaries – and not on the integrity of natural objects.

<div align="right">(Haraway 1991: 163)</div>

First, the question of experience. This one statement subsumes several questions, on politics, on knowledge, that I have been trying to raise in the thesis. What I have been calling the old ideological model of critique – the possibility of critique from the vantage point of a coherent set of material interests – was also tied to a model of knowledge, a model that said – *I know, you do*. This constituted the rationale for the vanguard, this constituted the knowledge of oppression. For a feminism having drawn from Marxist legacies of politics, this then was the model to be adopted, and the politics around women's lives that gave birth to this entity, feminism, and has nurtured it ever since, definitionally became that benevolent umbrella, that liberatory tool, that protects those lives and inserts itself into them (the personal must be politicized). Having identified the problems of vanguardism during the post-nationalist, subaltern turn, however, a portion of the rethinking Left *and* a global, universalist feminism may consider that what remains for us to do or think is a turn to experience. The slogan changed; it became – *we all know, together*. Both these moves were, however, hyphenated in the premise of 'one knowledge'.

There were several moves critical of 'one knowledge'. Those that took the 'Third World' route either proposed a 'different reason', a different canon, an alternative system (as postcolonial scholars sometimes did), or articulated a politics of complete heterogeneity that held knowledge as necessarily provisional and separate from a

rationale for politics (as did those that took on the name 'third world feminism'). A third position here was of *I know mine, you know yours, there can be no dialogue*. For this school of knowledge, the experience of oppression was necessary, and sufficient. The consciousness of oppression, which was ex-officio, offered knowledge. The community of knowers here was a closed community. Asserting that the 'one knowledge' claim rested on the active exclusion of other knowledges, it suggested a remaking of 'low knowledge' through the *experience of oppression*. This is the impulse that starts, and ends, with the embodied insider, speaking with[in] and for itself, a complete closed community. This impulse we have seen with respect to sexual minorities, women, the subaltern – an impulse also tied to the organic or pastoral as opposed to the technological, an impulse sometimes tracing direct connections with a cultural past, and often offering a choice *between systems of knowledge*. The above mentioned third worldist positions sometimes tied up with this third position, proposing a politics of coalition while keeping knowledge bases separate (as in third world feminisms), or realizing implicit connections between 'low knowledge' practices and a different system.

While I have made no attempt here to directly examine the complex of phenomena often referred to by the short-hand 'globalization', I will now refer back to my first mention of development as a practice and to the gender work that involves itself with disaggregated description as part of this phenomenon. The reaction to the ideological has meant, in this frame, a shift from politics to self-help, from the ideological to the intuitive, where the intuitive is taken as a flat description of immediate reality as experience. While it might be tempting to read this immediate everyday reality as organic, whole, feminine, and often able to escape an

overdetermination by patriarchal norms,[43] the new gender analyses do not necessarily rely on organicity. Rather, politics, or the politics of representation, have shifted, as Haraway notes with deadly precision, to a game of simulation in what she calls the "informatics of domination", and the new gender analyses are as much part of it as any other (recall Van Hollen's terms – culture-in-the-making, "processural", etc). While none of this new critical scholarship addressing development or technology actually denies domination or power, it has contributed to making it so increasingly difficult to define or identify, as to make counter-hegemonic attempts appear very nearly anachronistic.

What, then, of alternatives? After a rejection of those feminist strands that seek to build a common, sometimes homogenous *narrative of feminine experience*, and of gender analysis that thrives on the heterogeneity of *women's experiences*, but yet agreeing with the need to "speak from somewhere", as against older models of one knowledge that offered a "view from nowhere", a neutral view, what could be the nature of this critique?

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[43] There is a wealth of theorizations on the feminine, not going for such a simplistic reading of experience or the everyday. Feminist work in India that looks at autobiographies, for example, has taken on the notion of the everyday as a fraught space, but also a liberating one, following on the re-reading of the personal as the political. Parallels with theorizing in western feminism may be found where the spectrum has, in talking of women's experience, included a valorizing, as in Adrienne Rich's description of the experience of motherhood in the Anglo-American second wave of feminism (1986), as also a speaking of the body, of corporeality, of embodiment, and of subjectivity as a foil to identity (as in the French feminist school, where notions of touch as against vision [Luce Irigaray], of 'there being no place for woman' in the patriarchal Symbolic' and women needing a different Symbolic to 'be'[Irigaray], have been suggested. The subjectivity-identity theorization also recalls the *sati* debates). This has proceeded to either pit experience against 'abstract reason', or to demonstrate, more interestingly, how reasonableness is itself infected by bias, in some cases a 'male sexualization' (Grosz 1994). Other powerful analyses could be made, following on Judith Butler's concept of the 'constitutive outside', to show how Reason enacts its hegemony through a continuous production of experience as the constitutive outside to discourse. (This need not be construed as a structural model, as a detailed reading of Butler's theorization of 'politically salient exclusions' will show (Butler 1993). Parallely, 'experience' has been articulated, in the work of Joan Scott, among others, not as an 'out there' but a historical production (Scott 1992).

I would suggest that it will have to be a *re-turn to experience,* a re-cognition, *rather than a turn*. That we pay attention not only, or not even so much, to the fractured narrative offered by the wide variety or heterogeneity of experience, as to its possible *aporicity*[44] in dominant frames, so as to enact such a re-turn treating the perspective of the excluded, aporetic experience as momentary resource – not authentic, fixed, or originary, but appropriate.[45] Drawing on Haraway's suggestion of a gift of vision, of situation as a visual tool, this would mean a momentary cognizance, a momentary gift of ab-normal vision – abnormal by way of not making sense in dominant frames – that could describe the dominant in terms different than its own, as also point to other possibilities. This would mean, most importantly for a notion of the political, a shift from marginality to aporicity as a vantage point for critique.

Perspective, here, would therefore take on the third of the three meanings I have delineated in Chapter 2,[46] as the fantastic spur within the dominant, as a moment of seeing, of 'possession', that can be lost in the looking. In this sense, it is also not possible to map perspective onto identity or individual taste. Perspective as that moment of possession not only gives a completely different picture of things, it also gives a picture not available from anywhere else – that makes visible the dominant as such, as that which had rendered invalid other possibilities. This invalidation, this exclusion, could then be understood differently from a removal from circulation of that which is disobedient – "At my heel, or outside", as Le Doueff puts it; it is better

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[44] I have referred to the way in which I use aporia, in the introduction to the thesis. To recapitulate, aporia is referred to as a logical impasse or contradiction, that which is impassable, especially "a radical contradiction in the import of a text or theory that is seen in deconstruction as inevitable" (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online*).

[45] A clarification here. I am not saying that experience *is* always aporetic to a narrative, but I am asking for an attention to a particular perspective that might be so positioned as to be aporetic.

[46] I have referred, in Chapter 2, to three meanings of the word perspective. This is the meaning that I activate here, a perspective that appears fantastic, or absurd, except from a particular point of view.

understood as a constitutive or primary exclusion with an entry later on the dominant's terms. As Le Doueff puts it again, "Outside, or at my heel."[47] Here I find useful, as a beginning, the model of the excluded available within feminist standpoint theory, of the woman as 'outsider within'.[48] While this formulation evokes a degree of unease about whether this social location can be enough as a starting point (whether women then always have to be the outsiders within to be able to speak from this space), it offers, I think, valuable clues for working toward a possible model of feminist critique. To understand this, we need to understand, also, that the issue here is not only that of recognizing hierarchies, nor is it about building a stand-alone alternative system of knowledge that may be called feminist. The very first example I gave in this chapter, of the clinical consultation that turned into a conversation, tries to demonstrate this.

The very notion of a feminist standpoint would be then the act of interpretation that puts this positioning, this transient possession, to work, not a place already defined, as earlier understandings of standpoint would have; this process

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[47] "Exclusion in principle seems to function as a formidable method of forcing dependence. And it is indeed a choice between "being on the outside or perhaps at my heel," conveying first an exclusion in principle, and then conditions for secondary entry, rather than the reverse, "at my heel or on the outside," which would indicate first a frank authoritarianism and then punishment for insubordination." (Le Doueff 2003: 25)

[48] Feminist Standpoint theory talks of the possibility of a situated, perspectival form of knowing, of such a knowing as necessarily a communal project, and of this knowing as one where the community of knowers is necessarily shifting and overlapping with other communities. While Haraway would speak of 'situated knowledges' as against the 'God trick', as she calls it, of seeing from nowhere – a neutral perspective (Haraway 1992), Sandra Harding would go on, however, to propose a version of strong objectivity – a less false rather than a more true view; this, Harding would suggest, can come only from the viewpoint of particular communities, sometimes the marginalized, sometimes women. This is where Harding's version of standpoint epistemology is still grappling with the question of whether the experience of oppression is a necessary route to knowledge. (Harding deals with this with this by treating women's lives as resource to maximise objectivity, Haraway by treating these women as ironic subjects and seeing from below as only a visual tool). A related question is whether the very notion of standpoint epistemology requires a version, albeit a more robust one than in place now, of systems of domination, and it is here that a productive dialogue could be begun between Haraway's more experimental version of "seeing from below" and Harding's notion of strong objectivity.

involves the production of an attached model of knowledge that begins from perspective, one that requires a speaking from somewhere.

Such a speaking from somewhere obviously requires a conceptualization of this 'somewhere'; in other words, a fidelity to context. Here context, I would suggest, is not (only) about date-time-place, such that a concept of 'one knowledge' can be critiqued from a situation. It is most importantly about relationality, the space between you and me, both intra-community and inter-community. Once we take cognizance of this, we realize that that space does many things – it induces a porosity of boundaries (body, community), it creates attachment, it also creates separation. With this in mind, we then have to talk of building a story from perspective, where it is the *turning from within outward* (from attachment to separation) that does the work of building the story. Such a standpoint 'is' only in the *constant interrogation* of both dominant discourse – masculinist Marxist discourse, *and of the category of resistance –* feminism – within which it may be named.

What we may have to gain from an attention to either consultations or conversations, then, is not so much the shift in form that we have made in moving from one to another, but the recognition of the fantastic perspective as a visual tool. Perspectives are made fantastic by their positioning in an imbrication of power *and* meaning; and unless the position is required to be static through any counter-hegemonic exercise, they cannot be the source of a permanent identity, nor an alternative system. I present my report on the *dai* training programme, then, in a different detail and from a different perspective than as a look at indigenous systems of health or as a lesson to be learnt from women's experiences, or indeed as an essentially feminine perspective. What I call the allegory of women's lived experience

serves, for me, as a test case, an example of the fantastic perspective that both helps provide a different picture of the dominant, and a glimpse of other possible worlds. I will attempt to delineate this in more detail now, but would like to put in a statutory warning prior to the attempt.

Min(d)ing the turn

Does this re-turn to experience that I have talked about show up in individual *dai* experience? Is this a concrete turn, something that can be applied in straightforward ways? We turn to the Bengali Marxist who tried to find a subaltern Lenin –

> The concept of the outside as a theoretical category is rooted in the concept of abstract labour as opposed to concrete labour. Concrete labour, located within particular industries, is within the sphere of production; abstract labour is not. … It is situated where, as Lenin puts it, all classes meet – outside the sphere of production.

(Chaudhury 1987: 248)

Chaudhury is using the concept to gently remind the Subaltern School of the difficulty of positing a 'subaltern consciousness' as a separate domain, or the equal difficulty of speaking of inversion, in other words revolution, from this vantage point. For my purposes, the turn from within outward faces the same difficulty. It is a turn that has to be mined for its possibility, not one that offers, straightforwardly, the description of a different world.

Marking the turn: returning to the conversation

In what might perhaps be an unwarranted dissection of events, but one useful for our purposes nonetheless, let us go back to the *dai* training programme, mapping onto my narrative of it the paleonymies and possible difficulties of such a narrative. I have refrained from relating to this exercise as either participant observation (in anthropological mode) or as case study (the qualitative approach in medical parlance). Both of these, positioned at the same end of the methodological spectrum, were efforts that came up to serve a need for 'qualitative' analysis – the latter from within the scientific establishment, the former from within the social sciences. In its acting out, however, there is an effort to capture the microcosm that is a stepping away from earlier structural analyses; and a meshing of 'observer' and 'observed', a moving away from complete objectivity, that all self-respecting qualitative analyses undertake. These analyses are also an attempt to either expand or critique complete objectivity. This is what I have in mind when I refer to that time as 'conversation' rather than 'consultation'. What I am attempting here is a further *bracketing of that effort*, a bringing to bear, on the conversations, the weight of my identification of the problems with existing frames of critique that I have identified in the thesis. This is so that what I have been laying down as a different contour of critique, finds its possibility. To perform such a bracketing, I use the narrative of my experience with the *dais* as a template within which I identify moments of the anthropological narrative, and from which I move towards a different possibility.

This exercise will involve, therefore, as I have stated, through a re-turn to experience, a re-examination both of dominant discourse and of the category of resistance within which it has been named. Such a re-turn will mean an attention to

experience – not as narrative, resistant or otherwise, nor as fractured and unpredictable, but as aporetic – as affording a fantastic perspective on the dominant that had hitherto appeared as normal. An attention to the fantastic perspective will result in a turn from within (a community) outward – a different notion of the political from that of either organizational, organic, or individual responses. It is, however, a notion that is hardly structural, a notion of the political as interpretation, but one that will have to be done each time. With these telegraphic steps in order, let us proceed. We had started the classes from the *dais'* voices – what they had written or what they had to say regarding their experiences with the births they had attended. The attendant presumption on both sides was that these voices were constituted by experience, the only prerogative of those uninitiated into *method – mukkhu sukkhu manush* (the unlearned people). I then set about introducing a gentle reworking of the boundaries of this category "experience" – till its quarrels with "method" had diminished to negligible levels.

How did I rework these boundaries? What were the contexts in which this was made possible? What were the terms of reference for the exchange between "experience" and "scientific method" that placed each, firmly, on a particular side of the divide between the untrained *dai* and the development expert, the body and the mind, the sensible and the transcendental? Several notions of the feminist political are at work here, working vis-à-vis dominant and other responses to the experience question. The responses may be charted in the following way. In the turn to experience as narrative, feminism has addressed the representation of the female body. The "female body", we have seen, is the site for the understandings as well as operations of science (with its invisible qualifier Western). In its project of defining the form and delineating the workings of the female body, this body of knowledge

enjoys the status of a value-neutral, objective method that purportedly bases itself on solid empirical evidence to produce impartial knowledge. In the case of the female body, it would then appear that science has *found* it exclusively and powerfully fashioned by *nature* to bear and nourish children; in the event, all it is doing is putting the facts before us.[49] Feminist engagements have sought to detect several disclaimers to the purported value-neutrality of science. For one, the standard body is that of the male, by which the female body is judged small, inferior, or deviant; and through this a subtle process of othering or exclusion of the woman is instituted *within science*. Further, accounts of the workings of the body, its organs, its reproductive processes, are strewn with gendered metaphors that privilege the male as decisive, strong, productive, and the female, as complementarily passive, wasteful, unreasoning.[50] In the event, this part of the feminist project has been to make explicit the hidden cultural weight of scientific knowledge. Further, in addressing the methods of science itself, feminism has pointed to the homogenization inherent in the manner in which the scientific concept of the "female body" is derived. It is somewhat against this authoritative, homogenising strain that women's bodily experiences are posited[51] in feminism – as something that is not only missed in science's project of objectivity but something that is excluded from or unable to articulate itself in and through science's abstractions. In the event, the experience of the "woman" within science is seen as that which, through the explicit introduction of an apparently inassimilable, pre-

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[49] This would be stressing the empirical foundations of science, but human sciences have always been the area where the subjective is most easily detected – hence the name 'soft sciences'. Things are changing, however, with the biological sciences rooting themselves in the 'knowable' gene – their accession to hard objectivity is now a reality.

[50] As would be evident in the models of sexual intercourse in the medical texts with the masculine/feminine metaphors for sperm/ovum – a model we used in the class as well, with a lively response, for it spoke to traditional languages of patriarchy as well. This has been discussed in some detail by Emily Martin (1991).

[51] Where experience is separate from the empirical.

discursive subjectivity, questions the *explanatory* potential of science, while also offering possibilities for agency.

There are certain collusions in the goals of these two projects, however, that bear looking at. Both are moving toward a single truth, whether derived from scientific theory or subjective experience, which they alone can represent. To this end, both homogenize and both declare the undisputed presence of this 'reality out there' that can be represented without mediations. And from here also flows a claim to objectivity. If science posits a naturalized universal female body, experience would posit the "woman" universalized through socialization. No experience can exist here outside narrative history, unless as aporia – the seemingly insoluble logical difficulty. One would then derive that if scientific theories are built on exclusions, so is the category "experience". If science claims value-neutrality, a simple valorization of experience ignores the "historical processes that, through discourse, position subjects and produce their experience". In the process, both science and experience in turn achieve status as categories, homogenous and uniform in themselves. Both become discourses that have the right to regulate entry, so that what counts as science or experience becomes the qualifying question.

If we then conclude that there is in this separation a certain essentializing of categories that ignores their very constitutions by the other, as also their constructions through cultural intelligibility, several questions arise. Can experience be that essential outside of Science that can grant agency? Or would it be also explicable as reflective of hegemonic norms that grant the sensible body as "women's generic identity in the symbolic" while retaining a masculine topology for Science? This

brings us to another feminist cognition of experience as constituted by history, circumstance, and *as* circumscribed by the norm as outside it.

But, caught as I was between the conventional registers of science and feminism, I kept falling backwards into the question of results, and their reflection on validity. Experience, it would seem, was faulty by virtue of its very constitutivity, while science continued to look rigorous and unbiased. As critical courier of scientific knowledge, I thought I was trying to weave myself into the discourse of the *dais* with minimum damage to their framework, and to that end I had decided to keep the question marks alive throughout, directing them towards science as well. But as I sat down to look at the assessment sheets on the afternoon of the first day's session, 'I' was fairly stunned. Of the ten questions put to the dais, one was worded as follows –

If the child does not cry soon after birth, we must –

a] say prayers over the baby

b] perform mouth-to-mouth resuscitation

c] rush the baby to the nearest health centre

d] warm the placenta in a separate vessel.

Almost all 46 of the dais had affirmed the last answer. I remembered the asphyxiated babies that used to be rushed to the nursery in Medical College from the labour room that was on another floor. I remembered the bitter debates as to why the nursery was not stationed nearer the labour ward so that we could lose less time in resuscitating them. I decided this could not be allowed to pass. And I conducted the classes accordingly. When we repeated the written examination at the end, none had

ticked the last answer, and I was both relieved and vindicated. Until I had come away, still thinking, and then I realised that I had succeeded only because I had adopted a more positivist, authoritarian approach – right and wrong – to get across. And why had I done that? I realized, again, that with all my criticality, I was very much a scientific subject, and not merely because of my disciplinary training. I had retained reflexivity and criticality for as long as there was non-contradiction. Beyond that, I stayed put – well within Science. I too had my experiences – I could look at them as inseparably constituted by my production as scientific subject. But I had been trained to look otherwise – at experience as empirical evidence of theory. And there I was.

In current development policy, though, there is not so much the suppression of subaltern voice as its making visible in extensions of scientific discourse. It has become part of development policy to include women's voices in their own development; the 'third world woman' is no longer considered to have no voice. On the contrary, she has a *specific* voice that is apparently being heard now in development projects in the third world. In order to articulate this voice, however, she must have the capability to streamline it, make it universally understood as well as reasonable, and this is the cornerstone of the 'capabilities approach'. Here the *dai,* once named as dependable repository of traditional knowledge, can now be appropriated by notions of development flowing from liberal theories, for she also represents, in this frame, the rigid face of patriarchal traditions that have not given the woman voice. Development here is taken to mean empowerment – a granting, or rather restoration, of voice to the woman hitherto suffocated by tradition – and it is to this end that the efficient model of scientific method may be adopted. The old order will indeed change, for the *dais … Aage ek rakam chhilo … ebar anya rakam korte*

hobe[52]… but that is hardly an exchange of tradition for modernity, or of experience for science; it is an accommodation of one by the other. In the pluralism of current development discourse, the *dai* is a figure who exists before context, occupies an underprivileged class position, and has a voice that may be heard or streamlined into the mainstream.

And in feminism, despite, or after, the recognition of 'women's experience' as constitutive of hegemonic norms, there is a renewed positing of experience as resistant, as the natural habitat, perhaps, of the woman …

This is of course clearly in evidence in what I have called the global feminist undertaking, which is most well argued for philosophically in Nussbaum's work, and most tellingly represented in her examination and insertion of 'Jayamma-the-brick-kiln-worker' – who *cannot not* have a body that speaks – into the lexicon of development literature. As 'third world women's practices' that contribute to culture-in-the-making, it is visible in the gender work that I have talked about.

What of my 'conversations' with the *dai*? As medical-professional-feminist-addressing-gendered-subaltern, I recognized and tried to steer clear of the various precipitations of such a binary; I ended, however, looking for a connection *through experience* between the 'professional' and the 'unlearned'; for an essence to the feminine, perhaps, or to woman in the Symbolic. The earlier legacy of experience, then, inheres here; in asking questions of an epistemic status for experience, in the anxiety of not being able to accord it equal validity, in looking for a separation between feminist critical projects and dominant discourse through a recourse to a feminine difference which will be different from the place accorded to women in the

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[52] Things were different before … they will have to be done differently now …

patriarchal Symbolic.[53] Most telling, perhaps, it inheres in the anxiety over the similarity or otherwise of perspective between the (feminist) professional and the (woman) *dai* … one that presumed that the origins of an organic connectedness was to be found in the unspoilt *dai* who talked of *meyeder meyeder katha*.[54] So the first attempt that the *dais* made to connect with me was through *abhigyata* – experience. And the overwhelming feeling at the end of those 6 days amongst the *dais*, and in me, was of a solidarity that had perhaps been established. A solidarity across boundaries of authority (though not disruptive of it in any way), across science, across different experiences. But … where then are feminist projects going to differ from development initiatives? What do third world women want, if one may ask the blasphemous question, a question that gathers momentum, nevertheless, in the context of first world vanguardism. Can the solution be that we must give up on capability altogether as a universal? While accessing a connectedness that would not mean the place accorded to women in the patriarchal Symbolic would definitely be a move, where would this connectedness be situated? If not in family or traditional community, would it be in some other sense of being together? Will we seek to continue its residence in women? Will we travel from an erasure of experience, the feminine, the subjective, to an essentialising of the same? Will women be the "embodied others, who are not allowed *not* to have a body, a finite point of view"? If

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[53] The place of women – in patriarchy, in a language outside patriarchy, has been a recurrent theme in the thought of Luce Irigaray. Interpreting Plato's myth, she draws a picture of the analogies with the patriarchal arrangement, and proposes another topology. Plato's Idea she designates as the realm of the Same – "the hom(m)osexual economy of men, in which women are simply objects of exchange. … The world is described as the 'other of the same', i.e. otherness, but … more or less adequate copy … woman is the material substratum for men's theories, their language, and their transactions … the 'other of the same' … [or] women in patriarchy … [t]he 'other of the other' … is an as yet non-existent female homosexual economy, women-amongst-themselves … [I]n so far as she exists already, woman as the 'other of the other' exists in the interstices of the realm of the [Same]. Her accession to language, to the imaginary and symbolic processes of culture and society, is the condition for the coming-to-be of sexual difference." See 'The same, the semblance, and the other' in Whitford (1991: 104).
[54] This is between us women – a common saying in Bengali that carries connotations both of an exclusivity – a woman's domain – as well as insignificance – this is just something between us women.

so, are we still going to stay with the biological body as pre-discursive resource of experience? And if science is to remain the ultimate arbiter, is experiential agency then to be only the aporia, showing up as resistances through gaps in policy, that must let be, or can there be a feminist policy-framing that can work on the aporicity of experience?

What of collaboration? Caught between the conventional registers of science and feminism, where science is about knowledge and feminism about politics, not only is the *dai's* experience waiting to be rehabilitated within science but also within feminism. While the mainstream policy dialogues with science remain at the level of "filling in gaps in manpower", the philosophies of science attempt to talk about whether "midwives' tales" might be justified – questions of validity. The politics of inclusion have operated to bring 'low knowledges' into circulation, and feminism must be the natural host to these politics in a frame where feminism is about politics and about women. Hence the whole debate about representation – institutional science versus the *dai*, the *dai* as gendered subaltern versus the third world feminist, that populate the space of critique of knowledge by politics, of science by feminism. The questions therefore continue to be – In frames where the *dai* as "gendered subaltern" has been appropriated into governmental apparatuses, and *made to speak* that language, are conscious tools of collaboration with the master's discourse available to her? Or is this the tool lying there for the *feminist* to pick up, to create a discursive space of negotiation for 'third world feminisms'? Is this, then, yet a battle for representation, a vanguardism, a speaking for that continues to slip into a speaking of, where third world feminists freeze their examinations of their own enmeshedness or location in their negotiations with global feminism and global development? Is such a

freezing inevitable? Or is the *dai* as gendered subaltern as much outside third world-first world feminist negotiations as outside empire-nation exchanges?

But there is also a question here of the continuing separation of experience and knowledge. If these attempts to rehabilitate experience seem to be at the level of according it equivalent status to knowledge, thus actually keeping alive the binaries feminism has been straining to step out of, what of experience as condition of knowledge-making? The aporicity of experience I speak of might be a beginning.

Having identified these existing trajectories for feminist critiques of science in the Indian context, therefore, I pick up on the gaps in the quintessentially anthropological narrative, to bring back the question of aporicity. We have spoken extensively of the fractured narrative. Rather than the fractured *narrative*, however, it might be the *fracture* we need to speak of now. And rather than look at women as being essentially capable of *mimetisme*,[55] and therefore as the essential content of fracture, it might be useful to access the moment of fracture, using as allegory, not narrative resource, the responses of the *dais* to the reproductive health apparatus, or the bizarre consultation between the recalcitrant mother and the female physician. It might not be the connectedness between me and the *dai* as women, then, that will serve as my resource, but our very asymmetry of dialogue, our seeming separation. This might be the fantastic perspective that must be worked on, in feminism, to create the discursive space required to articulate the inversion – an overturning of the dialectic of one knowledge – that Chaudhury (2000) speaks of. Such a concentration

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[55] To travel from 'mimesis imposed' (Irigaray's term for the mimesis imposed on woman as mirror of the phallic model) to 'mimetisme' – "an act of deliberate submission to phallic-symbolic categories in order to expose them", where "[t]o play with mimesis is … to try to recover the place of … exploitation by discourse, without … simply [being] reduced to it … to resubmit … so as to make 'visible', by an effect of playful repetition [mimicry, mimetisme] what was supposed to remain invisible …" is the Irigarayan project (Irigaray 1991, quoted in Diamond 1997: 173).

on momentary fractures, disallowing as it does a final and fixed concentration on 'woman', or a continuing separation of registers between politics and knowledge on account of the 'fantastic' perspective opening up a fresh vantage point both of knowing and critique of possible worlds, I submit, would constitute what I have been calling a feminist standpoint epistemology.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS NEW BEGINNINGS

I will conclude by laying down, once more, what I hoped to accomplish in this thesis, what I think I have achieved, and what I have not. I will also briefly lay down the responses I anticipate to my formulations.

I suggested, in the introduction, that the thesis had moved from the premise with which I began – that a feminist critique of science is possible, and necessary – into an ambivalence, although not a confusion, regarding such a possibility. There are questions to the existing formulations of critique itself that the thesis has highlighted. Following on this, I have attempted, through an examination of feminist understandings of politics as well as of knowledge, to speak of a more precise vantage point from where critique becomes possible, or likely, and to formulate its contours. Such a vantage point also produces a different situation for knowledge-making. Critique and knowledge here are, therefore, linked, and this thesis has been an exercise in articulating a methodology for recognizing and activating the vantage point for these.

I realized that to make possible another world, another possibility of critique, or of knowledge, it would be necessary to move away from the *recognizable* and recognizably separate registers of both feminism and science. These registers were of feminism as politics and of science as knowledge. The two could meet when feminism identified a *politics of knowledge*, pointing to the politically salient exclusions constitutive of most hegemonic knowledge systems that relied on a notion of 'one knowledge' where the knower is separated from the known. Women's lived experiences have been the vantage point for most such feminist critiques, which have

proposed resistance through a *politics of experience*, sometimes offering such experience as alternative to knowledge itself.

I examined the case made for such a critique in feminist theorizations and politics. In doing so, I found that in the recognizable register of feminism as politics, a critique of knowledge systems was articulated in terms of their exclusion of women from access (to the fruits of science and technology), from inclusion (as a special constituency that might be catered to after special amendments to technology), or from presence (of greater numbers of women scientists in institutions). I have proposed in the thesis a move from 'politics as the essence of feminism' to a feminist political epistemology for our times. This meant making the break from recognizable feminism – in other words, a feminism of representation or ideology, the articulation of a coherent set of ideas stemming from a commonality of material interests, here women – to a feminism of monstrosities, of boundaries. Such a feminism of boundaries, that is constantly interrogating its own 'subjects' as well as dominant patriarchies, 'fails' to address a hitherto constant, loyal constituency – women – in the ways in which recognizable feminism has done. This also meant making the break, therefore, from a feminism premised on identity.

Such a movement entailed an attention to situation, to context, not as site of response to knowledge but as condition of knowledge-making. Contexts of knowledge production have been proposed in different ways in feminist and postcolonial critiques of science; my concern was to understand context both with respect to making visible hegemonic structures and as a way of making possible a different view of the world. Such a view would necessarily be available in the space between the two – hardly an identitarian alternative. Such a view would not, could

not, be an add-on, but a view that would necessarily invalidate the dominant one. A mere listing of exclusions, then, could not be my answer to this particular question, for it was only to be understood that every system had its own exclusions. I was more interested in the model of knowledge production that inhered in these systems, and that allowed or disallowed such a view. 'S-knows-that-p' – the propositional model contained in most existing scientific systems hardly allowed for such a view. A model of attachment, then, was perhaps in order.

Feminist standpoint theory has, more precisely than other approaches, taken on this possibility of a different view, of what I call the fantastic perspective, in Chapters 2 and 5. Proposed in Marxist literature by Georg Lukacs, the proletarian standpoint for the first time suggested the objective condition of the proletariat as the condition for production of knowledge about the world. Lukacs' suggestion, however, was not for an objective condition uncontaminated by "subjective mirroring" in the revolutionary class, that is, the proletariat, but for a dialectical relationship between the subjective and the objective conditions that provide a condition for the proletariat to "make their own history". Feminist standpoint theorists like Nancy Hartsock started from this notion, but later refined their own positions to talk of the situation of women in patriarchal structures variously as the "outsider within", of being provided with the "visual tool" to see differently, and so on. I have discussed these positions in detail through the thesis. The point I wish to make here is that feminist standpoint theory provided a reading of the relation between experience and knowledge, between 'subjectivity' and 'objectivity' – those red herrings of scientific method – that I think is a beginning for a feminist political epistemology. Particularly, an attention to this relationship between objective conditions for knowledge-making and the subjectivity

of the knower may be the first step out of the all-too familiar debate on the *contradiction* between the two.

Taking off from this set of suggestions available in feminist standpoint theory, I realized that the question of subjectivity itself needed to be addressed differently to accommodate this relationship. The recognizable registers of feminism speak of an attention to the experiences of women's lives, their rich variety, and yet their commonality, as breaching the possibility of 'one knowledge' – a knowledge that is defined by the detachment and neutrality that are markers of objectivity. Detachment and neutrality have come in for heavy criticism from feminist critiques of 'one knowledge', and an attention to the experiences of women's lives has been seen as the proper route to a rejection of objectivity altogether. For feminist theorizations working alongside standpoint understandings, and asking the science question, however, such a rejection of objectivity has proved not only difficult but inaccurate. Rethinking objectivity has, for such theorizations, been the more pressing task, and I have delineated in some detail these efforts.

Alongside such a rethinking of objectivity, then, the need to address subjectivity differently becomes more imperative if the relationship between knowledge and experience has to be thought more usefully. A narrative of experience, singular or fractured, is an identitarian narrative – of the perspective either of women or the feminine – that thrives on the contradiction of experience with knowledge. Is it possible to articulate a notion of the subjective that exceeds the identitarian? This is the question that drove my attempt toward a re-turn to experience as aporetic, rather than the turn envisaged in the recognizable register of feminism. Such a re-turn may also help articulate a model of knowledge that is objective yet not detached, that

begins from situation, from a particular positioning that offers a perspective that is yet only a "visual tool", one that will have to be worked upon to produce knowledge, both of the hegemonic and of a possible other world. This work might constitute the contours of a feminist standpoint.

In this sense, I propose the formulations of the thesis as a tentative contribution to feminist methodology, as also to disciplinary knowledge. Feminism, particularly in India, has struggled to distance itself from institutionalization, this becoming more of a problem with the setting up of women's studies centres and the imposition of disciplinary constraints. In response, the call has been to retain women's studies as a "perspective, not a discipline". Such a notion of perspective has leaned heavily on experience of oppression as offering a politics, rather than on first order theory that is unanchored in experience. This thesis draws lessons from this position to work towards models of knowledge that cannot be produced in detachment from the object of inquiry.

Given such a re-articulated relationship between politics and knowledge, I would primarily ask for a separation of the two expectations that this thesis might raise – a feminist critique of science, and a feminist science. The two seem to host two possibilities – the former a political critique of knowledge, the latter an alternative system. The possibility of the former I have delineated. In linking the political and the epistemological, I have also suggested that knowledge-making is related to the function of critique. In this sense, the fantastic perspective on science that the *dai* may provide, and that I have called a feminist methodology, will be intimately related to a model of knowledge. Naming this a feminist science, however, with its suggestions of an add-on, might not be a fruitful exercise. The intent of such a perspective, further, is

also not to produce an alternative system, as the naming may suggest. Separating from these two, therefore, from alternative systems and better systems, is something I seek to suggest through this thesis. If a more valid model of knowledge-making has been hinted at, I hope to have contributed somewhat to the task of possibility that I set myself (see Appendix 3).

This double exercise – of a break from identity and from representation – may look like a separation of feminism from politics as well as from women. Is it? While I would submit that this thesis definitely attempts to re-situate feminism as a methodological and epistemological tool, it does so in inalienable connection with the lived experiences of women. It does not, however, look upon these experiences as its own content or upon their recovery as an act of possessing, of bringing in testimony, or of adding information to the pool of what is known. Rather, it looks upon these as an allegory, that by virtue of their aporetic positioning, afford that fantastic perspective that I have talked about in Chapters 2 and 5. This could begin the process of producing knowledge that is perspectival and yet not conjectural.

It follows, given such revisions of objectivity, of the subjective, and the relationship between the two, as also the characteristics of the re-turn to experience as aporetic that the thesis proposes, that any notion of full agency, of women as full agents either of political change or of knowledge, do not hold.[1] As I mentioned

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[1] There has been rich activity – intellectual and political – on the agency question in feminism – both global and Indian. Starting from liberal feminist positions borrowing from the normative subject of Western metaphysics and asking for full agency for women too, to much later Western feminist critiques of the normative subject that is constituted through politically salient exclusions, we now have work in feminism and science that proposes a partial view – as opposed to the whole – as the only one. The normative subject of Western metaphysics has, of course, been imported wholesale in Indian Marxism too, and thereafter adopted in several languages of critique or resistance. For feminism in India, up against Western metaphysics as well as universalist feminism, two kinds of positions have been most in evidence – one a pointer at the multiplicity of identities – including caste and class – that do not allow for a fully gendered subject to be produced. This position militates against the stress on sexual difference that populated most later Western feminist work. The other position, somewhat in

earlier, I do not propose this dissent on full agency as a distancing of feminism from women. I do, however, suggest that what follows might be a feminism of monstrosities rather than one of liberation for women. The methodological stances adopted in this thesis will demand as much of its hitherto ex-officio 'subjects' – women – as of dominant patriarchies, as I have suggested above, and in so doing, might well be, like Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, the sign of death for what is *recognizably 'woman'*. Laying claim to that category thereafter, even in its nominalist sense – and I will suggest that this might be what a perspectival view of knowledge still hopes to do – will require more work than recognizable feminism has done thus far.

I do not get around some fundamental questions of critique, however, in the shape of hermeneutics. If hermeneutics be, as Rosen puts it, the shape of politics in the twentieth century, as against theory that might lead to truth, what would that say to the claims and methods of the thesis itself that stands on acts of alternative interpretation of perspective? Does such a politics become a resolution at the level of the individual – a contradiction in terms? These are questions that inflect in some ways my resolutions, but are not answered entirely satisfactorily through them.

While I have made strenuous efforts to articulate a different set of meanings for feminism as critique in this thesis, the effect of my efforts on the science question remains, I am aware, somewhat incomplete. I have not addressed, for one, any particular science, except by example. While I will offer a thin defence by stating that I have been attempting to concentrate on models of knowledge-making in the sciences as a whole, a closer look at the particular sciences may offer insights into ways of

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alliance, brings up more explicitly the problem of ahistoricity with the metaphysics of substance that inheres in Western notions of the subject. Both positions, however, continue to feel the need for a conscious subject of politics, and in that sense, cannot give up on a version of identity.

operationalizing such a model of attachment as I have proposed, as also into the

problems it is likely to encounter. I hope to address these questions in future research.

APPENDIX

Home   About Us   Latest News   Publications   Contact Us

Science and Rationalists' Association of India

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About us

The **Science and Rationalists' Association of India** (name of the organization in Bengali is "*Bharatiya Bigyan O Yuktibadi Samiti*") established on 1st March 1985, our organization is made up of like minded people coming from different professions. We are not affiliated to any political party .

Our aim is to eradicate superstition and blind faith, which include religious fanaticism , astrology , caste-system, spiritualism and numerous other obscurantist beliefs.

Our view is that rational way of thinking shall be spread among the people as against spiritual or religious teachings, and that alone can bring about social change.
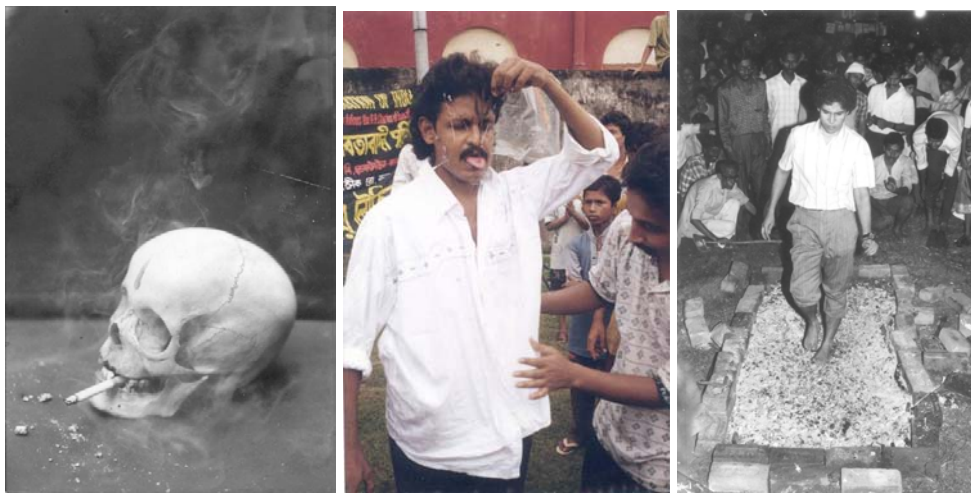
What is rationalism?— (article - RATIONALIST MOVEMENT in the Indian context)

We work to propagate our views by

➢ Holding regular study classes in Kolkata and all our branches.

➢ Organizing seminars /workshops.

➢ Holding street corner meetings.

➢ Publishing magazines, leaflets, posters.

➢ Sending team for investigations into any so called supernatural phenomena and   publishing/broadcasting the report immediately through the media.
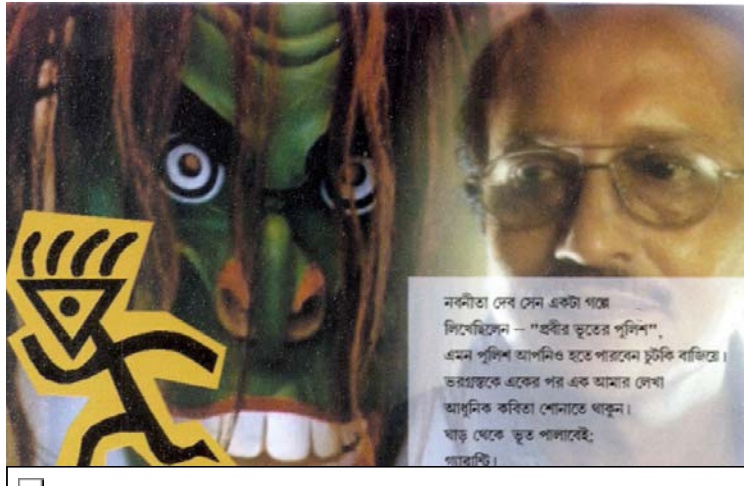
➢ Opening branches

Pic: Yuktibadi show

> free coaching, free dispensary, blood donation camp, eye and body donati

To open branches

Seven like minded people can open a separate branch after discussion and scrutin

office. After opening, Branches will work independently and submit periodical r

Annual subscription - **Rs. 100.00** only.

Associate organizations --- Any science club or cultural organization can become our member by paying annual subscription of Rs. 100.00 only, provided they propagate rationalism. On various issues they may join us in our campaigns and hold joint meetings.

Our achievements:-

> We have established humanism as a religion first time in India (N.B:- India's largest and most powerful religious organization Ramkrishna Mission tried to establish 'Ramkrishnan'as a religion . But after a long legal fight they failed). It is our great victory that now you can write 'humanism' in the column for religion. Please note that United Nations has in the general assembly of November, 1981 declared that "*Everyone shall have the right to have a religion or belief of his choice and freedom.*"

- ➤ Astrologers have been denied their status as a legitimate profession. In 2002, astrologers were prohibited from paying profession tax since this was not a legal profession. (Details)

- ➤ India and Pakistan used to feel that Kashmir issue was their internal problem to be solved by them. At that time we were the first to point out that even when India and Pakistan were under the British rule Kashmir was free state . So India and Pakistan do not have the right to divide a free state like Kashmir among themselves. For any discussion on this issue the people of Kashmir have to be taken into account. Now both the govts. and all political parties feel the same. (Details)

- ➤ During 1997-98 there was an attempt to legalize prostitution in India. At that time we, through our articles and leaflets and also TV programmes protested against this and created public opinion in our favour. Finally it was not legalized. (Details)

- ➤ UGC (University Grant Commission) had decided to introduce Astrology as a subject for studies in University. Later this was withdrawn on our instance of challenging our human resource minister Mr. M. M. Joshi. (Details)

- ➤ We have challenged, confronted and exposed a vast number of godmen , astrologer faith healers, witches people with so-called supernatural powers. Their names include-

Computer woman Shakuntala devi

Witch queen Ipsita Roy Chakraborty

Morris Cerullo from USA

And numerous other *fakirs* and *tantriks,* the latest being faith healer Clive Harris from Canada, who once exposed, had to flee without holding his healing sessions.

How you can help us?

➢ By being life member/ordinary member.

➢ By sending small articles, anecdotes which will be read in our classes and if selected, pulished in our magazine

➢ By donating to our magazine fund *Amra Yuktibadi* which is suffering due to constant shortage of fund.

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For students Rs 50/- yearly

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General Secretary (Humanists' Association of India)

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The challenge by Prabir Ghosh:- On behalf of Science and Rationalist Association of India, Mr. Prabir Ghosh will pay Rs. 25,00,000 (approx US$50,000) to anyone who claims to possess supernatural power of any kind and proves the same without restoring to any trick in the location specified by Prabir Ghosh. The so-called supernatural or paranormal incidents widely publicized in India and abroad which are included by Prabir Ghosh in his list of 30 instances are as follows:

> ➢ Curing a terminally ill person in six months, with the help on *Reik*i or touch therapy or faith healing.

> ➢ Repairing transistors or tape recorders with the help of *Reiki.*

> ➢ The effectiveness of *Feng-shui.*

> ➢ The effectiveness of *Vaastu-Shastra* (may be demonstrated by opening up factories under lock-out)

> ➢ Fixing marriages, winning law-suits, getting good academic results etc. with the help of amulets or talismans.

> ➢ Walking on water.

> ➢ Psychokinesis /Tele therapy

> ➢ Predicting the death (Year and Date) of 4 famous personalities by astrology, or any other psychic power.

And many others

It may be noted that – we don't have the challenge money 20 lakhs with us. But our supporters and well-wishers have committed to help us out in case we need it. But we are confident we will never need the money. The rationalist will win all the challenges.

If you commit and promise your support, we can enhance the challenge money further.

Our wings:

1. **Humanists' Association (HA):-** Established on 11th September 1993, with the aim of replacing all established religions with "Humanism". Also working for –

   ❖ Human rights: helping with legal assistance.

   ❖ Counseling people in distress.

   ❖ Propagating eye-donation and body donation for medical use after death.

   ❖ Demanding legitimacy of euthanasia (Mercy killing or willfully accepting death)

   ❖ Free coaching and free dispensaries.

2.**Muktachinta Publication**:-Publishing small booklets on current topics, rationalist issues or women's issues for circulation among common people at a subsidized rate.(name of the books will be sent to you later).

3.**Bangladesh Bigyan O Yuktibadi Samiti:-** It is an independent organization and working parallel to us.

4. **Mukto-mona: (** http://www.mukto-mona.com **)** An assembly of freethinkers mostly from Bangalee descent in the Internet promoting freethinking, humanism and rationalism.

Prabir Ghosh:-

Born on 1st March 1945, Prabir spent his early childhood in railway towns of Kharagpur and Adra. Growing up with god-fearing parents in this multicultural township, Prabir had keen interest in gods and godmen. As a child he spent hours with these religious people. As a result, he learnt magic and all the other tricks these godmen practiced, at a very young age.

Prabir Ghosh

Teacher Subhendu Roy instilled in him, the interest in sociology and in the power of political motivation behind all human endeavours. He grew up have keen interest in politics and developed excellent oratorical skill.

In his college days, he started writing in premier Bengali magazines and dailies. An avid reader, his interests include anthropology, archeology, history, psychology, sociology and of course, politics. As a result, his understanding of the human mind as an individual and the social human being as a species is vast. With this knowledge of the human mind, his keen sense of politics gives him an insight and a rare understanding of all human problems.

He has also completed four collection of series meant for young readers who wish to grew up. Topics like psychology, history, sociology and politics are discussed by way of story-telling in such lucid language that one never loses interest. And the special point of view, which is the trademark of Prabir, never fails to hit the readers'.

Aware of party programmes of all political parties , and their failures and effectiveness, he realized the importance of "Rationalism" as a school of thought which should be systematically developed . Once the Rationalists' Association was established, he had to face severe animosity from various groups of spirituals and godmen. An immensely courageous and upright person, he faces all attacks , with the help of his keen intellect, understanding and the worldwide network of support and goodwill which he enjoys.

Publications

❖ *Aloukik noy Loukik(Vol-I)*

   [**Nothing is Supernatural**]

 Subjects on 'Parapsychology', like ESP, Telepathy, Precognition, Clairvoyance, Psycho-Kinesis are discussed elaborately.

 Various godmen of the world has been exposed in this volume and their claims on supernaturalism debunked.   (Pages - 264)

❖ *Aloukik noy Loukik(Vol-II)*

   [**Nothing is Supernatural**]

 In this volume, 'exorcism', 'witch-craft', 'being possessed by god or demon' have been scientifically explained. Elaborate discussion about the reasons behind these superstitious beliefs is there.

 (Pages - 351)

❖ *Aloukik noy Loukik(Vol-III)*

   [**Nothing is Supernatural**]

In-depth study on Astrology as against Astronomy is the theme of this part. Belief on stones & amulets, metal tablets has been discussed scientifically. Apart from this, predictions of Nostradamus have been discussed and explained with humour.

(Pages - 306)

❖ *Aloukik noy Loukik(Vol-IV)*

[**Nothing is Supernatural**]

Soul, Spiritualism, Planchette, Reincarnation---- 12 such incidents narrated by Parapsychologists have been scientifically explained in this volume. It also explains how status-quo is being maintained in our social-system.

In order to change the system, we should know its basis.

(Pages - 240)

❖ *Aloukik noy Loukik(Vol-V)*

[**Nothing is Supernatural**]

Definition of religion as an institution; the advent of religion, the views of various Sociologists and Archeologists;

Atheism, Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism, Contemporary Rationalism and Marxism; details on Yoga and Tantra -

with all these discussed with insight –this latest volume is a 'must-read'.

(Pages - 256)

❖ *Ami Kano Ishwar-e Biswas Kori Na?*

[**Why I Don't believe in God ?**]

An array of arguments in favour of religious faith or belief in god are brought in. Various points as expressed by believers from all walks of life –from a destitute to a Nobel-laureate are discussed and discarded with counter-argument.

It's a first ever book of this kind with an exhaustive list of arguments and counter-arguments.

(Pages - 216)

❖ *Sanskriti-Sanghrasho-O-Nirman*

   [**Cultural Revolution : the struggle and the formation**]

   This book is the Manifesto of The Science and Rationalists'
   Association of India. It is a veritable text-book for those who believe in
   the necessity of Cultural Revolution .

   The Indian Constitution, Religious fanaticism , Secularism etc. have
   been discussed in a new light by way of a guideline to drastic cultural/
   social change.

   (Pages - 255)

❖ *Probad-Sanskar-Kusanskar (Vol-I)*

   [**Adages, practices, superstitions and hearsay**]

    Ancient and modern adages in alphabetical order are compiled and
   analysed meticulously-one can call it a dictionary   of adages with
   specialized comments on each.

   (Pages - 256)

❖ *Dharma-Seba-Sammohan*

   [**Religion-Charity-Hypnotism**]

     Collection of essays on various social and human malaise from the
   rational point of view. Topics discussed- Hypnotism, Mob-violence,
   Credibility of News-Media, Secularism, the role of NGOs funded from
   abroad.

   (Pages - 120)

❖ *Shadhinotar Por Bharoter Jwalanto Samasya*

   [**The burning issues of post independent India**]

As evident from the name, this collection has topics like 50 years of Indian Independence, free-thinking in Bangladesh , the inside story of "sex-worker's" movement , Kashmir Movement : a Historic Manifesto and Corruption.

(Pages - 176)

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[**Women's liberation through Rational Eye**]

Women's liberation and feminism has got a new perspective in this collection. Through rational analysis, a new concept "Humanistic Feminism " has emerged. Feminist movement throughout the world at different times have been discussed.

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[**Religion as seen by Rationalists of Bengal - East and West**]

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(Pages - 319)

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[**The mystery of miraculous vision**]

(Pages - 111)

❖ *Pinky O Aloukik Baba*

   [**Pinky and the godman**]

   (Pages - 84)

❖ *Aloukik Rahasya Sandhane Pinky*

   [**Pinky , chasing the supernatural mysteries**]

   (Pages - 128)

❖ *Aloukik Rahasya Jaale Pinky*

   [**Pinky trapped in miraculous mysteries**]

   (Pages - 128)

   Exciting real life incidents revealing various paranormal mysteries
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   (Pages - 48)

❖ *Jyotish Banam Bigyan*

   [**Astrology Vs Science – Pamphlet**]

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❖ *Biswa Quiz*

[World Quiz]

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During the last 5 years after volume-I, the rationalists (*Yuktibadis*) faced more than 200 challenges and each and every case they came out successful. Top ten such incidents of exposing social or medical myths, or debunking religious hocus-pocus have been narrated in this book .

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N.B Anyone wishing to translate any of the books into any language may contact Prabir Ghosh personally or write to

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West Bengal

India

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❖ Cassette of Prabir's (Love Poems)

The cover design of these books along with the details of other publications will be sent shortly.

HUMANISM AS RELIGION

Sumitra Padmanavan

General Secretary

Humanists' Association

In modern world man can not live in watertight compartments of his own clan. Barriers between countries and communities are first vanishing – here separate codes of conduct are bound to germinate into open clashes. Why? Can't we have a common code of values for all human beings? Yes, we can. Only if we can be rational and get rid of our age-old adherence to superstition, our blind faith in the infallibility of the scriptures, our unquestioning submission to the dictums of ancient law-makers. Faith without knowledge lead us to blindness, and blindness to fanaticism. If we learn to depend more on empirical knowledge of natural and social sciences, we can be guided by that knowledge to the path of peace and harmony . we then, will be able to imbibe the essence of all religious teaching transmitted us by our forefathers through generations and become total human beings.

The United Nations, after 20 years of effort made by its commission, has declared in the General Assembly of November 1981 that "everyone shall have the right to have a religion on belief of his choice and freedom…"

On the 10th of December 1993, the World Human Rights Day , we found 58 members of the Humanists' Association of India coming from different walks of life legally accept Humanism as their religion by singing a declaration. Since then the flow is steady and it is a matter of pride for our nation that so many are being inspired daily to unite in a truly rational, secular and humane common ground forgetting their caste and creed, which may in future show light to the entire world.

Who knows? By the turn of the century, Humanism might be the only religion unifying the entire planet?

RATIONALIST MOVEMENT

in the Indian context

Prabir Ghosh

The first precondition for a true Rationalist movement is that every decision, every judgements has to be based on reason. If our judgement are guided by personal motivates or by clannish sentiments, we will be depending more and more on muscle-power or brute-force.

In certain critical moments of life, man values emotion rather than reason. In such moments too, various reason play in our minds – which is to be accepted and which is to be rejected is usually decided by our religious belief, caste, social standing, communal motivates etc. the ruling class utilizes these divisive emotional forces to create separation between different classes/communities. Seeds of suspicion and division are planted and issues like 'Reservation' and 'Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid' are born.

Exploiters desire in their own interest that the common

man should be guided by emotion rather

than by reason.

To spread scientific awareness among common people, to propagate rational attitude towards life and its various aspects is the first prerogative for making rational human beings. That, according to us is the foremost aim of a science organization.

Today, many young boys and girls are coming forward in organizing workshops under our banner '*Aloukik Noi Loukik*' (Nothing is Supernatural). They are our associate organization who in cities, towns and remote villages conduct shows to explain apparently supernatural phenomena by actually showing the common feats shown by the *sadhus, avatars*, godmen witches, sorcerers, exorcists and the likes. They are then giving

scientific explanation for each trick. Some are challenging these frauds and exposing them in public. Some of their shows are like magic shows, but all the tricks can not be compared to common magic. Faith healing, hypnotism, being possessed by spirit etc. can not be explained as magic tricks. Our aim is to help people in finding out the real scientific cause behind each unnatural phenomena. The reason may be psychological or physiological or plain cheating. However there has to some natural scientific process perceptible to every common man. Once common people understand this fact, supernaturalism will fail as an instrument for exploiting the poor, the innocent and the ignorant.

[Translated by - Sumitra Padmanavan]

FAQ:-

1. How do you make members?
2. Are you affiliated to any political party?
3. Don't you believe in the basic tenets of Communism?
4. Do you think the festivals connected to religious beliefs are welcome and should not be done away with?
5. Do you think it is possible to eradicate religious faith in a country like India?
6. Isn't Atheism' too radical and a rather negative idea to offer to the common man?

Answer

1. willingness to overcome superstition and religious blindness is the main criterion. Anyone who comes with an open mind is welcome.
2. A big **NO**.
3. Not exactly. We dream of a world of equal opportunities for everyone, the world without exploitation. Humanism through rationalism is the only way.
4. yes. Is not overnight, gradually. Human progress has always been with the help of reason. Our effort is to bring this as first as possible in the greater interest of mankind.
5. No. religious belief (has also festivals and rituals) is harmful since it paves the way for exploitation and deprival. But festivals that have socio-cultural basis are welcome. E.G. *Raksha-bandhan, Bihu* and *Onam* (both connected to harvest) and holy (colour festivals welcoming spring).
6. Yes. That is why we promote *Humanism* as religion which has definite positive connotations.

   If you have any other questions regarding our activities etc. You are welcome to contact us over e-mail.

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