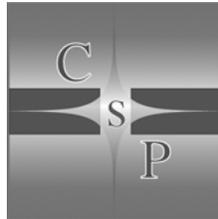


Home and the World

Home and the World
South Asia in Transition

Edited by

Helen Asquine Fazio, Atreyee Phukan, V.G. Julie
Rajan and Shreerekha Subramanian



CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS PRESS

Home and the World: South Asia in Transition, edited by Helen Asquine Fazio, Atrejee Phukan, V.G.
Julie Rajan and Shreerekha Subramanian

This book first published 2006 by

Cambridge Scholars Press

15 Angerton Gardens, Newcastle, NE5 2JA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2006 by Helen Asquine Fazio, Atrejee Phukan, V.G. Julie Rajan and Shreerekha
Subramanian and contributors

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system,
or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or
otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN 1-84718-040-x

DEDICATIONS

Helen Asquine Fazio

For my mother, Helen-Jean Moore Asquine, my husband Alex, my sons Dalai and Dante, and my beloved mentors.

Atreyee Phukan

For my parents, Joga and Bimal, who are the only home I know.

V.G. Julie Rajan

For my foundation—my parents, Muthukkannu and Gopal Guruswamy, and my sisters, Parvaathi Guruswamy and Subbulakshmi Guruswamy.

For my husband Raja, my rock.

Shreerekha Subramanian

For my parents, Santha and Gopinadhan Pillai and my in-laws, Seethalakshmy and Subramaniam Shankar - without whose support, this work would not have been.

For the splendid three, Santosh, Sarvesh, Sumana – my everything.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Art Plates	x
Acknowledgements	xii
Introduction: Reading Transitions Helen Asquine Fazio, Atreyee Phukan, V.G. Julie Rajan, and Shreerekha Subramanian	xiii
Part I: Gender and Identity	1
Introduction: Gender and Identity V.G. Julie Rajan	2
The Making of “Me”: (Re)Structuring South Asian-American Battered Women’s Identity Shamita Das Dasgupta	4
Gender <i>Jihad</i> for Islam’s Future in the 21 st Century: The Pivotal Role of South Asian Women in the Birth and Growth of Islamic Feminism as an Answer to Extremism Asra Q. Nomani	31
Notes from the Domestic Margins of Early Colonial Calcutta: Prostitutes, Slaves, Criminals, and Other Vulnerable Bodies Sudipta Sen	58
Part II: Nationalism and Globalism	77
Introduction: Nationalism and Globalism Helen Asquine Fazio	78
Identity Politics and Indian Resistance in South Africa Edward Ramsamy	81

<i>Queen of Dreams: Reading Immigrant Identity</i> Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni.....	96
The Silent Crisis at Home: The War of Terror on Immigrant Communities Jeannette Gabriel.....	104
Part III: Contexts and Diplomacy	131
Keynote Speech: India: From Midnight to the Millennium and Beyond Shashi Tharoor	132
Keynote Essay: Some Reflections on Pakistan Ambassador S. Azmat Hassan, (Ret.)	147
Part IV: Contemporary South Asian Art	163
Introduction: Home and the World: South Asian Art Today Debra Diamond	164
Home Is a Foreign Place Vinod Dave	169
How I Found Her: On Making of Art and Drawing of Women's Voices Chitra Ganesh.....	181
Bose-Pacia Gallery and the Decade of Development of Global Interest in Contemporary South Asian Art Arani Bose	191
The Serial Monogamy of Rashid Rana Rashid Rana, in Conversation with Hammad Nasar	195
Part V: Diaspora and Translation	205
Introduction: Diaspora and Translation Shreerekha Subramanian.....	206
Reading the Postcolonial Picaresque in Bharati Mukherjee's <i>Jasmine</i> and Radhika Jha's <i>Smell</i> Janet A. Walker.....	209

<i>The Enigma of Arrival</i> : Naipaul's Metaphysical Homelessness M. Josephine Diamond	239
The Question of Country: A Close Reading of Ismat Chughtai's " <i>Jare'N</i> " Tahira Naqvi	253
Speaking Positions in Global Politics Nirmal Puwar	266
"A Door Into Hindi": Teaching Language and Culture in Cyberspace Afroz Taj	281
Part VI: Touching Untouchability	299
Introduction: Touching Untouchability Atreyee Phukan	300
Dalits and Conversion John C.B. Webster	303
Climbing the Tamarind Tree: Dalit Women Claiming Voice and Visibility Jebaroja Singh	322
Problems in Translating Tamil Dalit Poetry Anushiya Sivanarayanan	342
Touching Untouchability? Dalit Situations and Theoretical Horizons Rajan Krishnan	364
Contributors' Biographies	379
Editors' Biographies	387

ART PLATES

Vinod Dave – See Centrefold

Figure 1. *The Magician*
84x60 inches, mixed media on canvas, 1996

Figure 2. Hawks of a Dreamland
60x67 inches, mixed media
Collection of Talwar Gallery, 1998

Figure 3. Forgotten Epics
40x40 inches, mixed media on photo, 1996
Collection of Vadehra Gallery

Figure 4. When You Shanghai
40x40 inches, mixed media on photo, 1983
Herwitz Collection

Chitra Ganesh – See Centrefold

Figure 1. *Kalima*

Figure 2. Tales of Amnesia

Figure 3. Written on Wind and Water

Figure 4. The Awakening

Figure 5. How I Found Her

Figure 6. *How I Found Her* (Detail)

Rashid Rana – See Centrefold

Figure 1. *I Love Miniatures*

Digital print, 2002, 18 X 24.5 inches (without frame) | *Edition of 2*

Figure 2. *Veil 2*

Digital print, 2004, 20 X 20 inches | *Edition of 20*

Figure 3. *Veil 2*, Detail

Digital print, 2004, 20 X 20 inches | *Edition of 20*

Figure 4. *All Eyes Skywards During Annual Parade*

Digital print, 2004, 240 x 98.5 inches | *Edition of 5*

Figure 5. *All Eyes Skywards During Annual Parade*, Detail

Digital print, 2004, 240 x 98.5 inches | *Edition of 5*

Figure 6. Who Is Afraid of Red

Acrylic, Stitched fabric and embroidery on canvas, 276 X 48 inches, 2000

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our deep gratitude to the following sources of financial, intellectual, moral, and volunteer assistance:

Many offices, programs and departments at Rutgers University collaborated to make the 2005 Conference on South Asia possible. We would particularly like to thank: the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and Academic Affairs; the Graduate School; the South Asian Studies Program and Director, Laura Ahearn; the English Department and Director, Richard Miller; the Transliterations Project; the Program in Comparative Literature and especially 2004/05 Graduate Director Richard Serrano; the History Department; Women's and Gender Studies; the Center for Women's Global Leadership; Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Philip Furmanski; Associate Vice President of Arts and Humanities, Isabel Nazario; Barry Qualls, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Sciences; the Asian American Cultural Center; and Political Science.

A committed team of undergraduate students facilitated all aspects of the conference. The Undergraduate Committee included: Vijeta Amin, Naseem Bandhari, Shashi Dolandas, Puja Ghosh, Smita Nadia-Hussain, Anand Kaji, Diti Patel, and Krupa Patel, Krupa H. Patel, and Jason Shah-Jahan. Undergraduate Assistants included: Namrata Amin, Sireesha Atluri, Kate Davis, Rachna Ganatra, Sheral Gandhi, John Hays, Supriya Kumar, Tina Madan, Suranga Ranasinghe, Akash Shah, Akansha Sharma, Deepa Sridhar, Amish Talwar, Ankur Thakkar, Mohan Tripathi, Ayesha Zahiruddin.

We also wish to acknowledge the community-spirited generosity of members of the Asia Society, NY, and various private donors—friends, family and business professionals. Special thanks to Guney Y. Yildirim of Rutgers Media Services.

INTRODUCTION: READING TRANSITIONS

HELEN ASQUINE FAZIO, ATREYEE PHUKAN,
V.G. JULIE RAJAN,
AND SHREEREKHA SUBRAMANIAN, EDS.

South Asia has been imagined through a variety of lenses. In 1757, British statesman Edmund Burke characterized India as the English sublime, imbuing it with an aspect of the reverent and sacred that would prevent it from being utterly violated by the East India Company. In the early twentieth century, British concerns over the rising Indian nationalist movement prompted then British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to oppose India's desire for Home Rule by referencing the colony as only a geographical expression, as "no more a single country than the equator."¹ In contrast, the Indian nationalist movement envisioned the emerging nation through the trope of the maternal, a feminine entity that would both nurture the growth of her descendants and protect them from British imperialism.

Those often contradictory, historic representations of South Asia have problematized its present identity, sixty years after gaining independence from Great Britain. Today, the greater portion of colonized India is known as "South Asia," which itself is comprised of eight nations: India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, The Maldives, Bhutan, and Afghanistan. The colonial observations of Churchill and the Indian nationalist movement have now been replaced by the new anxieties of the modern era. Current global ideologies have classified the nations of the world into broad, amorphous imaginary regions, primarily because of their geographic proximity to one another, as a means of maintaining economic and political surveillance over them. In this manner, the panoptic view of globalism has negotiated the agencies of the eight nations comprising South Asia by assuming that the sovereignty of one nation must resonate with and be inextricably bound to all of the others under the guise of regionalism.

¹ Shashi Tharoor, "India: From Midnight to the Millennium and Beyond," Keynote Speech, *Home and the World*, Rutgers Conference on South Asia, 2005, this volume.

Despite Western-dominated views of South Asia, since 1947, nations comprising that region have exhibited highly distinct political allegiances, economic and government institutions, and cultural agendas. Consequently, persisting global emphases on the unified nature of the region have proven highly problematic to each nation's ability to imagine itself as "distinct" from the others in the region. Furthermore, each country has been challenged by the strong commonalities between its own populaces and those of neighboring nations, engendered by centuries of shared geographic proximity and history. Those commonalities have challenged each nation's ability to produce and fix its borders, complicating its ability to produce a unique national identity.

Although most South Asian nations were borne out of powerful anti-colonial movements, the challenges of nationalism have required each nation, ironically, to reinscribe colonial ideologies into its postcolonial processes. All nations of South Asia, hence, exhibit neocolonial strategies of racial, economic, religious, and gender containment to produce vertical hierarchies and lateral categories of identity—categories that ultimately privilege certain subjectivities in the postcolonial state similar to the system of hierarchy that had sustained and produced notions of agency in the British Empire. In the South Asian context, the rhetoric of elitism has been guaranteed by the execution of colonial processes of violence to monitor the agency of non-normative subjects, to reinforce and engender new formulations of postcolonial "subalternity." In India, for example, normative forms of citizenship are guided by Hindu nationalist notions of Aryan identity and slogans, such as "Hindu = Hindi," that have dominated Indian notions of citizenship; such ideologies allow for the surveillance of the agencies of non-Hindus, Dalits, and non-Hindi citizens to privilege upper-caste Hindu and Hindi-speaking populaces residing in northern India. Furthermore, the politics of the entire region of South Asia has itself similarly been informed by neocolonial strategies. The overwhelming global visibility of India and Pakistan, for example, has conflated the sovereignty of those two nations with representations of agency for the entire South Asian subcontinent.

Imperial modalities of power have been reflected in the trajectory of South Asian political discourse since 1947, perhaps because they resonate with the imagined and/or desired agencies and ideologies of the South Asian region today. In the postcolonial era, cultural, theoretical, and activist investigations into South Asia have been guided by the desires of a few scholars whose identities are reminiscent of those ethnicities and languages in power during the nationalist movement and in the primary decades of nation building. For example, the pre-eminence and seminal research of Indian Bengali scholars, whose perceptions of nationalism were critical to shaping Indian identity in the colonial era, has earned them a privileged space in the academy today. In turn,

their visibility has proven highly problematic to alternate and subsequent investigations by other scholars of South Asia, and of India in particular. Their research regarding linguistic traditions, economic castes and classes, gender and sexual orientations, geographies, and historiographies has engendered a hegemonic influence on subsequent scholarship in their particular area of expertise. Thus, even innovative interpretations of the dialectic between women's bodies and the construction of masculinity under the Raj have been heavily circumscribed and often overshadowed by earlier foundational studies on this subject in the specific context of Bengali Brahmin culture. Similarly, considerations of the 1947 Partition of India have overtly emphasized the Partition of the Punjab to mitigate the importance of parallel events that took place simultaneously in Bengal. In addition, the elitist hierarchy of South Asian scholarship has privileged the importance of studies concerning India to eclipse the critical nature of similar investigations in, for example, Nepal and Bhutan.

The dominance of that praxis has allowed for the entrenchment of certain assumptions of normativity—or the standard of what can be considered important and viable scholarship in the discourse of South Asia—that resemble imperial processes of elitism and exclusionism. Those notions of normativity have engendered the marginalization and devaluation of scholarly investigations in alternate contexts. Ultimately, the hypervisibility of such strategies in postcolonial considerations of South Asia has limited dialogues on South Asia.

This anthology was conceived from the 2005 Rutgers Conference on South Asia entitled, “The Home and the World: South Asia in Transition.” We, the editors of the anthology, initiated the Conference out of a desire to capture what we perceive as a momentous “transition” in the discourse of South Asia. The critical nature of that metamorphosis lies in the emergence of transgressive and novel research that interrogates hegemonic South Asian scholarship to bring visibility to otherwise marginalized historiographies, linguistics, subjectivities, and geographies. The sheer number and unique nature of emergent strains of cultural, theoretical, and activist scholarship on South Asia in the recent decade reveals a marked rupture of those conventional parameters.

To enter into the discourse of South Asia today means to be conscious of its fluid nature, of the permeable status of the boundaries among the various disciplines that comprise it, and of the potential interpellation of one's work with the range of scholarship constituting South Asian studies. Hence, to be a South Asianist implies being conscious of the potential links among disparate investigations into South Asia, between, for example, the tribal historiographies in Pakistan and the problematic dialectic between Sanskrit and non-Sanskrit languages in the wake of Aryan-based Hindu nationalism in Southern India. To be a scholar of South Asia today requires the acceptance of the discourse as a fractured, plural, and amorphous entity, rooted by a similarity in geographic

origin.

The current transition within the discourse of South Asia has been paralleled by a rising interest in South Asia outside of the discourse, throughout the broader academic community. In the recent decade, scholars of African and Spanish/Portuguese studies, for example, have pondered the resonance among precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial historiographies of South Asia and their own research. Scholars of Comparative Literature, English, History, and Geography have focused on South Asia to explore the complicated relationship between native and plural diasporic spaces. Political scientists, legal analysts, and Human Rights activists are conscious of the impact of South Asian identity concerning modalities of resistance and terrorism, and publications concerning Sociology and Women's and Gender Studies are heavily informed by negotiations of masculinity and development in South Asia. The plurality and scalability of scholarship on South Asia in academic and activist spaces underscores the expansive and expanding nature of it as an academic enterprise today.

Home and the World

The theme and title of our conference took inspiration from Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore's (1861–1941) political novel, *Ghare-Baire*, or, *The Home and the World* (1916). A visionary man of many talents, including painting, poetry, music, education administration, and literature, the figure of Tagore himself coincidentally represents the international and multifaceted face we wish to give our own project in South Asian studies.

In his novel, Tagore makes distinct ties between the colonial politics of “divide and rule” and the symbolic division erected to keep women in *pardah*, or isolation, within the interiors of the home and away from the public quarters of the household. Against one narrative that depicts Bimala's, the female protagonist, newfound power when she dares to enter into the public quarters of her own house, is the parallel story of colonial India's split into various hostile religious and class communities during its struggle for independence from British rule. To be clear, the organizers did not only intend to interrogate Indian colonial history, as Tagore did in this depiction of anti-British and anti-Muslim uprisings in a West Bengal village. Rather, we were interested in fully deconstructing one important threshold portrayed in the novel that we see as important to contemporary studies of South Asia: the ideological boundary, most prevalent in North American academia, that allows for a study of South Asia even by isolating its various parts from one another.

We read Tagore's *Ghare-Baire* as a critique of the nationalistic discourse of freedom, which, at first promising, adopts a Machiavellian

indifference to how past histories of disenfranchisement and misrepresentation are transferred in to the future. Although the background of political agitation implies liberation and Independence in *Ghare-Baire*, full movement and development is denied to the female protagonist, who also represents the national home (India) that is ultimately trapped in its own soil after having been internally fragmented by British imperialism. Tagore's lingering question is to ask where a united India would be free within the sectarian divisions created by the British. We choose to treat "South Asia" today as a field that needs to be expanded by re-assessing labels previously ascribed to it. The conference posited South Asia as a broad, unified domain wherein the power in the public and private spheres/domains can be simultaneously exerted or exercised, rather than limited, in the spaces of either the home or world. In our minds, this approach underscores the need to create interest and research in regions more commonly neglected—such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka—both in South Asia and in the North American academic setting.

Indeed, in approaching scholars of South Asia for our conference, it was important to the organizers to widely redefine South Asian studies. Since the rise, and some would say entrenchment, of postcolonial studies, the voice of Indian writers has been pre-eminent. North American academia, especially in literary and cultural studies, syllabi, institutes, affiliate programs, and language centers, has tended to specialize in Indian studies, and little has been done to study India as part of and in relation to the South Asian continent. In our selection of specialists and arrangement of panels, we have tried to bridge this gap. In main, we have attempted to put regions of South Asia in dialogue in a cross-continental fashion. We use Tagore's idea of the threshold to re-imagine South Asia as such, in order to deliberately blur its geopolitical delimitations and to question where South Asian studies can or cannot be located. Neither do we mean that these constructs are "nowhere" in an abstract, universal sense. Specifically, the title and theme of our conference hopes to encourage a new trend in conceptualizations of the geographical, historical, socio-political, sexual, and aesthetic impulses that at once unite and divide South Asian communities.

Pondering Transition

The hyphen between the words *ghare* (the home or the inside) and *baire* (the world or outsideness) in the original book title signifies the condition of transition we see as productive in the academicization of South Asian studies. In concurrence with the novel, we wish to raise the following questions in response to recent theorizations on South Asia and South Asian studies: How has it become possible for an individual or community to be "at home" while

being “in the world” at the same time, and what movements have sought to arrest or facilitate this manner of diasporic development? What ideas and ideals are constructed as public, and therefore powerful, by relegating certain subjects, such as Tagore’s female protagonist, to an inner world in which they are denied a personalized politics of action? Bimala’s movement between realms of the home and thus, by symbolic extension, the nation, which lead to her ultimate confinement and sacrifice, demonstrate Tagore’s view that freedom is a commodity; often one of privilege only fully realizable in an outside realm controlled by a powerful Other (for example, the “India” of the British colonial imaginary).

We wish, however, to set our own conference in step with the protagonist’s willful transgression and to think of theoretical and ideological boundaries and formulae as permeable thresholds which can, today, be crossed without producing silences. The transformation of the “inside” into the “outside” that is depicted in Tagore’s novel is both the thematic and theoretical framework with which we circumscribe the articles in this anthology. As noted by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her keynote address “Staging South Asia,” the issues of transition the conference sought to explore were linked to translation—not merely of languages, but of the ideological superiority presumed by certain language-speakers and their notions of identity, nationality, and culture constructed in their particular languages. In order to conceive of South Asia as polyglot, which would be to study it from an inter-disciplinary angle and to resist forms of internal hierarchization, Spivak suggests another (and her own) translation of Tagore’s title—home *in* the world. Perhaps referencing the future of Comparative Literature as explored at length in her book *Death of a Discipline* (2004), Spivak’s address presented the audience with an alternative way to perceive of socialization through language. Albeit idealistic, the message is powerful: If the public domain itself (the world) could be seen as multiple forms of the private at work (multi-homes), the landscape of one’s daily existence would be produced and continually transformed by a constant contact with and recognition of our positionality as one part of a planetary system. The characteristic inter-connectedness in “planet-thought” and “planet-feeling,” new modes of thinking which Spivak defines as the intellectual engagement of the “exteriority” of the human, global condition where “the outside or other is indefinite,”² would advance a rethinking of Bengali as but one of many Indian languages of value to the national consciousness and India as one region of the many due academic investment.

“Home and the World: South Asia in Transition” was also a conference

² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “World Systems and the Creole,” *Narrative*, vol. 14, No. 6 (Jan 2006), 108.

designed to match the increased interest in South Asian studies demonstrated by various programs and departments at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ. Ourselves teachers and scholars of South Asian literature, art, religion, and cinema at the university, the organizers were able first-hand to experience a widespread scholastic enthusiasm to pool those interests together in the formation of the South Asian Studies Program. In large part, therefore, our insistence on the transitions yet to occur within this field affirm the recent changes in academics we currently see being implemented in universities and colleges throughout North America. We initially imagined this Conference out of an urgency to generate dialogue within the academy on all matters South Asian, which proved to be an overwhelming exercise. The kind of intellectual dialogue we envisioned, interdisciplinary in nature and cross-geographic in ambition, proved to be a collaborative effort on the part of scholars, artists, activists, and the community at large from various locations and disciplines, which yielded the present anthology.

Theorizing “South Asia”

Similar to Rabindranath Tagore’s project in his novel *Home and the World*, Partha Chatterjee’s close reading of history “from below” calls for the deconstruction of the postcolonial nation through gender. As he argues, the discursive power of “nation” as a public ideology borrows from and depends on the metaphorization of “woman” within the private sphere, making the clashes between late-nineteenth century nationalist fervor in Bengal and gender issues apparent. His binary points to the mutations in modernity once it arrives into Bengali *bhadralok*, so that a strikingly different form fomented within British India in contrast to their Western counterparts, which themselves represent various states of arrival into modernity.

Applying this inner/outer distinction to the matter of concrete day-to-day living separates the social space into *ghare* and *baire*, the home and the world. The “world” is the external domain of materiality and political power, and the “home” represents the internal domain that is separate from, but nevertheless influenced by, the former. The home and the world, therefore, may be perceived as anti-thetical but are never separable. To a great extent, the differences between the two domains help define their specific social function, which can be seen in their gendered representations: the external world typically masculinized and the internal domestic space as feminized and protected from the contaminating activities of the outside material world.³

³ Partha Chatterjee, “The Nation and Its Women,” In Ranajit Guha, ed., *A Subaltern Studies Reader 1986–1995* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997), 245.

The paradigms of home/world and female/male manifest in a wide range of geographical spaces, from South Asia itself through its wide-ranging diasporas in New York, Johannesburg, London, and Toronto. The migration patterns of South Asians within South Asia and outside of the region into particular diasporic contexts reflect complex socio-political dynamics. For example, the British transferred groups of South Asians from the British Raj to the West Indies, Sri Lanka, and Africa to sustain its imperial economy. In the modern age, mass migrations of South Asians into America have resulted from people seeking economic or political progress, or social and religious sanctum in countries far from what once was home. Large-scale immigration and a boom of South Asian populations in Western metropolises ultimately affect the socio-economic policies and urban demographics of the nation-states in which they reside.

Given the wide demographic backgrounds of those who consider themselves South Asian, several critical questions arise: Where and what is South Asia? In what ways does the category of South Asia unify disparate geographies? In what ways does the term “South Asia” exceed normative perceptions of the category itself? Although complicated, the answers might be rooted in considerations of the increased presence of South Asians in the political, economic, and social aspects of the nations in which they reside. For example, the location of South Asians in a wide range of economic professions around the world complicates investigations into the economic presence of South Asians in the global stage.

Certainly, such considerations must take into account the multiple social, political, and economic events that have affected representations of South Asia today. We initiated this “Introduction” in the midst of momentous events in South Asia, for example, in the wake of the Tsunami disaster, where tsunami-devastated areas of South Asia are attempting to recover the costs of these natural and political damages. This era is also marked by breakthroughs in the political deadlock over Kashmir that has pervaded Indo-Pak relations since 1947. Despite half a century of tense distrust, India and Pakistan finally show a brief spate of mercy to the Kashmiris in their respective states by allowing them to cross the gated and patrolled border to visit relatives. The region has also witnessed a series of natural and politically constructed disasters. Some obvious examples are the razing of the Babri Masjid in 1992, a significant marker in the surge of Hindu fundamentalism and in the rise of the political Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) closest identified with Hindutva,⁴ and India and Pakistan’s decision

⁴ For more on the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India, read Shaila Seshia, “Divide and Rule in Indian Party Politics: The Rise of the BJP,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 38,

to perform nuclear tests in 1998. The consequences of these historical moments have gained a certain level of visibility that has affected profoundly their immediate surroundings, the South Asian diaspora, and international politics. Natural disasters such as the tsunami that hit South India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and the Maldives in 2004, and the earthquake in Kashmir on both sides of the border in 2005 created a ripple effect that is perceived as a global, not merely a “South Asian,” tragedy.

The Subaltern Studies Collective has helped to uncover centuries of disciplinary silencing both engendered by Western scholars and native-born elitist or nationalist scholars. Postcolonial theorists, in part indebted to the subalternists and directed under the aegis of cultural, literary, or area studies, recover the relationship between the text and empire as inaugurated by the seminal work of Edward W. Said in *Orientalism* (1978) (later elaborated in *Culture and Imperialism*, 1993),⁵ which charts the relationship between imperial history and post-imperial conditions. Spivak articulates this difference in the following quote:

The Subaltern Studies collective is certainly related to South Asian history, as Gramsci was related to Italy. Its theoretical position, of studying how the continuity of supposedly pre-political insurgency brings culture to crisis and confronts power would make postcolonial studies more conventionally political. One major difference is that the disciplinary connection of postcolonial studies is

No. 11. (November, 1998), 1036–1050. Seshia charts the slow emergence of the BJP in its early years, when it advocated a form of positive secularism alongside Hindutva and did not so much mind giving minority groups rights, such as in the early 1980s when it sided against the Indian National Congress (INC) with the Akali movement for Sikh rights. Later on, she observes that it is more outside factors that lead to the rise of the BJP, such as the weakening of the INC, greater fragmentation of Indian parties, and also, moments such the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992 and the Pokhran blasts in 1998, when a certain fervent form of Hindu extremism found support in the masses. Seshia notes towards her conclusion, “Paradoxically, pacifism abandoned is atomic *Swadeshi*” (1049).

⁵ Edward W. Said takes to task area studies and policy institutes that set out in a general way to execute a labor similar to the Oriental Study scholars of earlier eras, making “Islam,” or entire regions of Asia, the Middle East, and Africa necessarily in need of enlightened Western intervention. For more on Said’s polemical caution against the intimate relationship between the scholar and the state, read Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). Said sharpens his claims in his later text, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) by unveiling the trope, “Structure of Attitude and Reference” (75), implicit in the works of famous European scholars and writers such as Joseph Conrad, Jane Austen, and Karl Marx.

to literary criticism rather than history and the social sciences.⁶

Benedict Anderson, writing of the development in nationalism in the late colonial and postcolonial periods in Asia, problematizes the modern construction of nation-states. Amidst myriad responses to Anderson's rendition of the meaning of nationalism within modernity, South Asianist Gopal Balakrishnan supports Anderson by stating,

the history of nationalism cannot be reduced to what he [Anderson] describes as its official, state-sponsored versions. The mobilization of a people on a national basis has just as often played the decisive role in the more subaltern history of struggle against colonialism and foreign occupation.⁷

Like Anderson and Balakrishnan, Gyan Prakash discusses the configuration of elitist nationalist discourse, especially the mobilizing rhetoric of M.K. Gandhi. Prakash contends that the founding principles of nationalism are "anchored in appeals to a 'lost' ancient belonging, and the unity of the national subject was forged in the space of difference and conflicts."⁸ Furthermore, Prakash notes that difference is dissolved and that the voice of the subaltern is lost in the birth of the nation-states. Homi K. Bhabha takes Anderson to task for ironing out meaningful differences and disjunctions. As Bhabha points out, "Anderson fails to locate the alienating time of the arbitrary sign in his naturalized, nationalized space of the imagined community."⁹

In this anthology, we look at the ways in which the meaning of the terms "home" and "world" stage South Asia into transition. In conceiving this collection, we were guided by the importance of reading the world as text, and to invite those who read the text alongside those who treat color, canvas, and object as language. To that end, our anthology encourages dialogue among artists, activists, gallerists, journalists, and more traditional scholars from a variety of disciplines such as literature, history, anthropology, education, diplomacy, history, linguistics, literature, political science, theology, urban planning, and women's studies.

⁶ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The New Subaltern: A Silent Interview," in Vinayak Chaturvedi, ed., *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* (New York: Verso, 2000), 331.

⁷ Gopal Balakrishnan, "The National Imagination," in Gopal Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation* (New York: Verso, 1996), 210.

⁸ Gyan Prakash, "Introduction," *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 9.

⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 161.

Organization of Anthology

In organizing the chapters in this anthology, we take inspiration, once again, from Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore perceived the problems inherent in the transformation of Bengal itself as similar to the transformation of Bengal's women, from sovereignty over the limited private sphere of the home to participation in the complexities of the public arena. In South Asia today and for South Asians living in adoptive homelands throughout the developed and developing world, women are still marginalized by their gender in negotiating their autonomy and agency within the spaces of the home, community, and nation. This is true particularly in South Asia proper, where the elevation and desecration of the territory through successive turf wars and shifting borders can be correlated to the freeing of women from territorial associations in those same contexts. Because gender is critical to assessing South Asian identity politics, we begin this anthology with the chapter *Gender and Identity*.

The first paper in *Gender and Identity*, Shamita Das Dasgupta's "The Making of "Me": (Re)Structuring South Asian-American Battered Women's Identity," explores the ways that immigration from South Asia to the United States stresses traditional gender role security in the home in the context of domestic violence. The location of South Asian communities in the broader American cultural context has inhibited the exploration and attainment of viable solutions to treat the special needs of survivors of domestic violence in the South Asian American community. This chapter also explores Asra Q. Nomani's observations of a larger position for women in Islam through "Gender Jihad for Islam's Future in the 21st Century: The Pivotal Role of South Asian Women in the Birth and Growth of Islamic Feminism as an Answer to Extremism." For Nomani, the new righteous struggle for devout Muslim women will be to re-embrace and to recover Islam from the retrogressive spiral of fundamentalism. Her piece is germane as it addresses the complexities of gender in exploring Islamic subjectivity in the volatile post-9/11 climate today. The final selection, Sudipta Sen's "Notes from the Domestic Margins of Early Colonial Calcutta: Prostitutes, Slaves, Criminals, and Other Vulnerable Bodies," approaches constructions of the female body and various forms of Othering in colonial Bengal. Through records of the victims' hearings in colonial courts, Sen observes opportunities to reclaim the histories of people living at all levels beneath the respectable veneer of colonial Bengali culture.

The second chapter entitled *Nationalism and Globalism* responds to the ways that transgressions upon new worlds in the age of European exploration (namely the fifteenth century) have affected processes of immigration and cultural assimilation throughout the globe in modern and contemporary times. Selections in this chapter focus on the distinct parallels between experiences of

South Asians in South Africa, a point of resettlement for indentured South Asian workers, and the United States, where the new climate of distrust and prejudice post-9/11 has created new problems for recent immigrants. This chapter also employs fiction to read the new climate of insecurity created by the New York World Trade Center bombings.

Edward Ramsamy's "Identity Politics and Indian Resistance in South Africa" explores the unique political agency of South Asians in South Africa. Indians in South Africa achieved that political agency through a fine balance: by resisting the temptation to lobby with Whites, but by also maintaining solidarity both among their own internal factions as well as with the majority South African Blacks and Coloureds, a term for racially mixed citizens in the South African context. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in "*Queen of Dreams: Reading Immigrant Identity*" writes of the ways that spiritual and familial homeland traditions both support immigrant identity in host countries, yet fail to provide solutions to the alienation of immigrants in those same host countries in times of national crisis. Jeannette Gabriel in "The Silent Crisis at Home: The War of Terror on Immigrant Communities" speaks about South Asians and other minority individuals who have been strategically moved outside legal protection, to assume a limbo existence that is at once both outside of the American law, yet detained in legal detention institutions inside of America.

The third chapter, *Nationalism and Globalism*, presents two perspectives from senior, career diplomats on Pakistan and India. Both nations were born in 1947 from the land mass constituting British India, which had been temporarily bolted together by British colonial administration through the imposition of roads, telegraph wires, postal routes, provincial sub-governments, and educational and legal systems, even as it was simultaneously apportioned by class and religion. The 1947 Partition of British India created two powerful nations, each with its own nationalistic impulse that continues to be at odds with that of the other nation because of historical offenses committed on both sides during the Partition itself, and because of continued opposition over the contested territories of Jammu and Kashmir. In the post-9/11 climate, the American war in Afghanistan has further destabilized the volatile relations between those competing nations, which in turn has had a profound effect on the stability of the entire region of South Asia. And in the wake of the cataclysmic earthquake in Kashmir on October 8, 2005, the future of the entire region has yet to be determined.

In diplomatic negotiations, it is the goal to steer nations benignly from imprudent and unfortunate pasts toward optimistic futures. War is proof of diplomacy's absolute failure. In "India: From Midnight to the Millennium and Beyond," Indian-born, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information Shashi Tharoor explains India as a

generally benevolent, pluralistic democracy that is moving toward greater tolerance and unity of purpose under the leadership of a fiduciary Hindu majority rule. Former Ambassador of Pakistan to Malaysia, Syria, and Morocco, and Former Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations in New York, S. Azmat Hassan responds to Tharoor with a perspective on Pakistan's history that takes into account the international conflicts that have restrained Pakistan's internal development in "Some Reflections on Pakistan." Hassan is critical of the ways Pakistan is decelerated by Islamic fundamentalism, the illiberality that oppresses women in many quarters, and the nuclear accumulation between Pakistan and India. Wary of the ways the United States's "War on Terror" implicates Pakistan, Hassan's perspective is optimistic for future development, opportunities, and peace with its eastern neighbor. Both Tharoor and Hassan's essays speak together for the thrust and parry of diplomatic, national discourse.

The fourth chapter of the text *Contemporary South Asian Art* addresses the conference organizers' recognition of the increasing prominence of South Asian artists both at home and in the world at large. During the decline of the British Raj, an interest in modern, non-traditional art experimentation grew. South Asians began to use Western thought and Western forms self-reflectively, creating hybrids and new national trends. It was Rabindranath Tagore who brought the first exhibition of European cubist and expressionist painting to Bengal, not to encourage Bengalis to paint like Europeans, but to inspire vibrant new national expressions, as demonstrated in the work of Jamini Roy and Amrita Sher Gil, among others. The first wave of Indian modernists, the Progressives, who were led by painters like M.F. Husain and F.N. Souza, has already become canonical. In Pakistan, the decline of the rigid regime of Zia-ul-Haq in the last years of the 1980s permitted the nurturing of fresh, contemporary, and—most significantly—politicized art expression, which has burst forth since 2000.

Debra Diamond, Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art at the Freer and Sackler Galleries in Washington, D.C., introduces the chapter on art in "Home and the World: South Asian Art Today." Diamond's discussion not only speaks about the contributors to this section, but also reviews the paths through which Western art museums have charted Western approaches to contemporary Asian art. Diasporic painters Vinod Dave in "Home Is a Foreign Place" and Chitra Ganesh in "How I Found Her: On Making of Art and Drawing of Women's Voices" offer candid narratives about their subject matter and their use of hybrid themes to contemplate how their work interrogates a personal space between North America and South Asia. In "Bose-Pacia Gallery and the Decade of Development of Global Interest in Contemporary South Asian Art," gallerist Arani Bose of the Bose-Pacia Gallery in New York City describes the

precarious leap of faith that he and his partners embraced while promoting South Asian contemporary art in New York City almost ten years ago. This chapter also includes an interview by Hammad Nasar of Green Cardamom with the Pakistani artist Rashid Rana in which Rana describes his influences and the political and personal nature of his work.

Chapter Five, *Diaspora and Translation*, acknowledges the inevitable relationship between the late colonial and postcolonial migration of South Asians into virtually every nation in the world, the attending co-migration of national literatures, and the creation of new literatures that speak for the South Asian experience in English and other Western tongues. English remains the language of choice for South Asian writers who wish to speak easily to a global readership. And, in turn, South Asian literature has been translated into foreign tongues, namely, languages the authors do not speak. For example, although Manil Suri's *The Death of Vishnu* (2001) was written in English, it was later translated into German, Spanish, and French. Shashi Tharoor's *India: From Midnight to the Millennium* (1997) was written in English, but translated into German and Malayalam. Activist writer Arundhati Roy reached a global audience by writing a controversial story of violence toward Dalits in her novel, *The God of Small Things* (1998), in English; her text was considered disturbing and defaming in her progressive home state of Kerala. The disabled, gay Parsi writer Firdaus Kanga wrote *Trying to Grow* (1990) in English because he could only publish and find a substantial readership sympathetic to and interested in reading about his developing gay consciousness through the symbolic slippages of the English language. Even as South Asian *literati* continue to publish in English, South Asian languages, of which there are a great many, continue to remain important languages for South Asian novelists and poets.

In this section Janet A. Walker in "Reading the Postcolonial Picaresque in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and Radhika Jha's *Smell*" writes of Bharati Mukherjee and Radhika Jha, two Indian writers, each of whom employ English very differently and very personally. M. Josephine Diamond in "*The Enigma of Arrival*: Naipaul's Metaphysical Homelessness" addresses V.S. Naipaul, whose complicated prose reveals a restless dissatisfaction both in the marginal and central identity formulations of the diasporic writer. In "The Question of Country: A Close Reading of Ismat Chughtai's '*Jare 'N*,'" translator and author Tahira Naqvi explores the intersection between feminism and nation. Nirmal Puwar in "Speaking Positions in Global Politics" addresses the problematic study and elevation of the subaltern voice. Afroz Taj in "A Door Into Hindi: Teaching Language and Culture in Cyberspace" describes his pedagogy for teaching the complicated dialectic between the Hindi and Urdu languages both in the classroom and in an online program that immerses the language student in cultural experiences and playful engagements with interactive language

learning.

The final section of the compilation, *Touching Untouchability*, concerns one of the most crucial, yet underdeveloped, topics in South Asian discourse: the problematic position of Dalits in South Asia and its diasporic communities. That ambiguous position is evidenced, for example, in social assumptions that render Dalits tangentially Hindu, yet paradoxically accord Dalits none of the spiritual and/or political advantages afforded to caste Hindus because Dalits are classified below, and therefore outside of, the Hindu caste system.

During the nationalist movement, Mohandas K. Gandhi attempted to improve the status of Dalits by referring to them as *harijans*, or children of God, to soften the stigma of untouchability their non-caste position had engendered. Yet as time has shown, their complicated status has not been eradicated by such poetic euphemisms. Sympathy for Dalits in nationalist texts such as Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) has also rendered the identity of Dalits more complex. The novel follows an adolescent Dalit named Bakha through one day in his life, during which he cleans public latrines—in line with the duties of his social position—and dodges becoming the victim of random acts of abasement by non-Dalits. At the novel's end, Bakha attends a gathering to listen to a celebrity politician speak against untouchability. The speaker proposes the flush toilet as the solution to relieve Dalits of their degrading social work of cleaning toilets and, therefore, of improving their position in Indian society generally. But the simplicity of the proposal highlights even more astutely that the historical scapegoating of Dalits cannot be solved by simple technologies, and that a truly enlightened future Indian society requires the abandonment of social discrimination against Dalits entirely. The complexity of Dalit subjectivity is further evidenced by Dalit conversions from Hinduism to Islam, Buddhism, or Christianity as a means of escaping Hindu castism. Yet even conversion is problematic, as those other religions within South Asia have themselves ironically incorporated the practice of untouchability into their own cultural systems; hence, the conversion of a male Hindu Dalit into Christianity still renders him a Christian Dalit.

Touching Untouchability opens with John C.B. Webster's "Dalits and Conversion," which explores the humiliating effects that conversion has visited upon Dalits who have converted out of Hinduism in the Hindu-dominated nation of India today. Beyond Webster's contribution, the remaining essays speak to the importance of Dalit identity globally and also poignantly advocate Dalit liberation. Jebaroja Singh in "Climbing the Tamarind Tree: Dalit Women Claiming Voice and Visibility" reclaims Dalit communal and poetic traditions through her own translation of oral poetry transmitted by Dalit women. Singh's work supports the contemporary Dalit movement that seeks to restore and vivify

Dalit culture, rather than to shed an identity, which was seen to compromise achievement and modernity—a protest movement advocated by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in his Conversion Resolution of 1936. Anushiya Sivanarayanan’s “Problems in Translating Tamil Dalit Poetry” addresses some formal and ethical issues for translators. When translators occupy the position of being outsiders to the sub-cultures from which works they seek to translate emerge, their translations become suspect. Sivanarayanan’s piece is conscious of how the translator translates culture and, perforce, becomes an unwitting ethnologist. Rajan Krishnan in “Touching Untouchability?: Dalit Situations and Theoretical Horizons” explores the construction of Dalit urban masculinity by examining the ways that *acting up* and *acting out* permits Dalit adolescents to negotiate a presence and a voice for themselves, even though these activities are, at once, both assertive as well as self-defeating. Together, the four voices of this final section argue for the vibrancy of Dalit articulation and advocate for the expansion of Dalit agency and parity, rather than for the dissolution and bland assimilation of this important group into mainstream political communities in South Asia.

Horizons

The moment in transition captured in these pages parallels the rising visibility of South Asia in the global stage in the recent era. India and Pakistan in particular have assumed critical roles in the international political and economic arena. Pakistan’s precarious ties with the Taliban in post-9/11 politics, the recent nuclear arms agreement between India and the United States, and India’s persistent demand to join the United Nations Security Council, for example, bring visibility to the rising agency of South Asia in contemporary global affairs. Yet, despite that emergence, the moral tenor of that agency has been questioned by various global human rights and women’s rights initiatives driven by peoples of South Asian descent themselves. The marked presence of Dalits at the 2001 World Conference Against Racism, for example, continues to highlight the archaic and oppressive practices of caste discrimination, which pervade India and problematize its image as an emerging global economic power.

Such contradictory images are propelled by, for example, Pakistani and Indian women’s activism in global conferences, which has underscored their respective nation’s complicity in various forms of gender violence, from rape sanctioned by tribal law, to the institutionalized sexual violence perpetrated against women by law enforcement officers, to the silence of Indian Chief Ministers in the perpetuation of sexual violence during cycles of communal violence. Those disparate representations of South Asia speak to major gaps in

the rhetoric of the region at this critical moment in its history. Approximately sixty years after most South Asian nations gained independence from Great Britain, explorations of South Asian identity are as much characterized by that dissonance as by similarities among cultural, theoretical, and empirical speculations of it.

Those dissimilar representations of South Asia today may be interpreted positively, as evidence of the expanding intellectual and activist productions that actively deconstruct its hegemonic tendencies. Present academic treatises (South Asian included) depict contexts that satisfy the majority academic through processes that gain credibility as they are circumscribed by certain traditional ideologies. The fallacy of such processes lies in their seamless and impermeable representation, which limits the study of South Asia by monitoring what can and cannot be discussed. Such approaches to scholarship in general limit the potential growth of any dialogue on the subject, to produce a discourse that is contained and circular. This approach has dominated the discourses of South Asia until recently, both by recycling conventional topics that have been rehashed in many journals and conferences, and second, by reducing the inclusion of innovative scholarship in the discourse. The exclusion of controversial topics to satisfy the palette of the majority at root reflects the hegemonic strategies of logic that had paralyzed the discourse previously. Instead, we feel that it is the responsibility of academia to reflect the reality of the world today, its perfections and imperfections, sanctioned and speculations, as a means to continue to evolve the discourse out of its previous stagnancy. By including articles and viewpoints that transgress and challenge, even controversially, the traditional scope of dialogue, we, the Editors of *Home and the World*, ourselves further the “awakening” in the current discourse of South Asia.

That agenda in mind, we purposely included controversial and wide-ranging viewpoints in the anthology to represent some of the chasms in current speculations of South Asia. The section entitled, *Contexts and Diplomacy*, engages international and regional diplomats concerning Indian and Pakistani nationalism. Although referencing biased viewpoints on South Asian politicians may appear problematic, our inclusion of those views here purports to their very real impact in South Asia today. The anthology also brings to light controversial discussions concerning the subjective gaps between the categorization of scholars of South Asia into “insider” and “outsider” positions. For example, much has been discussed concerning the difference in positions and agendas of the contributions of scholars of non-South Asian descent to the South Asian dialogue. That gap is apparent in the distinct approaches of several pieces included in the anthology, which reveal the varying considerations of scholars of non-South Asian cultural backgrounds. For example, attempts to include

South Asian literature in constructions of the Western literary canon might be perceived as problematic by scholars of South Asian descent. The paradigm of "insider" and "outsider" is further explored in the intellectual dissents among scholars of South Asian descent themselves. For example, the notable distinctions in culture and ethnicity are highlighted in considerations of teaching Hindi in South India, a discussion that arose during the conference. Soon after the independence of India, the imposition of a national Hindi language upon all the regions of India culminated in a mass revolution from the southern states of India. Refusing to accept Hindi as their primary language, Tamil Nadu, for example, rallied for secession from the newly independent nation of India. The silence on the problematics of introducing Hindi into a South Indian context today alludes to the continuing cultural gaps of consciousness between scholars rooted in various geographical spaces in India.

We hope to seal some gaps in the discourse of South Asia by including an entire section on formulations of Dalit identity and gender politics. Those portions of the anthology underscore how the increasing visibility of those dialogues globally has reoriented and fractured the foundation of certain social structures in South Asia and its diaspora. By offering treatises by activists and theorists alike, we highlight the unique methodologies and credibility guiding distinct investigations into South Asia.

Dissonance within the scholarship of South Asia also may be interpreted negatively, as evidence of an indifference to certain experiences, or as a lack of research of certain subjects in considerations of South Asia. We, the Editors, are aware that not every anthology can represent fairly and equally the subjective experience of all the range of scholarship concerning South Asia. Nevertheless, we are conscious of the silence of certain dialogues in our volume. The lack of studies concerning alternate sexual orientations, wide-ranging class and religious positions, and other unnamed forms of violence, such as trafficking, might be perceived as exclusions of certain experiences. We are further conscious of our inability to equally represent scholarship from all South Asian nations such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan.

In conjunction with its influence on geopolitical events, global cultural affairs, broader academic studies, and human rights contexts, the impact of the discourse of South Asia on dialogues concerning social production, nationalism, diasporic studies, and rights discourse is incalculable. Highlighting the resonance between the space of the local (South Asia and/or its diaspora) and the global (the world) through a variety of disciplines, we capture in these pages a transitory moment that reformulates perceptions of what can be construed as the phenomenon of South Asia.