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- A. Joseph Dorairaj A Synoptic Look at Poststructuralism, Postcolonialism and Postmodernism • Ajay S. Sekher Towards New Cultural Historiographies and Geographies • Hashmina Habib Mocking the Veil: Misrepresentation of Muslim Women

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relationships and the world of choices, Johns and Korah, who lead the lives of American citizens, have no belief in the traditional system of marriage.

In *Mediacity: Situations, Practices and Encounters*, Frank Eckardt investigates how social settings and spaces of the city are created, experienced and practised through the use and presence of new media (7-2). New media enable different settings, practices and behaviours to occur in urban space. In the narrative space of the film *ABCD* the media celebrates the American Born Confused Desi and makes them popular, public figures of Kerala. As Mankekar comments, "The centrality of NRI capital to the making of 'India' via transnational television crucially mediated the production, reterritorialization of Indian culture" (349). In *ABCD*, Johns makes up a story to impress Madhumitha that they actually came to India to help the poor by leading a simple life. A news editor overhears this story and publishes an article in the newspaper following which the news goes viral and Johns and Korah become public idols across Kerala.

James Clifford in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* raises questions like, where does an anthropologist stand and when does culture make itself at home in motion. Clifford takes travel and its difficult companion, translation, as openings into a complex modernity. The film *ABCD* can be considered as a travel story of "roots and routes" (78). Fast in *Diaspora and Transnationalism*, revives the notions of diaspora and transnationalism and uses them productively to study central questions of socio-political change and transformation (9-34). In *ABCD*, both the diasporic issues of identity and the transnational practice of deporting meet at the end. It is useful in this context to mention Bakhtin's term 'chronotope' defined in his work, *The Dialogic Imagination*.

Time takes on flesh and becomes visible for human contemplation; likewise, space becomes changed and responsive to the movements of time and history and the enduring character of a people....chronotopes thus stand as monuments to the community itself, as symbols of it, as forces operating to shape its members' images of themselves. (84)

Johns and Korah's travel from city to village and back, shows the geographical spaces of Kerala. Here identity is shown as a performance represented through the medium of film. In sociology the idea of identities as constructed through the performance of selfhood can be traced back to the work of Erving Goffman where he posits that there is a sense of theatricality to everyday life. The body is challenged in extreme ways through lack of delicious food, clothes, and shelter; torture from the power systems especially from the police when Johns and Korah took part in a struggle against the government. Some of the officials want to adorn them with the title 'terrorists' for their personal and political benefits. This shows the numerous possibilities through which innocent people are trapped in the social space as an outcast through divergent spatial practices. Madhumitha is a student, a female activist who is

against corruption and all the existing norms of tradition. She is bold enough to protest against the college management about the huge amount of fee that they extract from the students. For Aparna Gopinath, a theatre artist, who enacted the role of Madhumitha, the most challenging part as an actress was to perfect voice modulation.

The combination of cars, cable television, cell phones, and air conditioners points to the new landscape of consumption, a non-rational landscape where dreams of "good life" circulate via television within the ruins of modernity. Furthermore, the prevalence of smuggling, drug peddling and a thriving extortion racket provided a strong identity for many unemployed men. The narrative space of *ABCD* has shed light on the above spatial practices while showing the over-crowded *cheries* with multiple families as the "unintended city" that was not part of the "master plan," but a space that emerges as the other of the official plan (Nandy 7). It is portrayed as a centre of crime. The emergence of criminality and gang activity needs to be located within a complex spatial map, where a series of random events both spectacular and routine has led to the assertion of new identities. All the spatial practices of the city are experienced by Johns and Korah. They are compelled to live in a small building located near the *chery* with a lot of mosquitoes, poor water and electric facility. In his article "The Other City," T. V. Sajeer talks about the exciting city of Kochi:

Throughout the rest of the city shops are a street side presence, and at many places streets are shops. The city drew its manual workforce from the slum. The hallmark of Cochin's streets as perceived at night by anyone is the hordes of mosquitoes over one's head. The island of Vypin, a part of Cochin, is the most thickly populated island in the world. With little access to potable water, and acute shortage of health and service facilities, the island was the test site for the possible limits of demographic thresholds. Until the opening of Goshree Bridge three years ago, access to the mainland was only through the backwaters. (94)

However, Italo Calvino, in *Invisible Cities*, offers an alternative approach to thinking about cities, how they are formed and how they function. The work is framed as a conversation between the aging and busy emperor Kublai Khan and Marco Polo. Kublai Khan describes cities as: "Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else" (44). The narrative space of *ABCD* provides such an alternative experience of city – both imaginable and memorable.

Ajayan Venugopalan who is the scriptwriter for Shyamaprasad's movie *English* says that the movie narrates various facets of Malayali Diasporic experiences in a Western metro. The movie tells the story of four Malayalis who have varied impressions about the city of London. Ajayan adds that his

life in the US has inspired him in creating the story and characters of *English*. "The characters are fictional but their experiences are very close to what we as expatriates experience living in any city in Europe or America" (www.nowrunning.com). The movie casts Jayasurya, Nivin Pauly, Mukesh and Nadiya Moidu in the lead roles.

English opens with a letter written by Sankaran to Ammu, "dear Ammu... I feel this London, an ant's nest... How many faces, cultures and languages are there for a city? ... Time and this city flow together, though they know our lives, pretending that it is unknown." Personal letter writing is a social practice and a powerful channel for self-expression and for pursuing relationships. When people are socially isolated, they may turn to letter writing. In the past, it was the only channel available for contact with others. Isn't Sankaran a prisoner of the past? That is why for digging out his memories, Syamaprasad uses an act of letter writing. Janet Maybin, in the essay "Death Row Penfriends: Some Effects of Letter Writing on Identity and Relationships" writes that in specific contexts letter writing as a social practice can combine the individual and reflective functions of private writing with the interpersonal functions of conversation (151-78). It results in a rich site for negotiation and reconstruction of identity. The act of personal writing can create a private space in crowded or alien circumstances.

Syamaprasad gives enough breathing time both for the audience and for the characters. For the spectators, it provides a space to rethink, to reimagine and to recreate in the meaning making process. For the characters, this acts as a space of 'being and becoming'. The younger generation is a little confused and anxious about their future, though their parents get a sort of relief while thinking about their past: their country, rituals, friends, relatives, and childhood experiences. The youngsters (Mekhu, Chindu, Deepu, Sebin) know their parents' tongue (Malayalam). But they are ashamed of speaking it in office, in public or even at home. They want to think that their language is English. Always, they are in fear of being humiliated by the Londoners for their Indianness. They are what they are, neither Indians nor English, 'neither here nor there'.

People who migrate and settle carry with them 'cultural artefacts' – ideas and values in terms of religion, artistic endeavour, social norms, political thought, ethical suppositions and organisational attitudes. Appadurai offers a useful perspective for understanding the relationship between cultural contexts and social experience as elaborated through the concept of the imagination. Diasporic groups have undergone the experience of deterritorialisation from their places of origin, and ethnic mediascapes such as Mollywood offer an audio-visual space for ideas of the homelands and its translations to be negotiated around the world in places of diasporic settlement. This diasporic imaginary offers possibilities for comprehending the position of the diasporic subject in the country of settlement and the

country of origin as informing each other to produce new sensibilities of being and belonging.

The narrative space of the film travels through the lives of Sebin, an Indian, a Malayali working in an IT company in London; Sarasu, Dr Ram and their two daughters, a half Malayali and half Tamilian Brahmin family; Joe, a shop owner, his wife Sally, a nurse and their daughter Mekhu, a Malayali Christian family; and Sankaran, a Malayali Hindu bachelor working in a restaurant. In *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire and the Cultures of Travel*, Inderpal Grewal writes,

The seclusion of women in a separate space in the house was also given other terms in other places. In India it was the *anthapur* that took on the symbolic differential function of the harem in Egypt. . . . The pleasures and joys of life in the *anthapur* are recorded in the writings of many Indian women, as are the restrictions. (51)

Sarasu, a typical Indian house wife stays at home making food (Idli and Sambar) and engaged in household chores when her husband is in the hospital and her daughters are at school. She wears 'hindi' on the forehead and performs 'pooja' in the early morning. She doesn't like girls wearing miniskirts to school and their talking with boys. In her conversation, 'kadavule' is a frequent word. She wants to go back 'Home' to escape from this loneliness. Partha Chatterjee puts in his article, "Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonialized Women: the Contest in India" that "the national construct of the Indian woman attributes "the spiritual qualities of self-sacrifice, benevolence, devotion, religiosity, and so on" to femininity, which then stands "as a sign for nation" (630).

Diwali is a Hindu festival of lights that symbolizes the victory of good over evil. Sarasu celebrates 'Deepavali' by decorating her house with coloured electric bulbs. She wants a return to sources of moral fixity in day to day life, in contrast to the 'always revisable' outlook of modern progressivism. Her living space is limited to the four walls of her house until she travels alone in London to follow her husband Dr Ram. The realization that he is a homosexual is a waking up for Sarasu to the social space in which she lives. Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered research needs to continue problematizing the concepts of identity and community. Nikki Sullivan in her work *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* explores the ways in which sexuality, subjectivity and sociality have been discursively produced in various historical and cultural contexts. Dr Ram who is gay shows a complex interaction between subjectivity and sociality.

Joe's mother, 'Ammachi', who is the eldest character in the narrative space of *English* suffers from asthma. Ammachi who always wants *kanni* and *jerukavellam*, sacrifices her life for her children and lives in a foreign land, without complaints. But the problem is whether she could 'live' a life there in the present. In her broken memories, she still lives in the past. Joe looks after



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