

ARCHAEOLOGY OF VAGABONDAGE:
SOUTH ASIA'S COLONIAL ENCOUNTER AND AFTER

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ABSTRACT

Archeology of Vagabondage: South Asia's Colonial Encounter and After

Avishek Ray

My research examines the figure of the 'vagabond' as a case study to illustrate how 'modern' perception of the 'vagabond' has depleted the diversities in its 'pre-modern' counterparts. It argues that the paranoia towards the 'vagabond' was inherited from the west out of the colonial contact leading to the birth of the nation-state and its liaison with 'instrumental rationality' during the high noon of advanced industrial capitalism, while (quasi-religious) itinerancy, on the contrary, had always been tolerated in 'pre-modern' India. The problems I am addressing are: What is the line of thread that separates the 'traveler' from the 'vagabond', the 'explorer' from the 'wanderer'? How do we then politically account for the historic 'ruptures' in the vagabond having been tolerated in the ancient 'Indic' thought [cf. *Manusmriti*, *Arthshastra*], encouraged in early Buddhist discourse [cf. *Samannaphala Sutta*], revered as the 'holy Other' in the Middle Ages [cf. Bhakti-Sufi literature], and eventually marginalized in the 'modern'? While considering issues of cultural differences, my thesis points to how the epistemic shifts from the classical to the medieval, from the medieval to the modern radically alter the value system immanent in the figure of the 'vagabond'. The research argues that the cultural baggage that the expression 'vagabond' is generally associated with, is a product of a specific western/utilitarian value system, which is a distinct 'cultural' category of the 'modern' west that had no resonance in 'pre-modern' India, and hence cannot be necessarily *universalizable*. The project works in a number of registers: historical, archival, cultural, philosophical and representational, involves analysis of literary, filmic texts, also legislative documents, and is genuinely interdisciplinary in nature. As of

discourse analysis, the project studies the politics of cultural representations both of and by 'vagabonds'.

Keywords: Vagabond, India, Vagrancy Act, 1943 Bengal Famine, Chittaprosad, Zainul Abedin, Samannaphala Sutta, Buddhism, Rahul Sankrityayan, Kalkut, Premankur Atorthy

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iv
Introduction	1
A Note on Pre-history of Vagabondage	30
Imag(in)ing the Vagabond: Virulent Mobility in Post-Colonial Times	94
Literarizing The Vagabond: Towards a Radical Theory of Wandering	157
Conclusion	220
References	238

Introduction

In 1907 the Bombay Government denied a ‘vagabond’ his right to his father’s pension only because he was assessed to be a ‘vagabond’. The 1907 file from the Bombay Police reads: ‘[T]he widow had only one son – a vagabond – and so the pension was granted to the widow (instead of to the son) for the support of herself and her daughter’. Next, the reportage legitimizes the decision by citing a similar case – what the report calls a deviation from the ‘proper course’ – with another widow. In the latter case, however, the widow received a pension because her two elder sons had separated from the family. Notwithstanding the gender-angle, what catches my attention is the ‘cultural baggage’ associated with the idea of the vagabond, and how it acts as key factor in the verdict of this case. The pledge that the pension of seven rupees -- by no means a paltry sum in 1907 -- must go in favor of the widow instead of the son, has been solely supported by the fact that the latter had become a vagabond. The case is also interesting for a second reason: it involved a conflict of opinions between the Finance Department and the Bombay Government. While the latter was in favor of granting the pension to the widow for life, the Finance Department proposed that the pension should be paid for twelve years or till her remarriage, whichever was earlier. Curious about whether there had been any repeal or revision, I wanted to check on further follow-ups of the case. But this must have been in reality a very insignificant incident, one potentially incapable of grossly stirring public curiosity, for there had been no further follow-ups available on record; moreover, hardly half a page was spared for this single report in its entirety.

Nevertheless, questions do persist: When and how did the widow or the Government come to the conclusion that the son had become a ‘vagabond’? Did the ‘vagabond’ son really ‘disappear’? Did he ever return? Does his becoming a ‘vagabond’

bear the same kind of consequences as becoming 'separated' from the family? Even in the lack of verifiable sources on the whereabouts of the son, one cannot but be amazed at the way one's becoming a 'vagabond' has been uttered in the same breath with one's 'separating from the family', and has been equated with self-ostracization in the eyes of the law. From the manner it has been reported, it follows as if like a corollary to vagabondage, that the vagabond son may now be disentitled, if not deprived, from his claims although there is no mention of him having either renounced the family or refused to support it financially. What needs asking at this point is: how do we unpack the 'constructedness' of the *apriori* assumptions that cloak the idea of the 'vagabond'? How did they crystallize at all in the first place? Why and when is the idea of vagabondage naturalized as a punishable crime? What conflates this idea with the notion of abstaining from responsibilities, familial or otherwise?

These questions comprise the central problematic of my research. My research examines the figure of the 'vagabond' as a case study to illustrate how 'modern' perception of the 'vagabond' has depleted the diversities in its 'pre-modern' counterparts. It argues that the paranoia towards the 'vagabond', in the context of India, was inherited from the West out of the colonial contact leading to the birth of the nation-state and its liaison with 'instrumental rationality' during the high noon of advanced industrial capitalism, while (quasi-religious) itinerancy, on the contrary, had always been tolerated in 'pre-modern' India. The problems I am addressing are: What is the line that separates the 'traveler' from the 'vagabond', the 'explorer' from the 'wanderer'? How do we then politically account for the historic 'ruptures' embodied in the transitions from vagabonds being tolerated in ancient 'Indic' thought [cf. *Manusmriti*, *Arthshastra*], encouraged in early Buddhist discourse [cf. *Samannaphala Sutta*], revered as the 'holy Other' in the Middle Ages [cf. Bhakti-Sufi literature], to eventually being marginalized in the

‘modern’? While considering issues of cultural differences, my thesis points to how the epistemic shifts – from the classical to the medieval, from the medieval to the modern – radically alter the value system immanent in the figure of the ‘vagabond’. The research argues that the cultural baggage the expression ‘vagabond’ is generally associated with, is a product of a specific Western/utilitarian value system, which is a distinct ‘cultural’ category of the ‘modern’ West that had no resonance in ‘pre-modern’ India, and hence cannot be necessarily *universalizable*.

The 'vagabond' is basically an umbrella-term for a swarm of different categories of travelers: hippie, gypsy, peregrinator, bohemian, hobo, vagrant, tramp, wanderer and so on. The gypsy is the prototype of the footloose, the peregrinator of the quasi-religious mendicant, the tramp of the itinerant miscreant, so on and so forth. They refer to different modes of traveling practices, bear different undertones, positive and negative. But, there is hardly any doubt in the fact that whenever we face these phrases, we tend to take them as ‘naturalized’ concepts without questioning the classificatory intentions therein. Who were the proponents of setting up these classificatory categories? When and why were these set up? What is the ‘telos’ of this dividing practice? Which politico-historical milieu among others allowed this exclusionary dividing practice? And above all, if people had been traveling from antiquity and in so many *unessentializably* diverse forms, why certain travelers had to be branded as ‘vagabond’? How do we account for the paradox in the ‘explorer’ being venerated in history lessons while, on the flipside, the ‘vagabond’ being convicted of Vagrancy acts?

In this project, there is a family of words that I have set in motion around ‘vagabondage’, which is the keyword for the project. These surrounding words – wanderer, nomad, refugee, itinerant, vagrant, the homeless etc. – create regional,

context-specific, but overlapping concepts, and do not necessarily allude to any single overarching concept. The thesaurus, unlike taxonomy, does not require conceptual purification. Likewise, I have not attempted to ‘purify’ the individual concepts. I have, rather, sought to understand the histories and conditions that render the conceptual overlaps possible. In other words, I am looking at the conditions of possibility that make us overlap, say, the refugee with the vagrant, the vagabond with the wanderer. I am examining the uncanny associations among categories that uneasily co-exist as sub-sets of a vast range of phenomenon – what may loosely be called ‘itinerancy’ – and in so doing, I aim to foreground ‘vagabond(age)’ as an object of study, as a discourse in Foucault’s sense, and *see through* the obtrusive truth-claims concerning vagabondage, rather than conceptually ‘purify’ who or what a ‘vagabond’ is. A concept is full of inconsistencies and divagations. Take for example the conceptual overlap among: (1) the wider category of the wanderer (often inclusive of ‘aimless’ vagabonds) apotheosized by Nietzsche, Rimbaud, Rousseau, Thoreau, Chatwin among others; (2) the itinerant who, unlike the wanderer, does not quite aestheticize solitude, yet manages to escape social castigation; and (3) the vagabond whose lack of instrumentality appears horrendously negative in the medico-legal archives. My principal quest in this project is to examine how the ‘vagabond’ as an ‘aimless’ (read: non-instrumental) wanderer – as a mysterious sub-class within the broader categories of ‘wandering’ and ‘itinerancy’ – becomes dominant, while pointing to the inconsistencies and divagations in the ‘language game’ that otherwise remain hidden.

While acknowledging the social constructivism that contrive the respective categories, I want to emphasize, in this context, the pitfalls of conceptual ‘purification’ of the quasi-categories as a methodological aspect, the problems in

conceiving ‘vagabond(age)’ as a ‘pure’ object of study. Let me illustrate with citations from this project itself. The refugees, after the 1943 Bengal Famine, readily become vagrants in the colonial archive, while the *famine series* paintings (cf. Chittaprosad, Abedin), pitted against the random deployment of Vagrancy Acts across India, concurrently render the ‘vagrant’ extraordinarily poignant. Here, these are three *different* categories: the *historical* refugee, the *archival* vagrant, and the *represented* vagabond.

Broadly speaking, my discussion of the ‘vagabond’, in three different studies to follow, invokes four different, but overlapping, categories. On the one hand, I am concerned with (groups of) people who have been referred to by the term vagabond/vagrant in the archives: refugees, migrant laborers, runaway serfs, ex-seamen. In all cases, these are people whose travels are not voluntary; they have been forced to travel by war, poverty, disease and so on. This part of my project comprises an archaeology of the discourse of vagabondage in the context of the West. On the other hand, I am concerned with the *historical* figure, in the context of South Asia, whose travels, motivated by a desire for spiritual growth, symbolically characterize (religio-)political dissidence, a critique of statist authoritarianism. Then, there are figures – not necessarily archival – who are represented as ‘vagabonds’ in cultural texts. I invoke them in the second study. And, finally there are those who represent themselves as ‘vagabonds’, and, as I demonstrate in the third study, implicitly or explicitly critique capitalism, consumerism and discourses of modernity. Now, there are both differences and similarities within these categories. In other words, these are not mutually exclusive categories. Therefore, what I foreground in this project is the diffusing, proliferating, and mingling that take place *within* the categories. My reasons for doing so are as follow.

I propose a circulatory method that understands *co-constitution*, as opposed to the separatist undercurrent of the ‘modern Constitution’, which Latour (1993) has argued, conceives ‘quasi-objects’ as mixture of two ‘pure forms’. What I refer to as *co-constitution* is an approach that understands histories of *reception*, at least in the curious case of South Asia, by moving beyond questions of (in)comparability or conceptual ‘purification’, by disclosing subtle and complex histories of *hybridity* and subcutaneous connections between seemingly discrete or binarized entities: West/non-West, tradition/modernity, real/represented, historical/discursive, colonizer/colonized, voluntary/involuntary travels etc. My intent is not to conflate the categories, which have overlapping yet distinct logi(sti)cs, rather to problematize the dispositions that render these categories discrete, as insular objects of inquiry, and question the *artificial* separation of the categories – in this case the *archival*, the *historical*, the *represented* ‘vagabond’ – that have more often than not complemented and animated each other. The *represented* ‘vagabond’, in the *famine* paintings, mirrors the one in the archive. The more the imperialist rule imposed the category as an apparatus for dispersion of population and territorializing the urban space, the more the representations idealized the ‘vagabond’. The (colonial) *archival* ‘vagabond’ mirrors certain Western values of instrumentality. The *self-proclaimed* ‘vagabonds’ in the post-colonial literary texts I discuss mirror certain quasi-spiritual itinerant practice shared by pre-colonial Buddhist *sramanas*. Are we to, in Bachelard’s (1938) words, look for ‘epistemic ruptures’, or ‘epistemic recurrences’, or ‘epistemic obstacles’ between the categories? Here lies the case of post-colonial ambivalence: in the context of what I refer to as vagabond(age), epistemic ‘rupture’, ‘recurrence’ and ‘obstacle’ uneasily co-exist, a phenomenon Bandyopadhyay (1996), after Bhabha (1994), calls ‘epistemic amalgamation’.

So, when I argue that the ‘vagabond’ in India is a nineteenth century colonialist construct based upon Western values, I emphasize the ‘epistemic rupture’ between the practices of wandering in the West and that in the non-West. That the colonial legislation – the *Criminal Tribe Act (1871)* – failed to understand the nomadic lifestyle of indigenous peripatetic communities characterizes an ‘epistemic obstacle’. Then again, when I study the discourse reception between the post-colonial literature and pre-colonial Buddhist asceticism, I foreground the ‘epistemic recurrence’ between the two, wherein issues of ‘rupture’, though they exist, appear less relevant. Hereby, I invoke the notion of ‘hybridity’ as a way out of binary thinking. What I foreground here is the conceptual *creolization* (rather than *purification*) of vagabond(age), which, I argue, as an object of study has no solidified boundaries, ‘no primordial unity or fixity’ (Bhabha, 1994: 55) in meanings and categorizations; but has to be understood as a multidirectional category: ‘as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative’ (Rothberg, 2009: 3), as enunciative, not insular; and, in the broadest possible generalization, as embodying certain subversive values associated with wandering/itinerancy that the state is always paranoiac about. Speaking of ‘madness’, Foucault (1972: 32) writes:

[T]he unity of discourses on madness would not be based upon the existence of the object 'madness', or the constitution of a single horizon of objectivity; it would be the interplay of the rules that make possible the appearance of objects during a given period of time.

Similarly, my point is to deconstruct ‘the unity of discourses’ on vagabond(age), and decode ‘the interplay of the rules’ that render the taxonomy and divergent trajectories within vagabond(age) – the *archival*, the *historical*, and the *represented* vagabonds – fluid.

Let me illustrate with an example. As a ticketless traveler, Rimbaud, '[o]n arrival at the Gare de Strasbourg, ...[was] deemed a vagabond, and taken immediately to the local police station, then to the Mazas prison' (Gros, 2014: 40). Now, one can ask: What is it in Rimbaud that made him appear a 'vagabond'? What renders Rimbaud a 'vagabond' (and not a 'wanderer', 'itinerant' etc.)? However, more pertinent for me is to ask: Why is it in nineteenth century France that the state has to fear so much a ticketless traveler on the train, or more precisely, the kind of traveling that Rimbaud used to undertake? In other words, why is it in the nineteenth century that the French authority overlaps the 'ticketless traveler' with the 'vagabond'? In what contexts and conditions of histories does the 'ticketless traveler' become a 'vagabond'? Now, the problem with this approach is that the phenomenon is constitutive of a nuanced 'language game'. There is always a *differance* (cf. Derrida) among what Rimbaud has been referred to as in the archive, what Rimbaud would identify himself as, and what we decide to call Rimbaud. Likewise, as of the figures I discuss in the project, some have been referred to as 'vagabonds' in the archive (cf. the refugees, the ex-seamen, the run-away serfs etc.); some assert themselves as *bhabaghure* (cf. Kalkut, Atorthy) or *ghumakkar* (cf. Sankrityayan), while for others, I decide to call them 'vagabonds' (cf. the Buddha and figures from visual representations). The question, then, is: Are the categories identical? Is there a single referent that these categories invoke? More importantly, does *bhabaghure*, or *ghumakkar*, or the Buddhist notion of *sramana*, in essence, capture and contain what the word 'vagabond' signifies? Are there crucial differences between these experiences and identities that vagabondage elides? Is there something crucial vagabondage gets us into that these other concepts miss?

Given the manifold proliferation of complexity regarding the ‘language game’, I remind the readers what Clifford (1992: 110) notes in the context of his ‘parallactic’ use of the word ‘travel’ to access plethora of experiences such as diaspora, tourism, migrant labor, anthropological fieldwork etc.:

Enough. Too much. The notion of travel as I've been using it cannot possibly cover all the different displacements and interactions I've just invoked. Yet it has brought me into these borderlands.

I am in a parallel situation with vagabondage equally overburdened. On the one hand, my use of ‘vagabond’ covers tourists, religious pilgrims, famine victims, flaneurs; on the other hand, I call the *ghumakkar*, the *bhabaghure*, the *sramana* ‘vagabond’. The differences between these concepts, however, must not render the concepts de facto incomparable; but rather bring me into the ‘borderland’, that interstitial space where some of these concepts, *only* in certain histories and contexts, overlap. The relation between the words and their respective concepts in each system mirrors precisely the association between the word and concept within a discrete tradition, what Saussure (2013) calls the ‘arbitrariness’ of the sign. Take for example, the Afro-American vernacular word ‘Signifyin’ or Signifyin(g), which alludes to its English (homonymic) counterpart ‘signifying’ in a way that this set of words has ‘everything to do with each other and, then again, absolutely nothing’ (Gates, 1988: 45). While the self-referentiality of words – the choice of a word to signify certain concept(s) – remain arbitrary, during the process of what Barthes (1987) calls ‘second order signification’ the concepts themselves tend to slip away from the grid of systems of meaning(s) against which the signification is intended. My intention is to study the slippage, fluidity, amorphousness in, and problematize the (politics of) *modularity* of the diverse categories which, precisely because they have some ‘family resemblance’ with an anti-normative, anti-statist discourse on traveling, I provisionally yoke

together into a larger *genus*: vagabondage. For me, vagabondage is what Clifford (1992) calls a 'traveled site': a *field* constituted by the dynamics of its cultural analysis, rather than clearly demarcated objects.

In sum, the concept of the 'vagabond', though working as a functional umbrella, is notoriously nebulous. Can we say with a modicum of certitude that we know what (the word) 'vagabond' exactly means? In other words, how many of us can *define* a 'vagabond'? Is 'vagabond' a function of the extent of traveling? Fa Hien, Hueng Tsang, Marco Polo, Megasthenes were all travelers who had walked thousands of miles, but were by no means vagabonds. On the other hand, the homeless panhandler who had never stepped out of the town is often maliciously called a 'vagabond'. One will immediately be arrested as a 'vagabond' if found walking on the highways or camping on 'undesigned' sites while both Marco Polo and Megasthenes had obtained state sponsorships. Is it because the latter duo mapped the resources of the places they had visited? Is it then a function of structures and relations of power? A Sufi practitioner traveling along the Silk Route in the twelfth century is a vagabond 'saint' while a Westerner charting the same route in the twentieth century would be a vagabond 'hippie'. Is it then a function of time? Again, a *sadhu* (wandering ascetic) and a gypsy today are not the same brand of the 'vagabond'. They characterize totally different value systems we deploy to look at them. Is it then a question of disposition? Before I begin my *bricoleur* style foray into the slippery terrain of semantic overlaps, I would like to recap the opening of *The Order of Things*, where Foucault (1970) points to the complex grid of concurrent similarities and differences in Borges' mock-classification of animals in a 'certain Chinese encyclopedia': (a) belonging to the emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a

very fine camelhair brush, (l) *et cetera*, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies. The categorization of vagabond(age) is possibly no less complex. I have laid down below a set of examples to reveal the ‘the wonderment of...taxonomy’ (Foucault, 1970: xv) centering vagabond(age), and in so doing, I point to the impossibility of conceptually purifying what I provisionally call vagabond(age). The diversities and contradictions within and among the cases below are reflective of what my project aims to problematize.

Case 1: From New Zealand

The man who has become a familiar sight around Palmerston North, pulling along a trolley containing all his possessions, now has somewhere to live. Jeremy Leith Gray, 40, didn't have a home when he was found squatting in an empty Bryant St property on November 5 [of 2013]. He was charged with being unlawfully in a building and was facing a prison sentence unless he could get a roof over his head. For a while Gray went to live with an aunt in Foxton Beach, but the Palmerston North District Court heard yesterday that he was now at the Shepherd's Rest on King St, Palmerston North. Defence lawyer Jock Turnbull said Gray had said in the past he always wanted to live on the streets and needed a sentence that would encourage him to stay in proper accommodation. Judge Les Atkins gave Gray a one-year suspended sentence. He told Gray he could move somewhere else, but not back on to the street. At a previous court appearance, justice liaison nurse Grahame Stillwell said of Gray: "He reminds me of the old-style vagrants who are just happy to live on the streets." (Manawatu Standard, 29 Nov 2013)

Today, the predicament of vagrancy seems to embarrass all welfare states. The seemingly interminable ‘deviance’ of wanting to live on the streets has been phrased in a rhetoric of temporal function. In the nurse’s imaginative articulation, vagrancy itself is ‘old-style’. The ‘vagabond’ has been assumed to be in contrast with or in opposition to modernity and progress. This linear idea of incremental progress – from nomadic to agrarian, agrarian to industrial, industrial to techno-digital – renders nomadicity obsolete

in the 'modern' era. Gray was evidently happy the way he lived. That is how he wanted to continue to live. However, he was sentenced to procuring 'proper' housing for himself. Now, what needs to be asked is: Who gets to decide what is 'proper' for Gray? Who is the *actual* beneficiary of, in Gray's case, the termination of vagrancy? That the law enforced Gray (without convicting him) to stay under the roofs expresses an overwhelming sense of welfarist civic responsibility. What surprises me here is how the 'vagabond' turns from a 'law-breaker' to a retrograde figure. In other words, what is at stake in this articulation is the increasingly formalized idea of 'progress', rather than issues concerning legality.

The seemingly humanist values in the verdict is symbolic of what is at stake in the shift away from retributive to disciplinary modes of control, and its fallout in our perception of the 'vagabond'. Foucault (1986), while explicating the idea of 'heterotopia', stresses the extent to which space, in societies of control, are organized, if not monitored, in order to achieve desired outcome. The 'retreat' to nomadicity is at odds with utilitarianization of (urban) space. Of late, it is not rare to notice that the seats at the airports across everywhere are being increasingly fitted with armrests. Most *public* parks now a days, paradoxically though, have strict admission hours, beyond which they remain inaccessible. Born out of this regulatory intent is a desire to territorialize 'social' space into what Lefebvre (1992) calls 'differential space': a (re)organization of the coordinates of space and movement based upon the dialectics of (in)admissibility, which disenfranchises and expels those that are unwanted without any coercive intervention.

Case 2: From the United States of America

A fund for a homeless man who turned in a backpack with more than \$ 40,000 inside has collected more than \$100,000, an overwhelming response that's a "statement to everyone in

America," said the man who started the donation drive. Glen James flagged down a police officer on Saturday after he found the backpack containing \$2,400 in cash and almost \$40,000 in traveler's checks at the South Bay Mall...James, who once worked at a Boston courthouse, said even if he were desperate he wouldn't have kept "even a penny" of the money he found...A stranger from Midlothian, Va., Ethan Whittington, after reading media accounts of James' honesty, started a fund for him on the crowd-funding website gofundme.com. By late Thursday afternoon, almost \$ 111,000 in donations had been made. Whittington, an accounts manager for a marketing firm, said he's overwhelmed by the generosity of strangers. "The fact that he's in the situation, being homeless, it blew my mind that he would do this (turn in the backpack)," Whittington said [on] Wednesday. (The Huffington Post. 19 Sep 2013)

Now, the homeless man eventually has a home with the donations that poured in. In total, \$ 159,945 has been raised so far and the fundraiser is still on¹. Having read about James' honesty online, Whittington, hailing from about 500 miles off Boston, was so 'mindblown' that he started the campaign for fundraiser. While appreciating Whittington's salutary initiative, I ask the readers to take note of the issue of *distance* involved here. When I say *distance* I mean it more as a figure of speech than literally. As indicated by the reports on the incident, the agential subjectivity of the homeless man in question is overwhelmed by a profoundly emotive sense of humanist crisis. Those who (at least reportedly) speak for the homeless man and determine that he is in want of money and/or home do so only from a distance. In other words, decisions about the homeless person have been made by those who are not homeless themselves. The modicum of altruism immanent in this remedial diagnosis of homelessness finds articulation only in a remotely distant superordinate gaze that has been projected from the *outside*.

What Whittington says of James – '[t]he fact that he's in the situation he is, being homeless, it blew my mind that he would do this' – expresses an implicit sense

¹ Check the GoFundMe website, here <<http://goo.gl/B2dvvZ>>. Website last visited on 3 April 2014.

of awe and an element of surprise, aroused from an essentialist belief that homeless people are, or at least more likely to be, dishonest and/or financially destitute. To be precise, Whittington's remark is less about 'the situation' itself, than an 'imaginative' correlation between homelessness and honesty, or lack thereof. Ian Hacking's (1998) notion of 'ecological niche' problematizes the fine line between homelessness and vagrancy in the context of medicalization of 'dromomania' – the state of fugue-afflicted travelers wandering – as a 'disease' that manifested only in nineteenth century France, but not in other times or places. What the idea of 'ecological niche' alerts us to is that the figure of the 'homeless', or that of the 'vagabond', would continue to evoke cultural stereotypes, as evident in the case referred to above, unless we take into account the diverse variables that go into its making.

Case 3: From Norway

The key to Svalbard's status as probably Europe's closest thing to a crime-free society, according to the governor, is that unemployment is in effect illegal. "If you don't have a job, you can't live here," Mr. Ingero [the Governor] said, noting that the jobless are swiftly deported. Retirees are sent away, too, unless they can prove they have sufficient means to support themselves... Homelessness, like unemployment, is banned. All residents must have a fixed address, a rule that ensures that nobody freezes to death in a place that is closer to the North Pole than to the Norwegian capital, Oslo, and where snowfall continues deep into summer.

In banning homelessness, the state implicitly bans the conditions of homelessness: in most cases poverty, and in some 'un-normative' other, the very desire to be homeless. This report catches my attention for two reasons. Firstly, the nervy deliberation about the ban, as the report enunciates, obliterates history, in the sense that the historic-political conditions that create homelessness are obscured. The state wants to deport the homeless people without addressing the causes that create homelessness. Secondly, considering someone 'needy' unless one has a fixed address

is problematic. The punch line of the article is evident in its title: ‘A Harsh Climate Calls for Banishment of the Needy’. This chronos-free, a-historical assumption pre-emptively homelessness as a self-chosen lifestyle. Imbued with a totalizing political agenda, the clandestine welfarist rhetoric seeks to achieve social stratification, demographic control, sanitization and territorialization of what has been envisioned as a ‘crime-free’ space. The co-relation, as invoked in statist discourses, among homelessness, ‘heterotopic’ mobility and criminality is one of the defining problems I aim to investigate.

The issues that this incident raises – of class, criminality and welfare – further point toward the underlying politics in the discursive articulation of the ‘needy’, and by extension, that of ‘need’. Different people have different perceptions of ‘home’. Some perceive it as ‘need’; some as ‘choice’. What is ‘need’ for some is ‘choice’ for some others. The shifting definition/perception of ‘need’ and the issue of ‘cultural relativism’ involved therein come across succinctly in Adam Smith’s formulation:

By necessities I understand not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but what ever the customs of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even the lowest order to be without. A linen shirt, for example, is, strictly speaking, not a necessary of life. The Greeks and Romans lived, I suppose, very comfortably though they had no linen. But in the present times, through the greater part of Europe, a creditable day-labourer would be ashamed to appear in public without a linen shirt, the want of which would be supposed to denote that disgraceful degree of poverty which, it is presumed, nobody can well fall into without extreme bad conduct (cited in Sen, 2010: 74).

The incident in Norway illustrates how modern statecraft and techniques of governmentality – in order to optimize demographic control – collapse the subtle distinction between ‘need’ and ‘norm’, and in so doing, render ‘development’ as a fuzzy metric, rather than what Sen (2010: 3) calls ‘the removal of major sources of unfreedom’. This positivist perception of ‘development’ – enshrined in the welfarist

rhetoric pervasive in the report – stems from a certain narrow, entrenched understanding that Sen (ibid.: 74) debunks here:

The appropriate “space” [of development] is neither that of utilities (as claimed by welfarists), nor that of primary goods (as demanded by Rawls), but that of the substantive freedoms – the capabilities – to choose a life one has reason to value.

It is essential, therefore, to place this statist intervention to eliminate choices – choice to be ‘homeless’ – and to increasingly ghettoize the ‘un-normative’ within the specific historic context of its evolution, and to understand the stakes involved therein. In order to better understand how the state (ab)uses ‘homelessness’ as a pretext for state intervention, the idea of ‘home(lessness)’, I insist, must be pitted against the fundamental issue of cultural difference.

Case 4: From a story going viral online

Pastor Jeremiah Steepok transformed himself into a homeless person and went to the 10,000 member church that he was to be introduced as the head pastor at that morning. He walked around his soon to be church for 30 minutes while it was filling with people for service....only 3 people out of the 7-10,000 people said hello to him. He asked people for change to buy food... NO ONE in the church gave him change. He went into the sanctuary to sit down in the front of the church and was asked by the ushers if he would please sit in the back. He greeted people to be greeted back with stares and dirty looks, with people looking down on him and judging him ('Pastor Present'; Online).

However, it seems the story is fake. It has been exposed over the internet that the photograph too was tailored to appear as the pastor-turned-vagabond, and was in fact of an unidentified homeless person who had no connection with the story whatsoever². It is one of those several captivating tales that are better told than enacted. I ask the readers to note the narrative structure here. With a photograph of and

² Check the Snopes website, here <<http://goo.gl/7igJfe>>. Website last visited on 3 April 2014.

a name for the pastor, and even ‘realistic’ figures, the story is written from a third person point of view in a journalistic style. It is pretty obvious that the narrative style has been maneuvered in order to trick the reader into believing it to be true. Anyway, the story unfolded with the homeless man discretely sitting in the back row of the church till he was introduced as the new pastor. He then walks up to the altar and recites excerpts from the biblical parable of ‘The Sheep and The Goats’ from the *Book of Matthew* for the audience, among which ‘many began to cry and many heads were bowed in shame’ (online). As

evident from the symbolism here, the parable is meant to teach the audience in the church, and by extension the readers of the story, about the Christian value of compassion to strangers.

I am not interested in the story per se or its factuality, but rather concerned with the ambivalence that the figure of the vagabond invokes. The narrative cuts across the central problematic of a fundamental enunciative paradox: the character that is marginalized in real life is romanticized as the messianic Other when it comes to representation. What does this reflect of the relation between the two vagabonds: the real and the represented? How does this bear upon the friction between our fragmentary selves: our more impulsive present selves that cannot tolerate the vagabond (purportedly) living off the tax-payer’s money, and our aspirational future selves that see us as epitomes of ineffable humanist values? In other words, how do the many vicissitudes and contradictions in our fragmentary selves, which is to say, the deeper implication of the simultaneity in our unwavering, but inharmonic, faiths in both instrumentalist modernity and humanist values, constitute our imagination of the ‘vagabond’, making the figure latent with multiple meanings and disjunctive possibilities?

Case 5: From Japan

Homeless men are being recruited for one of the most unwanted jobs in the industrialized world - clearing of radioactive fallout at the world's worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl - the crippled Fukushima nuclear plant, a special report has claimed. One of the recruiters, Seiji Sasa, told Reuters how and where he is looking for potential laborers in the northern Japanese city of Sendai. The headhunter supplies homeless people to contractors in the nuclear disaster zone for a reward of \$100 per head...It also emerged that many of the cleanup workers, who exposed themselves to large doses of radiation without even knowing it, were given no insurance for health risks, no radiation meters even (RT Question More, 30 Dec 2013).

This news vignette further signifies the contradictory moment in our thinking of the vagabond. The vagabond, for the 'modern' neo-liberal states, is not only a burden but also a blemish on the development index. Accordingly, advanced capitalism renders disposable those whose labor power it does not value. 'What flows back to the worker in the shape of wages', argues Marx (1959: 532), 'is a portion of the product that is continuously reproduced by him'. That the worker is responsible for the social reproduction of condition of production is a staple of the capitalist system. What is self-defeating in this particular case is that, in strategizing to harness the vagabond's labor power the state exterminates the worker and in so doing, meets double ends: integrates into the 'vicious circle' of productive labor those that are eventually to be selectively gotten rid of.

The particular contradiction addressed by this strategy, however, probes beyond issues of the economy. It rather concerns an anatomico-bio-clinical penetrative intervention of power that effectively 'circulate[s] in a manner at once continuous, uninterrupted, adapted, and 'individualized' through the entire social body' (Foucault, 1984: 61). It is symptomatic of the phenomenon of how capitalism evaluates the body

in terms of its productivity, and thereby its potential for commercializability, in order to reinforce a signifying chain of social hierarchies. While the inhibitive reservation of certain jobs for certain people bears a reference to the orthodox Hindu casteist worldview, the deeper consistencies in this recruitment of vagabonds point to, particularly in the face of the workers not informed of the work hazards and risks involved, a stealth of human capital, which Shiva (1997) calls 'bio-piracy'. The ferocity in the nefarious treatment of vagabonds grossly violates the human condition. And, when I say 'human', I do not necessarily mean a particular species/form differing from the 'non-human'. What I suggest, rather, is that the brutality is certainly at odds with the founding principles of liberal democracies, and quite ironically, the very ethos of altruism, compassion and benevolence that the earlier snippets embody.

Case 6: From India

The apex court judge said non-fulfillment of obligations by the state in such cases amounts to forcing "uprooted persons to become vagabonds or to indulge in anti-national activities as such sentiments would be born in them on account of such ill-treatment". Therefore, it is not permissible for any welfare state to uproot a person and deprive him of his fundamental and constitutional human rights under the garb of industrial development, he said (Down To Earth, 7 Nov 2012).

The dispute had arisen back in 1964 over a wrongful acquisition of land by the Maharashtra state government to serve the purpose of development projects. The Supreme Court verdict, heard almost fifty years after the acquisition, directs the state government to compensate the legal heirs of the original landowners who were 'illiterate' peasants. In the process of the legal battle that had primarily started between the appellant and the Maharashtra state government eventually transfiguring to a contention between the Supreme Court and the state government, the dispute apparently functions as an arena where the relative priority between the

discourse of unbridled development and that of nationalism would be determined. In fearing that the uprooted persons would vindictively turn anti-national, the underpinnings of the verdict point more toward the stake in nationalist ethos progressively giving way to bureaucratically-driven transnational developmental market economy than a principle of ethical justice. The staging of the duel, however, renders exteriority to the person(s) to whom the wrong had been done. Couched in a rhetoric of welfarism and *human rights*, the imagery of the vagabond, as invoked here, is that of an *exteriorized* subject outside of both nationalism and development. This very structure of state intervention is characteristic of how it ordinarily perceives the ‘vagabond’: as ill-treated, as forced migrant, as anti-national, as anti-development, always in terms of negative predicates.

Speaking of the connection between vagabondage and homelessness, Google Ngram Viewer gives us some interesting insights. The following curves (in the diagrams below) represent frequency distribution of the words ‘vagabond’ and ‘homeless’ as occurring in Google's digitized archives over time. In the diagrams, the vertical axes represent relative frequencies (in percent) while the horizontal axes represent time. What is interesting to note here is that the phrase 'vagabond' reaches towering heights in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and gradually dies down thereafter. To remember, the curve does not help us infer any demographic information on vagabonds, but is rather indexical to the valency of the lexical phrase and the extent of its purchase within certain cultural repertoire across time. The question then is: how do we explain the density in frequency of recurrence of 'vagabond' only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and not in other times? In other words, what sense can we make of the ‘vagabond’ as a category from the temporal variation in the purchase of the ‘vagabond’ as a concept?



Images Retrieved from Google Ngram Viewer

Curious readers can further check with the Ngram Viewer that the terms *hobo* and *drifter* both come into use in about 1900 and increase in use frequency as the term *vagabond* declines, and the term *bum*, even more tellingly, is the exact mirror of *vagabond* in terms of frequency of usage. Finally, one notices a spike in the use of all these terms in the 1930s, during the Great Depression. From this, one can infer that the words are used more often because there are more people in a state of vagabondage. However, what makes the issue more complicated is that the trajectories of the curve representing ‘homeless’ and ‘vagabond’ literally fork toward opposite directions since the turn of the century (see diagram 2). This implies that the usage of the word ‘homeless’ has exponentially increased since 1900, while that of ‘vagabond’

shows a steady decline. Understandably, it might not have been so because the number of people in a state of ‘homelessness’ were increasing and that in a state of ‘vagabondage’ was decreasing since 1900, for the ‘vagabonds’ are, at least in the majority of cases, ‘homeless’. The question then is: What ‘cultural’ factors – other than plain demographics – do we need to invoke in order to understand the rise and fall of the term ‘vagabond’? In other words, what do the shifts in preference of terms tell us of the culture and context in which the shifts take place? Google documents cited here are from the Anglophonic cultures. This makes me wonder if there would have been any change in the contours of the curves if I were to limit the sample space to documents only from and on India. For example, in my first study, I demonstrate how nationalist self-assertion in nineteenth century India went hand in hand with endorsing certain practices of traveling leading to the construction of the ‘tourist’ as a heuristic subject, against which the penumbral figure of the ‘vagabond’ would be counter-constructed. Notwithstanding several other variables that determine the nature of the curve(s), I invoke cultural nationalism, as a specific trope in the context of South Asia, that urges us to (re)conceptualize the ‘vagabond’ as a *discourse*, rather than a *demographic* category.

Although the phrase ‘vagabond’ more often than not functions as a historical referent for ‘homelessness’, for much of the dynamics of vagabondage is embedded in the conceptual effervescence that the idea of homelessness evokes, we have to remember that these are distinctly separate categories. We can tell from zooming in on the comparative frequency distribution of the two words over 1980-2000 that while the use of ‘homeless’ skyrockets that of ‘vagabond’, although counter-intuitive, remains stable at an all-time low. Parallely, one must note that 2 million forced emigrants in 1975 skyrockets to 27 million in 1995 (Bauman, 1998: 86-87). According to Kothari (1993:

99):

[T]here is something about modernity and the development and consumption model it has given rise to that has proved exploitative – within and across societies – and inherently inequitable and unjust, hence inherently marginalizing sections and classes of society.

Taking cues from Kothari, the figure of the ‘homeless’ can be imagined as a fall-out of certain model of market-driven development. With the opening of the floodgates of neo-liberal economy, the developmental(ist) discourse of modernity retroactively creates the ‘homeless’ as a category tailored to receive its intervention, and thereby rationalize its very existence (hence the spike in ‘homeless’ since 1980). In this schema, the ‘homeless’ is perceived as the welfare-seeking subject, and therefore, re-territorializable, re-normalizable, re-domesticable. Conversely, the vagabond is like the bogeyman that threatens us from *outside*. The vagabond is thus the exteriorized subject par excellence. It invokes a sense of taboo. To be precise, the vagabond is characterized by a sense of degeneracy, both racial and cultural, and therefore, systemically to be gotten rid of (Hacking, 1998).

That said, we perhaps cannot *totally* uncouple the concepts. My goal, I repeat, is to situate the concept ‘vagabond’ in its *many* histories and contexts, not as a distinct entity in its entire specificity, but as a received container of cultural, dispositional and historiographic modalities. However, in mapping the cultural reception, we have ‘to distinguish between *the semblance and similitude* of the symbols across diverse cultural experiences’ (Bhabha, 1994: 247; italics mine). Here, the ‘semblance’ and ‘differences’ between the concepts are not contradictory, but they rub off onto each other. It is for the interest of better understanding the ‘semblance’ and overlaps that we need a clue to the difference-in-identity between these amorphous categories. This is what I do in my first study, which I call the ‘pre-history of vagabondage’. It is

against this ‘pre-history’ imbued with a sense of ‘rupture’ that I will mount my case of epistemic ‘recurrence’ and ‘obstacle’ in the context of what Choudhuri et al. (2000) call the ‘post-colonized Third World’: the *hybridized* local space. Together, these will argue for the curious case of ‘epistemic amalgamation’ in South Asia, while pointing to the ‘different immediate values or different kinds of valuation...of different formations and distributions of energy and interest’ (Williams, 1983: 11) immanent in the cross-referencing and overlap among these concepts when they travel in space and time.

The examples presented above constitute an array of field, which brings under consideration a whole range of contradictory imagination of the ‘vagabond’. Each of these examples mirrors certain aspects of vagabond(age) I deal with in this project. Mr. Gray represents the *voluntary* ‘vagabond’, who even though is not *forced* to travel, desperately wants to be ‘homeless’. The phrase *voluntary* ‘vagabond’, for some, may appear an oxymoron. In his article ‘Tourists and Vagabonds’, Bauman (1998) makes a distinction, in the context of globalization, between ‘vagabonds’ (economic, environmental and political refugees, migrant laborers etc.), and ‘tourists’ (tourists, business travelers etc., in short, the global elite). For him, there *are* no vagabonds, they are only *made* to be, ‘because they have been pushed from behind’ (Bauman, 1998: 92), and therefore, ‘vagabonds’ are *involuntary* travelers for lack of ‘the kind of sophisticated choices in which the consumers are expected to excel’ (ibid.: 96). I will take up Bauman in details again in the Conclusion. But, what I wanted to signal here is that Mr. Gray, though in a developed economy like New Zealand’s, and several other figures I discuss in the context of South Asia – who valorizes homelessness – illustrate the inefficacy of the voluntary/involuntary binary as a paradigm to conceptualize the ‘vagabond’.

Mr. James' case, however, more along the lines of Bauman, illustrates how 'vagabonds' are indeed *made* by complete denial of her agential subjectivity, all in the name of *normativization*. This mirrors what happened with (some of) the 1943 famine refugees in Bengal: the refugee who was not agreeable to forced repatriation was *turned into* a vagrant. The case of peripheralization of poverty in Norway is symptomatic of territorialization of 'differential space', which, in my second study I demonstrate, happened in colonial Calcutta, and is tantamount to an internal colonization. The case of 'bio-piracy' in Japan, which foregrounds the politics of institutionalization (and, therefore instrumentalization) of labor power, characterizes precisely what the Buddhist *sramanas*, in my discussion, were deeply critical of, and why they had 'abstained' from 'productive labor'. The Indian case illustrates the pitfalls of developmental discourse, which serves as the backdrop for my second study. The fake story about the pastor seems to be, in essence, echoing those who, as I discuss in my third study, in order to critique the society by appropriating vagabondage as a trope as latent with the potential for spiritual growth, and as a motif evocative of 'humanist' sensibility.

In a sense, the first part of my project does what (the first diagram shows) Google Ngram does: traces the curvature of the trajectory of the concept 'vagabond' over time, but in the context of India. Here, I argue that the 'vagabond' is a 'modern' category. With conceptual surplus from the earlier, indigenously known forms of travel, say for instance the pilgrimage, vagabondage would be differentiated from traveling like the chaff from the wheat. What I mean by 'conceptual surplus' is that the *concept* of the 'vagabond' always yields some non-utilitarian buffer to the *category* of 'traveler'. Certainly, people traveled since antiquity. But in order for a few among those to be segregated as 'vagabond', the *concept* of the 'vagabond' had to be attenuated *prior*

to perceiving the vagabond as a ‘vagabond’. All vagabonds are essentially travelers, but the converse is not always true. Travelers are politically status-quoist, while ‘vagabond’ is always framed a potential agent of change, hence mysteriously clad with suspicion, indignity and animosity. It is this tendency to marginalize that informs our understanding of the *concept* of the ‘vagabond’ as unpredictable and dangerous, and therefore an outcast traveler.

The first part of the project, therefore, examines why, when and how the idea of vagabondage crystallized in tandem with the ‘modern’ discursive schemas of instrumental rationality. In determining the ‘rupture’ precisely following which vagabondage would invoke the cultural baggage that it invokes today, I revisit the semantic histories of competing imaginations of the ‘vagabond’. The first part of the project points to a two-fold epistemic rupture in the ‘order of things’ of the concept ‘vagabond’: one, between the Indian and the Western contexts prior to the nineteenth century; two, between the pre-modern and the modern Indian contexts. It strikes me that the articulation of the concept of vagabond(age) within the discourse of colonial modernity ranges considerably across the span of marginalization and romanticization, contempt and encouragement, and therefore characterizes a floating signifier. Here, I demonstrate how the polysemic imagination of the ‘vagabond’ was contrived within a highly contingent process of reinforcing social elitism, struggles over nationalist self-assertion, (anti-)imperialist ideologies, and more importantly, the pervasive tendency to emulate the colonial conceptual vocabulary while at the same time still cloaking it in ‘pre-modern’ vernacular repertoires.

The second and the third parts of the project work in registers of representation. Together, these respectively examine the visual and the literary representations of the ‘vagabond’. The second part problematizes the uncanny

coincidence between the Bengal Vagrancy Act (1943) and the Bengal famine in 1943. Here, I look into why a legislative intervention was required in 1943, that is *only* after the famine, to identify and marginalize the vagrant'. Investigating the etiology of deployment of the Act, I demonstrate how the visual imagery of the 'vagabond' during the 1940s, more precisely the *famine paintings*, would implicitly invoke the 'refugee'. Despite the Malthusian-Eugenist intervention to wipe out the 'vagabond' in the 1930s and 40s, the 'vagabond' would survive as 'residual' in esoteric paintings of the 1940s only to re-emerge in popular movies in later decades. The recent representations, however, show more playful portrayal of the vagabond who is sometimes an urban underclass, sometimes a bastard trickster, or sometimes even subversively presents a prophetic critique of modernity. The metamorphosis of the visual registers points toward a dichotomy between choosing to marginalize or romanticize the vagabond, the aporia being fallout of an overtly rationalist approach toward demographic control, territorializing the cityscape, instrumentalization of mobility, turbulent histories of class confrontation, and resistance thereof, all unfolding against the changing perception of 'home'³.

More to the residual-emergent aspect of vagabondage, the third part of the project traces how the trope of 'nomadicity' as articulated in 'pre-modern' discourses percolate down to 'modern' Indian literature. Hereby, I problematize the historiographic

³ An examination of the 'vagabond', and more generally the trope of itinerancy requires careful investigation of its opposition, which is to say, the idea of sedentariness, and by extension, the notions of 'home'. Though there is much work in recent cultural studies/discourse analysis of the nation-state and its exclusions/fragments in context of India, there is very little philosophical inquiry into notions of home and their implications. What makes this case interesting is the fact the empirical definition of 'home' undergoes subsequent revisions in the Indian Census. In the first study, I have taken up the cultural politics centering the 'home' in 'pre-modern' India -- how it functioned as a site of contention between the Hindus and the Buddhists -- while in the second study, I have discussed the changing perception of 'home' against the backdrop of the Partition.

trope that features traveling in the Indian context necessarily as a liberatory aspect of colonial exposure. What I argue here is that capitalist intervention brings about a structural change in practices of traveling. This is to say, what forms of traveling are (un)acceptable is determined based upon capitalist postulates of commercialization of traveling. The idea of vagabondage stems from a *gratuitory* worldview, which is at odds with capitalism. From close reading of literary texts, I demonstrate how the eloquent portrayal of the ‘vagabond’ by literary practitioners who were themselves footloose can be read as a metaphor of resurgence of India's ‘pre-modern’ tryst with nomadicity critiquing the grand narratives of capital and progressionist humanism. While unraveling the stakes involved in the relationalities of influence and reception, I stress on the elements of gratuitousness, as opposed to self-gratification, as immanent in the self-rationalization of vagabondage, at times latched onto the rhetoric of an imagined ‘Indic’ revival.

Finally, the narrative progression of this dissertation on ‘vagabond’ is itself no less *vagabond-ly*. The first part is archival while the latter two parts are on discourse analysis. For that matter, the break between the second and third parts is based on the difference in genres: visual and literary; inasmuch it is on the point of view of representations: representations *of* and *by* the vagabonds. To remind, the project is about *seeing* the ‘vagabond’ – seeing from which side the vagabond appears to be ‘vagabond’ or the lack thereof. In other words, this thesis is more on the *gaze* toward the vagabond than vagabonds themselves. One sees, say, some books and a computer when one sees the table from above; but it reveals cobwebs when viewed from down below. What matters is the perspective one is viewing from. Taking cues from the Foucauldian (1984) notion of ‘genealogy’, I have deliberately de-chronologized the narrative, for the point is not to write a history of the ‘vagabond’, nor to arrive at some

historicist *truth*; but rather to critically examine and flag-post the historical junctures that shape the aperture of our 'ways of seeing' the 'vagabond', the diversities, contradictions and contingencies that render such *truth* possible.

A Note on Pre-history of Vagabondage

'The skeptics, a kind of nomads despising all settled culture of the land', writes Kant (1929: 8), 'broke up from time to time all civil society'. How Kant sees nomadicity – as oppositional to civility and threatening to settledness – characterizes how vagabonds are ordinarily perceived. The 'skeptics' Kant refers to are advocates of (Humean) skepticism – skepticism as a branch of knowledge in analytic philosophy – and therefore his chief adversary. On the other hand, Kant's life was 'wholly uneventful', and legend goes that he himself 'was a man of such regular habit that people used to set their watches by him' (Russell, 1999: 677, 678). Given Kant's routinophilic habits, one can understand his sympathy for settledness. The analogy between the 'skeptic' and the 'nomad', therefore, renders the 'nomad' as the complete Other. The imagination of nomadicity, as a voice of dissent always to be refuted, and the tendency to counter-pose the 'nomad' against the 'social', however, is not trans-historical.

It would have sounded cogent if the historicist idea of 'progress' embedded in the transition from the nomadic to the agrarian mode of society, notionally speaking, had placed vagabonds in diametrical opposition to civility. But, it is not until the fourteenth century that we find evidence of the word being used pejoratively. For that matter, the birth of the 'vagabond' only dates back to the fourteenth century. The tendency to criminalize and marginalize the vagabond started in fourteenth century England, with the passage of the *First Statute of Labourers*⁴, which restricted the movement of persons who did not own any land, or were unemployed. Apparently, this was done to prevent the collapse of the feudal structure, in other words, to ensure an adequate supply of cheap labor in the aftermath of the Black Plague. Going back to Kant's

⁴ This comes as a precedent to Vagrancy Acts and interestingly enough, the nomenclature alludes to 'labourers', bearing a Benthamite hint toward the friction between vagabondage and productive labor, which I shall take up in detail later.

observation where he points to an implicit association between skepticism and nomadicity, it seems that the construction of the category 'vagabond' as a functional, but nebulous umbrella started *only* when itinerancy was perceived as 'skeptical', more precisely, resistant to the prevailing relations of power and orderliness in the society.

Boccaccio (1996) records in the introduction to his *The Decameron* composed during 1350-53:

[T]here was no better or more effective medicine against the disease than to run away from it; convinced by this argument, and caring for no-one but themselves, huge numbers of men and women abandoned their rightful city, their rightful homes, their relatives and their parents and their things, and sought out the countryside, as if the wrath of God would punish the iniquities of men with this plague based on where they happened to be, as if the wrath of God was aroused against only those who unfortunately found themselves within the city walls, or as if the whole of the population of the city would be exterminated in its final hour... [I]n the fortified towns, similar things occurred but on a lesser scale than in the city, through the small villages and through the camps of the miserable and poor laborers and their families, without any care from physicians or help from servants, and in the highways and the fields and their houses, day and night at whatever hour, not like humans but more like animals they died... Let us leave the countryside and return to the city.

The chaos and pandemonium that followed the Black Plague one of the greatest human disasters in Europe's history left millions crippled and homeless on the streets. The massive unforeseen and forced migration, back and forth between the city and the countryside, predictably lead to lawlessness and these figures were readily looked down upon as rogues and social outcasts. The birth of the 'vagabond', both as a lexical phrase and a new category of itinerant figure, dates back to here. The word 'vagabond' owes its origin to Old French '*vagabond*' with first recorded usage, to be noted, also in the fourteenth century. Its Latin counterpart '*vagābundus*' comes from '*vagāri*' which means to wander. It is hard not to take sight of the amazing parallel between the historical source of 'vagabond' being traceable to Old French and that France being one

among the first-hit provinces by the Black Plague immediately after it struck Mediterranean Europe – Turkey, Greece, Italy – before making its way further north and south⁵. It is not at all a co-incidence that both the reception of the word 'vagabond' and infection by the epidemic in Northern Europe had come from France, but the former is actually a corollary of the latter. The *Oxford English Dictionary* records the first use of 'vagabond' in Old English in 1426, which establishes that the 'trace' of the word apparently chased the trail of the plague barely by a margin of three quarters of a century.

The aforesaid dictionary defines the vagabond as: roaming or wandering from place to place *without* settled habitation or home; leading a wandering life; nomadic. So right from the onset the vagabond is conceptualized on the basis of 'lack'. It is a reductive definition right from the beginning. A detour into the semantic history of the word 'vagabond' across centuries would bring out how it went about accumulating an irremovable stigma. In 1426 John Lydgate translates Guillaume's *De Guileville's* into (middle) English. The *OED* records that the word 'vagabond' first appears here: 'O thou blyssed Lady, hyde hem that flen vnto the for helpe, and they that be vagabonde, dyscoure hem nat.' Here, the vagabond stands only for a wandering person, still pretty much neutral. The word reappears in Lydgate's *Minor Poems* (1841[1430]: 256) still without any value-judgment, but simply to convey vagueness: 'My poort, my pas, my foot alwey unstable,/ My look, myn eyen, unswre and vagabounde.' In 1489 the 'vagabond' is uttered in the same breath with 'wanton' and meant to invoke similitude of what in middle English has been called a 'bor', i.e. a boar: 'Man ... is hardy asa lyon ... profytabyll as a bee,

⁵ For a quick understanding of the spatio-temporal trajectory of the Black Plague in terms of the European continent, see the animated map available with Wikipedia: <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Blackdeath2.gif>>. Website last visited on 3 March 2012.

wantoun and vagabunde [L vagabundus] as a bor, ontame as a bole⁶ (cited in the *Middle English Dictionary*). Abraham Fleming, in 1576, translates Erasmus' *Panoplie Epist.* as *A Panoplie of Epistles* where the vagabond possibly for the first time has been criminalized and imagined as an entity worth being suspicious about: 'The dogge...defend[s] our houses from theeues, vagaboundes, lewde fellowes.'(cited in *OED*). Milton, in 1644, in the preface to *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* writes: 'What through the brood of Belial, the draffe of men, to whom no liberty is pleasing, but unbridl'd and *vagabond lust* without pale or partition, will laugh broad perhaps, to see so great a strength of Scripture mustering up in favour, as they suppose, of their debaucheries' (1851: 6, italics mine). It is interesting to note that there is little reference to the figure of a wandering person as such, but the word 'vagabond' has been used as an attributive referent to a 'lust' that is *vagabond-ly* in nature. In order for a word to qualify as a qualitative attribute it must have a fixed set of referents among its 'interpretive community'; and by 1644 it is not inconceivable for Milton to have known that the grid had already been laid in order for 'vagabond' to act as a metaphor of unrestraint, to be precise, unrestrained lust. In 1726 Defoe invokes the vagabond as the embodiment of Satan: 'Satan, being thus confined to a vagabond, wandering, unsettled condition, is without any certain abode;... this is certainly part of his punishment,... without any fixed place, or space, allowed him to rest the sole of his foot upon'⁷ (1843:

⁶ It is interesting to note how animals or animality becomes a cultural trope acting as the core of distillation of the human(e) from non-human, or at least a bad human. There is an enormous body of literary and iconic representations – think of the seven deadly sins in context to the Catholic values – where viciousness is essentially portrayed as 'animal instincts'. Boar here stands for slothfulness; and surprisingly we still say 'boring as a pig' in common parlance.

⁷ The *Bible* makes quite a few references to the vagabond. (*Proverbs* 6: 11, *Genesis* 4:12, *Psalms* 109:10; *Acts* 19:13). It would be a productive exercise to inquire how vagabondage has been invoked in these passages, though not any in positive light, and delve into the semantic variations translations. There are also some parallel in Indian myths where

22). The pejorative slant accentuates in a 1785 poem by William Cowper (1825: 24): 'A vagabond and useless tribe there eat/ Their miserable meal...' The vagabond is not only 'useless' but purportedly a 'tribe', another ambiguous, discriminatory 'social construct' to crystallize again in the nineteenth century in contrast to the ostensibly arcadian Romantic ideals. By the late nineteenth century, medical pedagogy had institutionally acknowledged vagabondage to be a (curable) *dis-ease* still with some feuds in the medical front over its taxonomy⁸.

The notion of the vagabond in the Western context is intrinsically tied to the idea of a run-away serf, not only feared as a potential criminal but also a 'master-less man' who symbolically heralded the beginning of the end to feudalism. With the authority of the feudal lords collapsing, the Tudor legislation by the *Statute of 1351* – the earliest known government intervention – attempted to monitor wages, labor contracts and capture fleeing serfs. After the Peasants' Revolt of 1381⁹, legal personnel authorized to apprehend vagabonds were appointed by an Act of 1383 and yet another Act of 1388 insisted that anyone leaving his abode or service must carry letters patent explaining the purpose of his journey. The *Vagabonds and Beggars Act of 1494* stated: 'Vagabonds, idle and suspected persons shall be set in the stocks for three days and three nights and have none other sustenance but bread and water, and then shall be put out of the town' (*The Oriental Herald* 4: 25). In 1535, *The Poor Law* announced that 'every sturdy Vagabond should be kept in continual labor' and 'a part of his right ear be chopped off on a second offence, and on a third be hanged. In 1547 branding and

vagabondage symbolizes being accursed. This is a vast topic and needs separate attention.

⁸ Detailed discussion on the aspect of medicalization of vagrancy follows a few paragraphs later.

⁹ The significance of the Revolt lay in the fact that it came to be seen in retrospect as bringing an official end to serfdom in medieval Europe.

slavery as a punishment for persistent vagrancy was officially legalized. In 1553, influenced by Bishop Nicolas Ridley, the Tudor monarch Edward VI set the example by founding 'correctional parishes' to 'discipline' the vagrants with other towns soon to follow. The 'theatre of the spectacle', to borrow an oft-quoted Foucauldian phrase, involving corporal punishment (such as chopping off a part of the offender's body or hanging him) henceforth would give way, even hastened by the severe flood of 1586, to a new and more effective form of socially engineered disciplinary mechanism, that Foucault (1995, 2013) calls the 'Great Confinement': to imprison 'unreasonable', the 'unproductive' and, needless to say, eventually in context to the English statutes of 1576, 1597, 1610, all with forced labor.

In 1689, Dr. Hugh Chamberlen takes it upon himself to submit a *Proposal for the Better Securing of Health* recommending facilitation of medical treatment for 'all sick, poor or rich... for a small yearly certain sum assessed upon each house'; by 'house' he means the 'correctional parishes', and,

that the laws already in being may be revised, which provide against the sale of unwholesome food; that bread may be well baked; beer well brewed, and houses and streets well cleaned from dirt and filth; all these being common causes of diseases and death' (Chamberlen, cited in Warren, 2000).

At a time when the sick and the poor were increasingly being considered 'unproductive', the predicament of poverty becomes a concern for Dr. Chamberlen. It is indeed anomalous for this salutary act of philanthropy to have come from the court physician that Dr. Chamberlen was at that point of time. However, in bringing the 'unproductive' under what Foucault (2012) calls the 'medical gaze', Dr. Chamberlen heralds a structural change in perceiving those that are 'unproductive': integrated into an 'enumerable space' they render themselves to optimized surveillance and demographic mapping. Societies reinforce 'regimes of truth' as historically validated discourses within particular times and

places based on the power-knowledge nexus and the one in question here was in transit from a system based on notions of ethico-legal conformity to the law to one based on psycho-pathological conformity to medical institutions (Foucault, 1972). As a result, the 'gaze' towards the vagabond changes: vagabondage from now onwards would be seen more as a pathological *dis-ease* to be medically cured than as a legal deviance to be punished. Vagabonds would now be seen as docile agents of demographic control: if and when 'cured', a potentially mobilizable work-force, a significantly important dividend in the light of the germinating Industrial Revolution.

The following image gives us some lead into the transition of the gaze that I just discussed. The word 'limbo' precisely captures what is at stake in the transition. Lexically, it means 'an uncertain period of awaiting a decision or resolution; an intermediate state or condition' (*Oxford English Dictionary*), and in this case, possibly refers to that intermediary phase prior to which the state had been dismissive of the vagabond as 'unproductive' and after which schemes had been engineered to extract his labor power. The image is from 1798 and depicts an aristocrat (on the left) overseeing a work-force. This is a political cartoon. The figure on the left is William Pitt the Younger, at the time Prime Minister of Britain and leader of the Tories. The other three, working left to right, are Charles Fox, Richard Sheridan and the Duke of Norfolk, three opposition members of the Parliament who were Republicans and supporters of the French Revolution. This explains why the three shackled figures are wearing (red) Phrygian caps, the kind of cap we associate with the French revolutionaries. The term *Ceceders* in the caption, refers to the fact that at the time of this cartoon, these opposition MPs had absented themselves from the Parliament in protest over the fact that most of their opposition colleagues voted with the government in favor of war against France. The joke, on the top left of the image, is Pitt saying:

Mind your business ye vagabonds...no idling – I'll teach ye a new Trade now you have left your Old Calling – There is a great deal of Rope wanted – there must be no neglect of duty here.

In other words, they are being set to work making oakum, the tarred fibre used for caulking in the Royal Navy, which would shortly be deployed against the French.



Ceceders in Limbo, i.e., Vagabond's made Usefull [sic.], print, Charles Ansell, 1798

The image illustrates the contemporary articulation of vagabondage: vagabonds flee from productive labor, and in this case, are feared to be anti-state, potential revolutionaries, or at least supporters thereof. In other words, the late eighteenth century figure of the vagabond created a reason for a statist utilitarian intervention. The invocation of 'duty' counter-posed against the vagabond's 'idleness' functions as a prelude to our anticipation of utilitarianism. In the image, Fox, now been shackled and put to

work, looks pitifully at Pitt. Sheridan seems to working with a hammer, but has his gaze diagonally fixed on what is going on between Pitt and Fox. While he is a witness to the reciprocation of gaze between Pitt and Fox, he is unknowingly being watched by the Duke. The directionality of the gazes is a testimony to a suspiciously surveillant social engineering process, whereby everyone is watching someone else, and knowingly or unknowingly, in turn, is being watched by someone else. Drawing on the Foucauldian (1995) critique of the 'panopticon', what I want to stress is that the underpinnings of the state-sponsored welfare programs for the vagabonds point to the implementation of optimized techniques of disciplinary control envisaged to be remedial to the vagabond's abstinence from productive labor.

In one of her passages from *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1834), Martineau recounts reportage of a criminal trial, possibly from some contemporary daily¹⁰, and then goes on share what seems like her extemporaneous reactions to it. This piece shall provide a number of important reference points for our discussion:

'Yesterday morning, Andrew Wilson underwent the sentence of the law, ...Though only twenty years of age, he was old in guilt, having been committed for his first offence, – throwing stones at the police, – when he was in his thirteenth year. he is supposed to have been for some time connected with a gang of desperate offenders; but nothing could be extracted from his relative to his former associates, though the reverend chaplain of the jail devoted the most unremitting attention to the spiritual concerns of the unhappy man.'

So this is the way we tend the sick children of the great social family, because, forsooth, with all our palaces, we cannot afford a proper *infirmary*! As soon as *symptoms of sickness* appear, we thrust all our *patients* together, to make one another as much worse as possible, ...[H]onest poor are taxed to pay for the transportation of the guilty, and for the idleness of all: while the incessant regeneration of crime through our prison methods affords but a *melancholy* prospect of augmented burdens on their children's

¹⁰ Martineau does not mention the source she cites from. The citation appears within parenthesis and in italics in the original, while the italics within her response are mine.

children for similar purposes. In this view alone, how dearly has the public paid for the destruction of this Andrew Wilson, and for the offences of the gang he belongs to! Committed in his childhood for the childish fault of throwing stones, *kept in the state of expensive idleness for want of an apparatus of labour*, thrown into an atmosphere of corruption for the want of room to insulate him, issuing forth as a *vagabond* to spread the *infection of idleness and vice*, and being brought back to be tried and hanged at the nation's expense, after he had successfully qualified others for claiming from the public the expense of transportation, – would not the injured wretch have been more profitably maintained through a long life at the public expense?... Every complainant who commits a young offender to certain of our jails knows, or may know, that he thereby burdens the public with a malefactor for life, and with all who will become criminals by his means (93, 94, 95; italics in the second paragraph mine).

The 'criminal' in question threw stones at the police when he was thirteen years old. This was his first offence, following which he had been rehabilitated, then released, only to end up committing more 'crimes'. And, finally this career 'criminal' was sentenced to death in his twentieth year. The rehabilitation, possibly over numerous times for Martineau presents us with the chronicle of him going 'astray' during the course of these seven years, and the judiciary process involved in the trial was carried out with tax-payers' money. Apprehending that this might have antagonized the public and turned their sentiment against the 'criminal', Martineau herself engages in a polemical inquiry to determine whether impunity or lack thereof leads to escalation of criminal activities. I am not as much interested in the righteousness of her argumentation as I am with its rhetoric. In the first instance, it appears striking that not only 'the spiritual concerns of the unhappy man' eventually to be hanged had been paid attention to, but this was also deemed reportable in the media, the premise being those at the receiving end of the media would likely to have some amount of curiosity towards his 'spiritual concerns'.

Second, the plethora of medical terminologies in Martineau's response can actually be read as a metaphor of the 'gaze' perceiving crimino-legal deviance as (mental)

dis-ease. There are five of those in total: *infirmity, symptoms of sickness, patients, melancholy, and infection* – all directly provocative of pathogenic references.

Martineau's narrative medicalizes crime, wherein the 'criminal' is thought of as a 'patient'. She diagnoses the dis-ease as 'the state of expensive idleness', its cause to be 'want of an apparatus of labour', and its nature 'infectious'. What is revealed in this exposition is that Martineau's is the tip of an iceberg: the prevailing tendency to medicalize criminality. Foucault (1982a) digs up the archival documents – medical, legal, police records – concerning an 1835- incident of some Pierre Rivière excruciatingly chopping his mother, teenage sister, and a seven-year-old brother to death; and reveals 'the interaction of those discourses as weapons of attack and defense in the relations of power and knowledge' (xi). Using Rivière's memoirs as 'the zero benchmark to gauge the distance between the other discourses and the relations arising among them' (xiii), Foucault et al. reveal how the medico-psychiatric discourses of knowledge contended to overpower crimino-legal discourses in questions of authority and credibility. The nineteenth century interventionist anatomo-clinical gaze thus pathologized all 'deviances': Rivière's in terms of symptomatizing 'monomania' – a 'disease' no wonder to 'appear' around the 1810 only to 'disappear' in the 1850s – while the vagabond's in terms of symptomatizing idleness.

Third, as an analyst of Political Economy, Martineau envisions taxation as a function of idleness. Idleness is as though a vice, the direct impact of which is upon public taxation; and which when 'cured' will bring an end to all social crimes, albeit there is no known empirical correlation between idleness and throwing stones at the cops.

Fourth, and the most important of all, Martineau accuses the 'criminal' to have spread the 'infection' of 'vicious idleness' as a 'vagabond'. Having medicalized crime, she next goes on to criminalize the 'vagabond'. In other words, sets forth the idea of the vagabond as that common point of reference from which all aspects of 'infection of idleness and vice', all

sorts of 'social unproductivity' must be spoken of. Hacking (1998) shows how and to what extent vagrancy had been medicalized within the domain of nineteenth century French psychiatric systems. Citing narratives of mentally ill run-away travelers in ecstatic and amnesiac states – the fugueurs – he examines how this 'symptom' in the late nineteenth century became an issue of contestation between taxonomizing it as 'epilepsy' and as 'hysteria'. With the 'birth of the clinic', diagnosing the 'symptom' as epilepsy over hysteria, with all the effeminized connotations the latter came/comes with, would certainly bolster the penetrative, positivist 'clinical gaze'. Hacking borrows the notion of 'ecological niche' in order to demonstrate how this amusing medical rhetoric renders (mental) diseases to function as 'dominant-emergent-residual', in this case 'fugue' or 'dromomania' being epidemic in France-Germany only at one time but totally absent in the Americas during the same, not because of reasons based on medico-scientific evidentialism, but rather due to 'paradigm shifts' in the social outlook based on eugenic concerns.

'After 1870,' reminds Hacking (1998: 68), 'vagrancy – vagabondage – became important, and by 1885 tramps were deemed to be a critical social problem.' He continues:

It is important not to identify vagrancy in 1887 with homelessness in 1997. The meaning of homelessness to us is different from the meaning of vagrancy to the French a century ago... To French people in the 1880s, the vagrant signified racial degeneracy, no reproduction, or reproduction of those very features that the French race ought to get rid of (69).

The 'turn' that Hacking suggests to have taken place in the late nineteenth century is one towards eugenics to facilitate an overtly medicalized intervention to 'cure' the vagabond lest s/he infects the rest of the docile citizen-subjects. Commissioned by Napoleon III Paris underwent utilitarian rationality-maximized urban planning initiatives during 1853-70, more popularly known, after its planner, as Haussmann's Renovation of Paris that set the standards for the other burgeoning European cities. What appeared

outstanding with the introduction of these urban infrastructures is the emphasis on its sewerage, now concealed, underground and networked. Matthew Gandy (1999) draws our attention to the remarkable frequency of the word 'putrid' being used in the writings of medical hygienists and public health policy-makers in reference to the Parisian sewerage system. 'Putrid' comes from the Latin word meaning prostitute¹¹. These urban reorientations not only impacted the get-up of the cities, but also gave rise to a new obsession with health and hygiene. The redesigning of the sewerage system can be read as metaphor of a *heterotopic* sanitization, an obsessively inhibitory cleansing, that all social hygiene initiatives of the time had been geared towards: an abject-disposal mechanism towards a *Procrustean* flattening of everyone 'suspicious', 'unproductive' and 'infectious' into the 'one-dimensional man' – be it the prostitute, the beggar, the squatter, or the vagabond. With Hacking distinguishing between 'homelessness' and 'vagrancy', it has to be understood that the former is the condition of lacking or wanting a home, which ceases with getting or finding a place for dwelling; while 'vagrancy' is purportedly the deviance from the 'normalcy' of wanting (to be at) a home, which needs medical intervention for cure.

With the collapse of the feudal system the laborers no longer saw any incentive to stay anchored to the soil for sustenance. Next, with the introduction of the Inclosure Acts¹², they were ousted by the landed aristocrats from what were previously 'village

¹¹ Gandy (1999: 34) retrieves from a piece of writing by Parent-Duchatelet, one of the early proponents of 'medical hygienics' in nineteenth century France: 'Prostitutes are as inevitable in an agglomeration of man as sewers, cesspits and garbage dumps; civil authority should conduct itself in the same manner in regard to the one as to the other: its duty is to survey them, to attenuate by every possible means the detriments inherent to them, and for that purpose to hide them, to relegate them to the most obscure corners, in a word to render their presence as inconspicuous as possible.' I cite this to draw parallel in the context of the vagabond; my point is to flesh out the Malthusian gaze emerging in the nineteenth century towards all 'socially unproductive' alike, be it the prostitute or the vagabond.

¹² The Inclosure Act, originally spelt with an 'I', but later conventionally known by Enclosure

communes', but now appeared as 'enclosed ownerships'. These together forced the laborers to concentrate in towns and cities, mostly as jobless 'proletarians'. Finally, with the promises of the Industrial Revolution (1750-1850) in sight, this phenomenon reached its apex, when 'the population of Britain nearly tripled, the towns of Liverpool and Manchester became gigantic cities, the average income of the population more than doubled, the share of farming fell from just under a half to just under a fifth of the nation's output...' (McCloskey, 1981: 103). This massive ballooning of the cities continued till the industrial economy at about time the Revolution neared completion was left burdened with a huge surplus of migrant laborers. On top of that, thousands of soldiers discharged from the Napoleonic Wars (1803-15), mostly crippled and all now out of work, were also dispatched to the cities. These 'parasites' – without a home or work – would haunt the urban economy falling into recession as the spectre of the 'vagrant'. Hereafter, the notion of labor would come strongly tagged with sublime ethico-economic connotations, epitomized by the ethos of what Weber (2003) calls the Protestant (work)ethics, and that would be adopted as a panacea for the vagabond's 'unproductive sinfulness'.

What these evolutionary phases – the fourteenth century run-away surf, the kicked-out agricultural laborer of the Elizabethan times, the nineteenth century crippled homeless destitute – point to is that the epistemic structures that inform the perception of vagabond(age) are purely transient and contextual; and depend more on the (pre-)disposition of the perceiver rather than any historicist 'truth' on the 'vagabond', which, as an 'imagined community, is vastly heterogeneous anyway, and, as of the West, more

Act, had been deployed in Great Britain phenomenally in the mid-18th century. It reshuffled the perception of ownership of land quite uniquely with no change in the economic mode of production involved. As a result a select few of the 'occupants' overnight into 'owners' who were henceforth necessarily required to fence their piece of land and live 'enclosed'. Once the boundary is designated there would emerge concepts of emigration, trespassing and so on.

often than not engineered to check unwanted diasporic migration. On that note, the *Vagrancy Act of 1824* defines the 'vagabond', and in the same breath, the 'disorderly person, and rogue', as follows:

[E]very person wandering abroad and lodging in any Barn or Outhouse, or in any deserted or unoccupied Building, or in the open Air, or under a Tent, or in any Cart or Waggon [sic.], not having any visible Means of Subsistence, and not giving a good Account of himself or herself; every Person wilfully [sic.] exposing to., view, in any Street, Road, Highway, or public Place, any obscene Print, Picture, or other indecent Exhibition ; every Person wilfully [sic.], openly, lewdly, and obscenely exposing his Person in any Street, Road, or public Highway, or in the View thereof, or in any Place of public Resort.

Not only does the Act prohibit begging and sleeping on the road, but also imposes that the vagabond's possession be liable to inspection, upon which the money found, or alternately all possessions be sold, towards 'the expenses of maintaining such offenders' (article 8), lodging houses likely to shelter vagabonds be searched (article 13), vagabonds be whipped and detained with hard labor (article 10), and also officers neglecting to carry these duties out would be punished (article 11). This is, in a way, tantamount to saying that being homeless in nineteenth century England (and Wales) is an offence by itself. Thus, in (the name of) dealing with homelessness, the Act of 1824 actually intensified the (existing) urban-diasporic polarization in the sense that it evoked a sense of territorialization of the cityscape, and disciplinary control of those who poured into it from the 'outside'. Let us hold this issue back for the moment. We shall come back to it soon only with more clues to demonstrate how this model of polarization would serve as the paradigm for the Vagrancy Act(s) in India, where the concept of the 'vagabond' had to be ethnocentrically 'engineered' in the first place.

Sacralizing The Vagabond: The Case of 'Pre-Modern' India

While no ancient source records the practices of recreational travel, the genre of traveling that would be of the closest approximation to what we assume to be vagabondage today was undertaken by ascetics¹³. The word 'ascetic' may have a religious overtone, but I am talking about those ascetics whose wandering had nothing to do with their religious accomplishment. These ascetics are not to be confused with preachers or pilgrims. The *Arthashastra*, the earliest known Indian legislation, never mentions traveling or the traveler in a negative light¹⁴. Instead, it protects the interest of the wandering ascetic in terms of assuring them social security to a certain extent:

Ascetics, called by various names in the text (sanyasin, tapasvin, pravrajita, parivrajaka etc.) were a familiar sight on the social scene. There were men and women ascetics, *Aryas* and those belonging to other sects. Though often equated with Brahmins, they could have originally belonged to any *varna*. They are often referred to in the text as *munda* (shaven headed) or *jatila* (with matted hair)...They were allotted forest areas for their meditation and contemplation {2.2.2} but they had to live in harmony, make room for newcomers and not annoy each other {3.16.33-36}. Their property could not be claimed as war booty... Respect was to be shown to them; reviling, hurting or killing one was equated to similar offences against father, mother or teacher {4.11.13,14}. Torture of ascetics was prohibited {4.8.19}. (Cited in Rangarajan, 1992: 49)

Not only were these ascetics 'a familiar sight on the social scene' but were also an integral part of the society. It has been even advised to show respect to them. That their presence has been acknowledged with assurance of some kinds of protective rights distinctly points to the fact that this group of people was never completely erased out of

¹³ I have a separate on tourism to follow and I explain in the third chapter why it is anachronistic for 'ancient' texts to have mentioned recreational travel(ing).

¹⁴ 'India(n)' appears with different allusions in the course of this thesis. The perception of 'India(n)' varies diachronically and according to identity-politics of heterogeneous clans, and hence not to be confused with the colonial geo-political map as it stands of now. This thesis rather attempts to unsettle the hegemonic perception of 'India'.

the periphery of the mainstream gaze. They are admittedly a 'different' bunch of people, which is why the text contains separate entries on them; but never a complete outcast.

Indeed, they have been sought to be a part of the holistic 'mosaic' of the social rubric.

The *Arthashastra* reminds:

An 'authentic' ascetic 'who wants to earn money' – shall be established, as an agent, near a city along with many disciples – shall pretend to practice austerities by eating very sparingly in public, just a handful of barley every month or two; he may eat secretly as much as he likes. Employ merchants as under-cover agents, find prior information on visitors, suitable recruits for government service, prediction, palmistry {1.11.13-20}... A wandering nun may be a Brahmin (*parivrajika*) or from another sect (*vrshala* with their heads shaven). Such agents shall be recruited from poor but intrepid widows, who need to work for their living. {1.12.4,5}... In addition to the above categories employed on a permanent basis, occasional agents could also be used.

Their salary was fixed at 250 panas p.a. which could be increased according to the work done {5.3.24} (Rangarajan, 1992: 504).

The *Arthashastra* clearly dates back prior to the (re-)consolidation of *Brahminism*, which explains why unlike what we would find in the *Manusmriti*, the ascetic in the *Arthashastra* has been acceptable from any *varna*, even among women. Their service has been sought for by the state; they are being considered as potential 'recruits for government service'. The ascetic (*tapasa*) and the mendicant woman (*bhikshuni*) have been mentioned among those who fit the bill for institutional-official spying for the king {1.11}. Quite contrary to the modern-day idea of the vagabond always already as *a-social*, as pointed out by the Bombay Police case I started the 'Introduction' with, the *Arthashastra* uninhibitedly integrates them within the social coordinates. Even the 'authentic' ascetic, as paradoxical as it may sound, is permissible to be pretentious. To sum it up, the gaze in which the mainstream society saw the wanderers was lenient and very accommodating indeed. Certainly, it is hard to imagine any state that is concerned for the employment/employability of, say for example the prostitute,

or terrorist, or any of the outcasts for that matter; but the state does so in the case of wanderers. Even the prospect for salary increment for them has been considered. The message is clear and simple: the state realized it pays off more in subsuming the 'cultural differences', instead of perpetrating hostility upon them. The state saw more benefit in resourcefully allocating the wanderers rather than completely casting them out, for, as it is clearly evident, they were neither perceived as a threat, nor abnormal.

The *Manusmriti*, furthermore, advises promotional or concessional travel arrangements for the ascetics: '[A] woman who has been pregnant two months or more, an ascetic, a hermit in the forest, and Brahmanas *who are students of the Veda*, shall not be made to pay toll at a ferry' (8.407; italics mine). The traveler is also deemed legitimate to beg and worthy of receiving gifts:

Him who wishes (to marry for the sake of having) offspring, him who wishes to perform a sacrifice, *a traveler*, him who has given away all his property, him who begs for the sake of his teacher, his father, or his mother, *a student of the Veda*, and a sick man... These *nine Brahmanas* one should consider as Snatakas, begging in order to *fulfill the sacred law*; to such poor men gifts must be given *in proportion to their learning*. (11.1-2; italics mine)

These two verses are of key importance in terms of shedding light on the ancient legislative attitude towards the wanderer. The 'traveler' cited within the nine categories above is clearly an independent traveler. In order for there to be nine categories (which is confirmed in the second of the above verses), each has to be read, interpreted and understood separately, which is to say each is a separate category by itself and not to be read as a clause to another. In other words, the 'traveler' unconditionally qualifies to receive gifts, alternately alms, as long as s/he is a Brahmin. However, both assessing whether s/he 'fulfill[s] the sacred law' and gauging his/her 'learnedness' are ambiguous, arbitrary and positional. Now, here is a catch.

How does the donor test his/her competence? The traveler is definitely not

meant to be put through screening tests; basically the underlying suggestion is to make sure before donation that s/he complies with the Vedic tradition. The 'sacred law' understandably is self-referential to the legislative aspects of the *Manusmriti* itself and 'learnedness' by default stands for the virtue of having learnt and believing in the *Vedas*. Given that the *brahmanas* only had access to the *Vedas*, it can thus be concluded that the *Manusmriti* sanctioned purposeless travel if and only if undertaken by the *brahmanas* who were more likely to have some leisure compared to the rest of their counterparts in the four-fold *varna* system¹⁵. Had there been any exception, it has to be understood to have proven the law. In other words, those 'non-learned' travelers who did not 'fulfill the sacred law', the obvious hint being towards the Buddhist *bhikshus* and Jain monks, even if the likeliness of them being itinerant and mendicant far exceeds that of the *brahmanas*, are seen as intolerable and never qualify for receiving gifts/alms¹⁶. That being said, there is no evidence in the *Manusmriti* that opposes or is dismissive about vagabondage; rather it expresses consent to it unless it topples the status-quo of *varna*-hierarchy. What the *Manusmriti* has issues with is the non-Vedic practitioners embarking upon travel; not with the idea or action of purposeless travel per se. This can further be established with conviction once we look into the semantic slant of the Sanskrit word for 'traveler' as it appears in the original (11.1).

The Sanskrit counterpart of 'traveler' as it appears in the original is 'adhvaga'. Any

¹⁵ Again, *varna*-caste-class has been co-terminously used with little distinction particularly in Western scholarship. Thapar (2003), who is known to have herself once fallen prey to this trope, reminds on how anachronistic it would be to confuse the categories since the latter two could have arisen prior to a post- agrarian organized-economized division of labor while allusions to *varna* has been made in the *Rigvedas*.

¹⁶ *Manusmriti* (8.363) and *Arthashastra* among other legislatures endorse social ostracization of the Buddhists. Charudatta, the protagonist of the Sanskrit drama, *Mricchakatika*, considers the sight of a Buddhist monk 'inauspicious' (see Act VIII).

standard English-to-Sanskrit dictionary gives some forty plus entries for the 'traveler', each with different slant and subtle variation in meaning, nevertheless all falling into the umbrella category of 'traveler' that also includes the sub-set of 'vagabonds'. While on the one hand it is indeed surprising why and how this cascade of Sanskrit vocabulary faded into obsolescence, on the other hand it leaves us wondering what the choice of one word over so many options tells us, if it does anything at all, about the ancient Indian outlook towards vagabondage. The word 'adhvaga' (<adhavan + ga) etymologically comes from the root word 'adhvan' (meaning road, journey, orbit etc) and is suffixed by 'ga' (meaning staying, being, in the state of being etc). For that matter, 'ga' comes from the root compound 'gam' which when suffixed with gives rise to cognate words all associative to ideas of travel (say for example, $\sqrt{\text{gam}} + \text{an} = \text{gaman}$ [to go]; $\text{gam} + \text{tavya} = \text{gantavya}$ [destination]; $\sqrt{\text{gam}} + \text{kti} = \text{gati}$ [speed] etc). The word 'adhvan' also appears in the *Manusmriti* as a synonym to 'journey' (4.60). 'Adhvaga' is thus the state of having embarked upon a journey, or one who *is* (<being) on the road; and therefore steers clear of any possibility of pejorative undertone.

The *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (1866), however, cites that the word 'adhvan' has been used, presumably figuratively, in *Shantiparva* of the *Mahabharata* (12.11876) as versed, skilled, learned and so. What needs asking at this point is: how can the 'road' act as a metaphor of knowledge, learnedness, being skilled? This is a very discrete usage, for I do not know of any Indian languages that, even proverbially or colloquially, bear trace of this sort of a usage. In Sanskrit poetics, all words contain in themselves, by an inherent property, a tripartite meaning-generating potential: *Abhidha* (denotation), *Lakshana* (indication, connotation) and *Vyanjana* (suggestion). They may, however, generate different meanings in different contexts or all three possibilities of meanings, which is to say denotative, connotative and suggestive, all at the same time, or a

combination of the three. In other words, if a word is removed from its context it loses its signification completely, although it always retains the *Abhidha* element, i.e. the lexical component to convey meaning, re-manifested if and when contextualized syntactically. According to the *Nyāiyayiks*, a word has three-fold expressive potential: the conventional (*Rudhi*), the etymological (*Yoga*) and the etymo-conventional signification (*Yogarudhi*). Using 'adhvan' for 'skilled' is neither lexical nor conventional; the 'road' has no physical co-relates to 'skill' or 'knowledge' (say, like in the case of similes where the rose is the referent of redness), therefore, presumably it must have been a semiotic construct (like the case where the rose stands for love). This is what Barthes (1987) calls the 'second order of signification' by virtue of which certain cultural constructs are ideologically naturalized. The question here is not what it means, but how it means what it means. What then could be the associative clues? What is it that it is suggestive of?

Now, the *Monier Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (2008) gives some alternative meanings of 'adhvan'; of which one is certainly worth taking note of. He records 'adhvan' has been used as 'a recension of the Vedas and the school upholding it'. This revelation, however, does not contradict my thesis by any means, but rather reinforces what we saw been consented to by the *Manusmriti*: vagabondage, as long as it upholds the ideals of the *Vedas*. The Pandavas were *Kshatriyas* (warrior clan, for lack of a better word), the chief duty of these royal personas being governance; hence although they did uphold and abide by the ideals of the *Vedas* they cannot be authentically regarded as a 'school' whose 'recension of the *Vedas*' would be celebratory. That been ruled out, it is worth taking note of the fact that the *Shantiparva* (*The Book of Peace*; Ch 12) is preceded by the *Vanaparva* (*The Book of The Forest*; Ch 3) which already features the Pandava's wandering in the forests in exile for twelve years in

disguise. This wandering, though, would not categorically fall under vagabondage, as it had been more a compulsion arisen conditionally out of having lost a gamble, and more importantly undertaken with clear motivation to retaliate and lay claim to the kingdom, they lost as the stake in the gamble, as soon as the exile ended. Nevertheless they qualify for travelers; although it would probably be arguable to call them vagabonds at this point. Then again, we must not lose sight of the fact that (at least parts of) *Shantiparva* was an addendum inserted much later to the 'whole body' of the *Mahabharata*¹⁷, and therefore must factor in that the Pandavas in *Mahaprasthanikaparva* (*The Book of The Great Journey*; Ch 17), quite like vagabonds, would renounce kingdom and embark upon a great journey across the whole 'country' till their ascent to heaven. Is this vagabondage? Well, they had a final destination – that is, heaven – but apparently their travel across the length and breadth of the country was pretty aimless and had no functional or logistical pay off in terms of having made it to heaven. They were purposeless travelers to say the least, if not rulers- turned-vagabonds. So, if the *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (1866) is correct in terms of noting that 'adhvan' has been figuratively used as skilled or learned, then it may have been so used (for there is a legitimate possibility of the wanderings in chapter 17 chronologically preceding the usage in chapter 12) in attribution to the Pandavas, by now already having undertaken two terrific wandering expeditions. Now, if the Pandava's ascent to heaven be read as a metaphor of being bestowed with supreme knowledge, being enlightened, then this followed immediately after renunciant travel without any rhyme or reason. Hence it

¹⁷ The *Shantiparva* makes historical references from a timeframe much later to that the rest of the chapters do. It is, therefore, assumed that *Shantiparva* had been a later insertion. That said, I would also like to draw attention to the fact that for a narrative that was nurtured in a culture of orality, its 'whole body' does not convey anything. It is not until the nineteenth century, with the flourishing of the printing press in Bengal, that these narratives were canonically 'literated' and they started to possess 'body'. I have discussed this issue in details in the third chapter.

would not be far-fetched to imagine that 'adhvan', as it is invoked in the *Mahabharata*, is suggestive of that knowledge, of which the road is the facilitator, that particular (life-)skills acquired by virtue of having undertaken extensive travels, which is further to affirm that those who embarked upon a journey on the road emerge knowledgeable. The main function of the *parivrajaka*, one must remember in this context, was 'apart from acquiring knowledge, was to participate in discussion and debate' (Thapar, 1978: 69). 'The charisma of the renouncer', Thapar (1978: 98) further attests, '...[was] derived from the practice and pursuit of non-orthodox knowledge, which provided one aspect of the ultimate moral authority of the renouncer'. The figure of the wanderer traveling in an epistemic pursuit has also been evoked by 'the dissenting groups [who] denied the *Vedas* as the source of all knowledge and [instead] preferred knowledge acquired through perception and experience' (ibid.: 65). In other words, the association between wandering and (acquiring) knowledge is not a-historical.

Does it then follow that vagabondage in 'ancient' India was celebratory? It would be too hasty to conclude at this point. This is after all one discrete citation – unique and very unconventional – and any conclusion drawn from it may be precarious. Even without pushing the boundaries that far, it can be said with certainty that vagabondage was not at all a concern for people in ancient India. That both 'journey' and 'skilled' could have shared the same etymological origin ('adhvan') is evidence sufficient to reveal with pristine clarity that vagabondage at one point of time was seen with tolerance, if not distinction. Furthermore, the mystery of disappearance of the cascade of Sanskrit vocabulary for traveler-vagabond still remains unsolved. Of some forty plus words only a handful still survives, although some as neologisms¹⁸. The rest gradually faded into

¹⁸ The *Online Spoken Sanskrit Dictionary* shows the following synonyms for 'vagabond' and 'vagrant': *avanicara* (etymologically: globe trotter; now obsolete), *paribhramin* (wanderer/roamer; now obsolete), *vaGka* (etymologically: crooked/bent; which is how now

obsolescence and quite interestingly what we use today for vagabond – *bhabaghure* in Bangla and *ghumakkar* in Hindi – are etymologically derived from, but non-existent in Sanskrit. The word *bhabaghure* is an amalgamation of *bhaba* (earth) and *ghure* (<ghum, meaning 'to travel') while *ghumakkar* is derived from *ghum*. However, both *bhabaghure* and *ghumakkar* are comparatively 'new' coinages. Why and what then did the Sanskrit lexicon fall short of? It is not until the nineteenth century, I will soon argue, that the 'modern' vocabulary needed a re-orientation – with omissions and new coinages – such that it now might come with the social stigma that the ancient vocabulary lacked. This is, however, not to say that the 'pre-modern' (lexical) imagination of the vagabond-wanderer always yielded positive overtone. The *Samsad Bengali Thesaurus*, for instance, indexes *bhabaghure* simultaneously under two entries: one, *bhramana* (travel), which further enlists passenger, mountaineer, sailor, honeymoon, road, *parivrajaka*, globetrotter etc. on the one hand, and two, *ashrayhinata* (shelterlessness), which enlists helplessness, homeless, orphan, beggar, stray dog etc. on the other hand. As evident, the 'order of things' of the concept *bhabaghure* (vagabond) is imbued with a bivalent potency that, notionally speaking, generates both positive and negative allusions. The 'modern' articulation of the vagabond (*bhabaghure*), I insist, has eliminated the *aporia* centering the concept and accrued an overwhelmingly negative, pejorative undertone to such an extent that *bhabaghure*, in the colloquial usage, is now synonymous with *chalchulohin*, a pejorative expression literally meaning without a

used, ornamentally though), *paryaTaka* (tourist; in use), *saMcAraJivin* (*saMcAra*= motion, *jIvin*= the subject of [motion]; now obsolete), *parisaMcara*, *vipruta*, *azuddhavAsaka*, *vrAtyA* (colloquially: outcast), *vrAtyagaNa*, *anagAra*, *yAyAvara* (tramp), *saMghajIvin* (*saMgha*= group; the hint being towards Buddhist bhikshus who wandered in small groups), *vrAtyacaraA*, *vrAtyacaraNa*, *raktAmbara*. The *Apte English Sanskrit Dictionary* gives the following additional synonyms for 'vagabond': *svecchācārin* (colloquially: autocrat), *yathecchavihārin* (colloquially: whimsical), *ajñātanivāsa* (colloquially: stranger; etymologically: one whose abode is unknown), *gūdhacārin*. The synonyms in the Monier Williams dictionary overlap with those already cited. All inputs in parentheses are, however, mine.

roof or an oven.

The *sloka* (verse) in *Parashara Sanhita* Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, the nineteenth century social reformer, is known to have anchored onto as his last recourse when the orthodox Hindus seemed to turn a deaf ear to his liberal reformist arguments in favor of (Hindu) widow remarriage – eventually legislated in 1856 – sanctioned a woman to remarry in certain cases, which included, besides the husband's death, him having become *prabrajite*, in other words, a renouncer-ascetic (Adhikari, 1990: 48). The legislative text, in this case, bears testimony to the fact that the practice of renunciation was acceptable. The renouncer in the Indian tradition was essentially a wanderer.

Thapar (1978: 81) confirms:

The insistence on the renouncer being a wanderer (a rule which was observed until the sect became prosperous and powerful) was mainly to prevent the development of any attachment, either with the lay community or with fellow monks and *sannyasis*.

The kind of wandering referred to here is a sectarian, collective practice. One has to be careful, in this context, to distinguish 'between the individual renouncer who isolates himself totally...in short, the ideal ascetic, and the one who opts out of society but joins a group of renouncers' (Thapar, 1978: 64). The wanderers, sanctioned by the Vedic discourses, lived outside of the society, while those of the post-Vedic period, Thapar insists, 'were seeking to establish a parallel society' (63). The ascetic, that is the *sanyasi*, Chakravarti (2006) argues, earned his right to renounce only after completion of the social obligations as laid out in the Brahminical scriptures, thereby complying with the Vedic dictates, and maintained a solitary existence, which did not require to break the caste taboos. This has further been attested to by Thapar 1978: 65):

[W]hereas the ascetics [sanyasis] were figures of loneliness working out their salvation each one for himself, the renouncer was concerned about other people and his concern was expressed in his desire to lead others along the path which he had found.

In my third chapter, I will discuss how the trope of wandering in Indian literature and

critical thinking – with clear precedent in the Buddhist discourses – functions as an apparatus for connecting with the Other, as a manifestation of concern for the Other, as a metaphor of a gratuitous worldview. Anyway, thinking in these terms, the Buddhist *shramana*, or for that matter, other (non-Vedic) minoritarian cults – what may loosely be called the 'heterodox' sects – were radicals, and revolutionaries to certain degrees.

The 'heterodox' sects represented a voice of dissidence. Notwithstanding all internal differences, they maintained a relation of complementary opposition among themselves while their relation with Brahminism was that of dialectical/binary opposition. For the Buddhist *shramana*, therefore, 'the root of the contradiction of *samnyasa* as a social phenomenon lay in the negation of the social function of *grhastha* by the *samnyasin*' (Thapar, 1978: 80). The *shramana's* denigration of the *sanyasi's* renunciation was, thus, his symbolic anathema to, broadly speaking, the Brahminical ideals. According to Chakravarti (2006: 185, 186):

What distinguished the period in which Buddhism arose was the appearance of the *parivrajaka* (Pali *paribbajaka*) or the *shramana* (Pali *samana*). The characteristic feature of the paribbajakas was their state of homelessness. In the Pali texts, they are described as moving from home to homelessness... The shramana or parivrajaka broke especially those rules that applied to the householder (*grhastha*). He shunned all tokens of Vedic culture, such as the sacred thread or the symbolic tuft of hair on the head, and he did not perform *yajna*. The renouncer and the householder were therefore opposed to each other, and they represented two parallel modes of existence in the 'heterodox' tradition... An important feature of 'heterodox' texts in general, and of Buddhist literature in particular, is the compound expression *shramana-brahmana* to denote two opposing religious systems: the 'heterodox' sects on the one hand and the brahmanas on the other... The traditional antagonism of the two categories remained a constant feature of Indian society... The emergence of the phenomenon of renunciation in opposition to the brahmanical tradition permeated the atmosphere of the time to such an extent that the period as a whole has been characterized as the age of shramanas and brahmanas.

It is against the backdrop of this politico-historical scenario that the post-Vedic

semantic turn characterizes a sharp bifurcation in taxonomy of the wanderer: between the 'good' wanderer and the 'bad' wanderer. From the orthodox Hindu point of view, the *shramana* was a 'bad' wanderer, precisely because the *shramana* was a political dissident who intended to topple the status quo. For the *shramana*, however, the *sanyasi* was the 'bad' wanderer, for he complied with the Brahmanical-casteist ideals. This explains the ambiguity, the bivalent potency of *bhabaghure* as indexed in the *Thesauras*.

Nevertheless, Thapar (1978: 94) insists: 'The charisma of the renouncer has been a continuing feature of Indian society'. The lynchpin of the renouncer's counterpunch to the Brahmanical system, relying heavily on a casteist division of labor, was his complete withdrawal from manual labor and material possessions: 'the functions of production and reproduction, activities that were essential aspects of his social obligations as a man-in-the-world' (Chakravarti, 2006: 195). In Thapar's (1978: 81-82, 98) words:

The renouncer was forbidden any kind of profession or occupation and, more particularly, manual labour...[and] was expected to spend time in study, meditation and the purification of the mind and the body..., all of which were, from the material point of view, counter-productive...The prohibition on manual labour highlighted their (renouncers') ability to live off society: yet they were not *of* society. The renouncers were above and beyond conventional laws.

This contributed to the renouncer being recognized as a charismatic figure, as a symbol of moral authority evidently derived from 'the apparent contradiction of a social nexus based on the repudiation of society' (ibid.: 94). 'The acceptance of the renouncer as a necessary counter-weight to conventional society', Thapar (ibid.: 98) contends, 'may account for the continuing authority of the renouncer'. Accordingly, this grand legacy of renunciant wandering as a rhetoric of religio-political dissidence continues till the Middle Ages and beyond.

During the Middle Ages, the Bhakti and the Sufi movements swept across India.

Bhakti and Sufi basically subverted the scripture-based ritualistic authoritarianism of Brahmanism and Islam respectively and their thrust was towards vernacularization of devotional literature. Within this saga of enormously rich tradition of poetry and lyrics in ethnic languages by minoritarian quasi-religious clans would emerge the rhetoric of the 'mad lover' and the 'wanderer' in search of the god who is no longer in the confines of the altar; but is personalized, even sexualized to a certain degree. Actually, these people – the *Bhaktas*, the *Sufis*, the *Bauls*, and the *Fakirs* – had set off leaving their home and everything else behind in an ecstatic state, of course, in pursuit of 'god'; but from a political vantage-point, more importantly defying all sorts of ecclesiastical authoritarianism. Thus the figures of the 'mad', the 'mendicant singer', the 'banished wanderer' came to acquire a certain currency, a profoundly prophetic value, the status of a seer; and most importantly, for these figures, quite contrary to the Foucauldian hypothesis that unreason-reduced-to-madness is always an *exonym*, madness and wandering were *endonymic* concepts symbolic of iconoclasm. This means that the self-projection of this image had some sort of purchase, the most obvious form of which being the rest of the docile subjects looked up to them as set-apart defiant figures.

In his attempt to explain the generic uniqueness of the Bhakti-Sufi poetry, Sisir Das in his essay 'The Mad Lover' (1984) categorically puts emphasis on a state of 'a wild frenzy, an abundance, an excess, a 'madness' as a recurrent pattern in medieval devotional literatures across most Indian languages. He asserts:

[T]he common man was attracted towards them (the saints) because of this madness, and it was this madness which the poets portrayed with great feeling and the saints themselves welcomed... The words meaning 'mad' or 'crazy' in almost all Indian languages in the medieval period attained a new connotation which is an evidence of recognition of 'madness' as a significant element in spiritual life (1984: 1).

In the context of Das' observation, it might be useful to know that in Urdu, incidentally the language in which most of the Sufi poetry has been composed, the two most

prominent synonyms of 'mad' are *bawra* and *diwana*. Although one cannot vouch whether they are etymologically cognate, it would be interesting, even if the cases might be merely homophonic, to note that in Urdu *bawar* means 'a sweetmeat; also, belief, faith, (to) trust, credible, trustworthy' [from where *bawarchi*= a cook or a chef] while *diwa* means 'light, lamp' [from where *Diwali* = festival of lights] (Platts, 2006). 'The epithet 'mad'', Das (1984: 12) reminds, 'is not necessarily a pejorative one in Hindu religious context'. He records Tagore to have pointed that two of the supreme godheads – Chaitanya and Siva – in the Hindu pantheon are in fact 'mad' and that they are admired because of their 'madness'. However, Das (1984: 13) suggests not to lose sight of the Platonic categorizations of different kinds of madness, the reference obviously being towards the distinction that appears in *Phaedrus* between (pathological) madness as a disease and divine madness, while he goes on to demonstrate how in the medieval Indian literature – both in self-compositions and biographies – the poets-saints have outrightly been declared 'mad', but with outmost dignity, pride, admiration, rebelliousness and so on. 'The texture and the character of the religious poetry in India' Das (1984:14) posits, 'was changed by this 'madness'. In the context of what he calls 'traditional' Tibet and India, Feuerstein (1991: 105) also confirms: '[T]he "holy fool" or "saintly madman" [and madwoman] has long been recognized as a legitimate figure in the compass of spiritual aspiration and realization.'

Das limits his discussion to medieval Indian poetry; but what he opens up for further examination – and what seems more intriguing in relation to my thesis – is a playful discourse between madness and itinerancy. Most of the 'mad' saints, if not all, he discusses were – historically or at least as portrayed in anecdotal and hagiographic legends – itinerant figures¹⁹. Their 'madness' is as though a 'symptom' that would

¹⁹ Das discusses Andal (8th century or prior), Manikka Vasahar (9th century), Mahadeviakka

culminate to itinerancy. Furthermore, nudity (and in some cases charges of obscenity arising thereof) has historically accompanied this discourse of 'madness': Mahadevi Akka and Lalleswari, both female, are, at least going by the legends, known to have renounced their clothes before they went about singing publicly on the streets; the iconographic representations of Chaitanyadev always show him bare-chested. Das observes how these 'mad' saints had testified themselves to have been in a trance, and totally 'possessed by God' during when they behaved 'abnormally', 'hysterically', 'madly'; and that none of what they did was done out of their own will. However, in terms of its political significance it is not very hard to account for a more discernible reason for why they did what they did: it was clearly a counterpunch to the Braminical civilian conventions. The Braminical regimentation of the *chaturashrama* (*the four stages of life*) clearly upholds the *household*: a student stays in the teacher's house during *brahmacharya*, leads a family life during *garhastha*; renunciation to live like a hermit in the forest, still allowed with the family, during *banaprastha* follows only after the completion of the previous two stages of household practices, and finally *sanyasa* is only reserved for the male Brahmins (that too at an age likely to have been attained by a very few in terms of life expectancy), not to mention some of the earlier *Dharmasastras* being thoroughly critical on the act of renunciation²⁰. The most perceptible manner to

(12th century), Lalleswari (1320-92), Kabir (1440-1518), Guru Nanak (1469-1539), Chaitanya (1486-1534), Mirabai (1498-1547), all 'mad' and itinerants. I have arranged them chronologically in order to draw attention to how 'madness' and itinerancy, one more often than not acting as a pretext to another, have acted as the cultural register to the language of rebelliousness since a very long time in history.

²⁰ On who qualifies for the right to renounce (*sanyasa*), see *Manusmriti* (6.29, 40). Gifting/feeding a Sudra ascetic or conversing with a female renunciant involves a penalty/fine (*Yājñavalkya*, 5.115; *Vishnu*, 2.235; *Manusmriti*, 8.363), indicating they were discouraged to renounce. Thapar (1978, 73-74) posits: 'The brahmanical theory of the four *asramas*, first propounded in full in the late *Jabala Upanisad*, brought asceticism into conventional custom by making it the last stage of a man's curriculum and accessible to the upper castes. By implication however the *grhastha-asrama* was a necessary prior requirement'. As of the supremacy of the

rebel on the face of it was first, to leave one's home and hit the road; and next, for some, to shed off one's clothes, which is precisely what the Buddhists-Jains started doing long back, followed much later by the medieval 'mad' saints²¹. In other words, the 'mad' saints re-appropriated practices of wandering as a language of protest which was already there in the political vocabulary of 'pre-modern' India. Thus, what follows is that the trajectory of the 'wanderer' has a fascinating curvature in the Indian context: a figure of tolerance from ancient times culminates to that of reverence in the Middle Ages to be finally marginalized in the 'modern'.

The Rupture: Colonial Bengal and The Case of Mimicry

If wandering practices were tolerated, and at times revered in 'pre-modern' India, when

'household' in the Braminical tradition, see Olivelle (1984) where he points to the paradox in the earlier *Dharmasūtras* strictly disapproving renunciation while the later ones making room for the same, the reason being: the later *Dharmasūtras* (*Manusmṛiti*, in particular) were invested to resolve all internal differences within the Brahminical system, a prerequisite for strengthening campaign against the rising opposition from the nastika-schools (non-believers in the Vedas, Buddhism-Jainism being the most threatening). Both *Baudāyana* (2.11.27) and *Gautama* (3.36) advise the student (snātaka) to start the family-life (garhastha) after completing education (brahmacharya) and there is no mentioning of the sequential stages of life -- the banaprastha, the sanyasa -- as one finds in *Manusmṛiti*, indicating the student is advised to stick to it thereafter. However, *Manusmṛiti* (6.33), *Visnu* (96.1), and *Yājñavalkya* (3.56) all enforce paying 'triple-debt' as a householder before renouncing, indicating a steep taxation in place to prevent everybody from wanting to renounce, which is actually what the Buddhists-Jains were preaching-practicing.

²¹ Paradoxical but true, the idea of renunciation in the Indian perception has always evoked politics of (choosing/ regimenting) dress codes. What I mean to say is: far from simply dressing scantily, or dispossessing it altogether, dress codes for renunciators became issues of contention on one's identity-bearing and sectarian-politics. The Buddhists dressed with thrown away rags, the Sufis with tattered pieces sewn into one, the Bauls in saffron, the Ajivikas without any, and among the Jains the Svetambaras in white, while the Digambaras carried only a peacock feather as broomstick, otherwise nude: these are in the first place metaphors to rejecting the world as it is; but undeniably markers of sectarian identity each shared allegiance with. No wonder why the modern-day 'saints' like Gandhi, Tagore, Vivekananda, Tilak, to mention a few, in the 19-20th century would emerge with typically inimitable dress codes so emblematic to their iconographic representations.

did then the scornful outlook towards vagabondage develop? How did the admired 'wanderer' become the disdainful 'vagabond'? Soon after the 1943 famine in Bengal, the British administrators encountered a situation similar to that what they faced in the 1850's Britain. Millions died and most of those who survived were left unfit for labor. The economic backbone of rural Bengal collapsed, so did the rural fabric of the 'family'²². The complementary urban-rural relation had already turned conflictual following large-scale industrialization since the turn of the century and the famine possibly nailed the last pin to the process of the 'city' becoming an expansionary force devouring the rural²³. Agricultural-artisanal laborers from May-1943 onwards started gathering in the city of Calcutta under the illusion of buying rice at a controlled/rationed price. No sooner had the city pavements been thronged with the destitute than *The Bengal Vagrancy Act, 1943* was brought into effect from July 31. This Act 'for dealing with vagrancy in Bengal' defines a 'vagrant' as:

[A] person found asking for alms in any public place, or wandering about or remaining in any public place in *such condition or manner as makes it likely that* such person exists by asking for alms but does not include a person collecting money or asking for food or gifts *for a proscribed purpose.* (3)

and requires him/her to accompany 'any police officer authorized in this behalf by the Commissioner of Police in Calcutta and by the District Magistrate elsewhere and appear before, a Special Magistrate' who:

²² To remember, the idea of family evokes different referents for different people in different times. As of India, here is a trajectory of how the *Indian Census* keeps on changing the definition of the family/household: 'The household or family was first defined in 1872 as comprising of those who lived together and ordinarily cooked at the same hearth including their servants and visitors. In 1881 Census it was defined as comprising of all those persons who actually slept in the house or compound on the night of 17th February, 1881. From 1891 till 1941 the term 'family' was used in place of Household. From 1951 Census onward again the concept of household was used in Indian Censuses. In 1971 Census a household was defined as 'a group of persons who commonly live together and would take their meals from a common kitchen unless the exigencies of work prevented any of them from doing so' (online).

²³ For a detailed discussion on the exploitative relation between the urban and the rural, see Tagore (2007).

... shall make a summary inquiry in the prescribed manner into the *circumstances and character* of such person, and if, after hearing anything which such person may wish to say *he is satisfied that such a person is a vagrant*, he shall record a declaration to this effect and the provisions of this Act relating to vagrants shall thereupon apply to such person. (5)

Tons of inexplicably vague-ambiguous phrases – 'such condition or manner as makes it likely', 'proscribed purpose', 'circumstances and character', 'he is satisfied' etc. – leave lacunas for the Act to be (ab)used as a catch-all. What I am hinting at is that in so far as the 1824 Vagrancy Act in Britain had been designed to exterminate the homeless underclass in the city, the 1943 Bengal Vagrancy Act had been implemented evidently to combat a similar human-resource crisis, that of unauthorized diasporic migration. Now, if we cross-refer the phraseology of the 1943 *Bengal Vagrancy Act* with that of its British counterpart it is hard not to notice the incredible parallel between the two. With a serene indifference to the question of 'cultural difference', that had always been hospitable to all sorts of *unessentializably* diversified forms of traveling; *The Bengal Vagrancy Act* mimicked the Western paranoia towards vagabondage. Famines had struck Bengal before, following which migration too presumably happened. But, preceded by the large-scale industrial urbanization, this time the migration was prominently noticeable as a migration from the country to the city. What needs paying attention to is the stakes of the colonial legislators and the urban dwellers involved in this post-famine huge rural influx. Can this conceptual-semantic streamlining of the 'vagabond' be explained *merely* in terms of the 'vagrants' in reality being perceived as an economic burden on the productive 'tax payers' within the ambit of an already-exploitative colonial economy under the Raj? Curiously still, was this the first endeavor of its kind?

Historically, this sort of an initiative towards ghettoizing the 'vagrant' was not entirely new. In fact, these attempts had, at least in case of Bengal, always been preceded by perpetual concerns expressed for the 'vagrant' since as early as the late-

eighteenth century. On 23 April 1789 Mr. J. Price, marine Paymaster writes a letter to Mr. E. Hay, Secretary, Fort William, Calcutta:

The English seamen who have come abroad in foreign ships and those who run away from the Company's ships in all ports of India, flock down to Bengal as to the land of promise, but being generally the worst sort of seafaring people, whose interference prevents their long being employed by any body, *they become a charge to Government and a nuisance to the public...* There are now a great many of them about the Town, and experience had repeatedly shown that money paid into their own hands serves only to make them more troublesome, get drunk and lay about the streets, and ultimately die in the Hospital (italics mine).

Apparently, on the very next day, 24 April 1789 a public notice is issued empowering the Town Major with the authority 'to apprehend and confine in Fort' the vagrant seamen 'on account of many *irregularities* which are daily committed in the Fort of Calcutta by vagrant seamen and other low European who appear to be without any honest or industrious means of subsistence.' The fact that the notice is issued overnight does not however mean it had solely been conceived as a reaction to a single piece of Secretarial letter expressing concern for the 'vagrant'; rather it has to be understood that the perception of the 'vagrant' as a potential threat to the social order had already been in the air. Of further note, the phrase 'irregularities' (retrieved above) that appears in the very first line of the notice has been in the original piece of document stricken off and replaced with 'disorders' on the top of it. With the post-edited piece now reading: 'Public notice is hereby given that on account of many disorders which are daily committed...!', it is understandable that 'disorders' actually stands for rowdiness or 'lack of orderliness'; albeit one cannot ignore, if and when juxtaposed with the reference to the 'hospital' in the preceding letter, an obvious undertone towards pathologization of vagrancy.

Additionally, as a precautionary measure, the notice further stresses:

With a view to the good of the police of this Town, and to prevent as much as possible in future many Riots and Disorders which might arise as heretofore from irregularities

of sailors belonging to the ships importing into this River, and from vagrant Europeans who stay in the Country without any License or permission whatever, is pleased to resolve that all Commanders of ships either from Europe or any port in India or from China shall on their arrival at this port deliver at the Police office a list of European sailors in their respective ships and the Countries of which they are subjects or they shall not be permitted to land their goods.

This seems to be some sort of an immigration record, a precursor to the contemporary visa protocol, being put in place, surprisingly, much before the birth of the nation-state. In order for the eighteenth century territorial control across the vastly un-unified 'Indian' sub-continent to emerge as a monopolistic industrial-capitalist economy in the nineteenth century, it would cost the British producing: 'detailed and encyclopedic histories, surveys, studies, and censuses, ...[on] the conquered land and people' (Prakash, 1999: 3). For the British, it was clear: more they were on the top of this empirically systematized body of knowledge of the colony, the more equipped they will be to exploit its resources and govern its people. Let us stop here for a moment and look back at Charles Ansel's print-image *Ceceders in Limbo* (1752). The structural change in disciplinary control of the outcast, as the image is indicative of, reflects in the colonial maneuvering of the vagrants in India within a moment of parallel historical development in the wake of urbanization and industrialization. The 'bio-political' turn amounts to an enhanced impetus on techniques of demographic control, for the subject's body now becomes 'a site where regimes of discourse and power inscribe themselves, a nodal point or nexus for relations of juridical and productive power' (Butler, 1989: 601).

Thus, the nineteenth century modality of restricting the vagabond, far from corporal punishment, reflects in the form of mobility in the urban space been subjected to strict surveillance and all instances of immigration and emigration procedurally recorded. On 21 October, 1858 the Secretary to the Governor of Bengal in his letter to the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department writes:

The Lieutt. Governor has instructed the Commissioner of Police in Calcutta to obtain every information regarding the men on their arrival at this port [Calcutta], and to watch their movements reporting any thing remarkable or suspicious which may come to his knowledge.

And, on the flipside, the Consul and British agent at Jedda, on having to deport to Calcutta eighty five destitute Indians who otherwise would 'almost inevitably perish[ed] of want', requests the Secretary to Government, Calcutta, in a letter dated 11 July, 1861:

to place some check on the emigration from India of those who have no money, such for instance that they should prove that they have sufficient money to enable them to return to their own country.

Beneath the surface of checking itinerancy, the larger consistencies of the protocol seem to function as a springboard for the idea of cultural nationalism. In determining who is an insider and who outsider, in other words, who belongs to where, the immigration protocol percolates a cartographic imagination of a hierarchizable social space, and by extension, 'India'²⁴. The Google Ngram image, if we recall it from the 'Introduction', had showed us the tip of the iceberg. It now reveals with clarity as to why the frequency of recurrence of the phrase 'vagabond' starts to suffer a steep decline following the era of cultural nationalism.

This imagined territorialization, in particular for the port cities including Calcutta, fast becoming diasporic, and therefore, socially stratified, would involve a procedural cleansing, a systemic disposal of those who were unwanted based on a principle of spatial belongingness and execution of rights and (in)admissibility to the city²⁵. Sanjay Nigam (1990a; 1990b) has stressed the extent to which the *Criminal*

²⁴ For details on cartographic imagination of India, see Ramaswamy (2010) and Bandyopadhyay (2006) among others. While Ramaswamy genealogizes graphic representation of 'India' in terms of an essentially feminized divine 'bodyscape' and the cultural politics embedded therein, Bandyopadhyay contests the purported claim that this cartographic imagination is 'modern'.

²⁵ Chattopadhyay (2000), in context of colonial Calcutta, and Mitter (1986), more broadly in

Tribes Act 1871 in British India criminalized socially 'backward' and itinerant communities that were labelled 'inherently criminal' in discourses of what he (1990a) calls the 'colonial stereotype'. Mayaram (2003: 13-35) points to the fervent obsession of the colonial state with 'scientifically' establishing a correlation between nomadism and criminality. Inasmuch as the nineteenth century French psychiatric system, as Hacking (1998) demonstrates, scientized *dromomania*, Indian legislature under the Raj had foisted its paranoia toward the vagabond under an overtly medico-scientific rhetoric that renders 'nomadic tribes' criminal, first and foremost, because of 'genetic traits'. Invocation of Medicine in questions of Law, and in this case, making a case for criminalizing peripatetic lifestyle, is symptomatic of the nineteenth century 'clinical gaze' wherein epistemic structures bolstered by discursive regime of scientization appear unquestionably *true*. Radhakrishna (2008), however, argues that in enforcing the 'hereditary criminals' to take to rehabilitative sedentariness, the British government intended to (ab)use them as cheap labourers²⁶. The political intent of the systemic restriction of itinerant mobility – as demonstrated by Singha (2000, 2008) – was to acquire a desired outcome: the disciplinary reorientation of (potential) 'criminals' from the domain of what Foucault (1986) calls 'heterotopic spaces' to that of *enumerated* space, such that it optimizes surveilability on the one hand and reinforces the social hierarchy on the other.

Sumanta Banerjee (2009: 13, 16), in drawing our attention to the parallel between the *Criminal Tribes Act 1871* and the *Habitual Criminal Act 1869*, points to how theories of genetic disposition to committing crimes based on physiognomy owe

context of the port cities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, examine how the architectural planning was symbolic of colonial power relations and catering to the interest of governmentality.

²⁶ For a visceral account of the conditions prevailing in the 18th-19th C jails in Calcutta including the labor conditions therein, see Banerjee (2009: 546-604).

their origin to the Eurocentric positivist school of criminology set out to criminalize the gypsies among others. In his rich archival research on the evolution of crime scene in Calcutta, Banerjee (2009) goes on to argue that the rise in criminal activities particularly in nineteenth century Calcutta was because of two reasons that has got to do with industrialization of the port-city: first, availability of 'modern' techniques and devices that made committing crime easier; and second, outburst of discontent among the city's underclass, increasingly feeling powerless and disenfranchised within the imperialist hegemonic set-up. The escalating number of crimes in nineteenth century Calcutta, however, went hand in hand with scientization of criminology, and these together made the peripatetic communities more vulnerable in the eyes of law.

When carefully examined, the classificatory practice of segregating the 'vagrant' in the 18-19th century reveals that the vagrants were identified from those that are the 'inherent criminal'. That been said, one must not lose sight of the fact that apart from the 'criminal tribes', or pilgrims in penury, a large number of 'vagrants' in colonial Calcutta were low-profile Europeans 'dissipated in promiscuous whoring and reckless drinking' (Banerjee, 1998: 68)²⁷. Banerjee (1998: 37-50) in his study of the attitudes and policies of the British administration towards prostitution in 18-19th century India points to the irony in the subordinates totally embarrassing the upper-rank British officials in issues of moral conduct, a sphere where the latter aspired to project themselves as exemplars among the 'natives'. Banerjee (1998: 52) emphasizes:

²⁷ From the experience of having worked at the National Archives, New Delhi, India, I find that a significant number of the alleged 'vagrants' in 18-19th century are the low-profile Europeans, and there are evidences of rehabilitations set up *exclusively* for Europeans, needless to say, with Indian tax payers' money. The Friend-In-Need Society is one such rehab centre established in Madras as early as 1812. A letter (1859) from the Chief Secretary to the Government, Fort Saint George, explaining the need to raise their budgetary allocation, clearly mentions: '... [I]ts (the Society's) object being the relief of indigent Europeans and persons of European descent, irrespective of religious or any other distinctions' (italics mine).

Unlike the 'sahibs' of the 18th-19th century period, the white soldiers and sailors who arrived in India at that time were mostly drawn from lower-middle- and working-class homes...who were thought to lack the intellectual and moral resources required for continence.

What seems prominent is that the idea of the 'vagrant' in this case functions as a handmaiden to the repertoire of negotiating internal differences within the British camp itself²⁸. Now, the question is: had the idea of the 'vagrant' always been shrouded with suspicion right across the colonial times, why do I chisel the 1943 Bengal Vagrancy Act? How does it then, if at all, stand out from its precursors? First, we have to remember here that the earlier legislations, unlike the 1943 Bengal Vagrancy Act, were technically not *Vagrancy Acts* in the sense that those did not consider wandering per se as a crime; only that they alleged the 'vagrants' culpable of or more prone to committing 'criminal activities'. Second, the earlier legislations, though had a classist undercurrent, quintessentially reflected a colonialist-imperialist tension, by which I mean that the stake in implementing such legislatures was directly linked with colonialist ideologies. I argue that the 1943 Bengal Vagrancy Act, on the other hand, was primarily meant to cater to the interest of the Indian bourgeoisie. I will demonstrate in the next section, and more elaborately in my next study, how the Act takes up the negotiatory function of fumigating the city from all profanities and philistinism, clear the city of the hungry people, otherwise a constant reminder to the Famine, while the bourgeoisie endorses the transition from 'geographic space... to urban space proper' (Barthes, 1997: 159).

²⁸ Banerjee (1998: 52) retrieves a touchy passage from MacMullen's (1846: 141) autobiographical narrative as a testament to this phenomenon: '[T]he British soldier is a neglected man. He is looked on in every country as being a part of inferior species; as the paria of the body politic; and thought to be almost incapable of moral or social improvement. His own officers despise him, and the public at large despise him. Surely then, when he finds himself treated with universal contempt, it cannot be a matter of surprise that he loses all self-respect, and becomes the reckless and degraded being that he is...!'

The colonizers had barricaded themselves from the colonized, the West from the non-West, through deictic categories 'we' and 'they' (Said, 1984, 1993, 2006; Guha 1983). The idea of village communes, polytheistic spirituality, blending of agriculture with handicrafts of 'they' was far from the Eurocentric industrialized concept of 'modernity'. Hence 'they' were 'inferior', 'primitive' and 'savage'. 'Primitivity', is diachronically transient across colonies; yet for the colonizers all-that-Europe-is-not is 'primitive'. As Said (2006: 54) incisively puts it:

[A] group of people living on few acres of land will set up boundaries between their land and their immediate surroundings and the territory beyond, which they called "the land of barbarians". In other words, the universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is 'ours' and an unfamiliar beyond 'ours' which is 'theirs' is a way of making geographical distinctions that can be entirely arbitrary.

Now, Chatterjee (1997b) has argued how the emerging nationalist discourse of the late nineteenth century led to the formation of an 'inner domain' insulated from the overwhelmingly racist 'outer domain' still coping with the changing face of colonial 'modernity'. The elites who always preceded the understanding of nationalist politics, and undisputedly accepted the colonizers to be ushering all 'progressive' doctrines, needed a site at which this severe 'castration anxiety' could be negotiated with. In a desperate attempt to buttress the disempowerment they virtually turned internal colonizers and shored up as the 'you', the intermediary collaborators in between 'we' and 'they'. Inasmuch as one needs the Other to assert one's self-identity, 'you' casted its identity against 'they' in the same way 'we' did upon 'you'.

It is the symbolic projection of this self-image, I argue, that forges link with the *1943 Vagrancy Act* in clinically sanitizing Calcutta, a port-town-turned-city from the doubly subaltern: the 'unpolished', 'uncultured' rural folks. The initiation of a geo-political territory into a 'city' is invariably accompanied by a sharp 'functional segregation' that splits the urban geography into the more 'developed' politico-industrial urban

centers of power and concentration of the lurking underclass (Hobsbawm, 2007: 261-78). No sooner had the East India Company of the eighteenth century graduated from a monopolistic trade-economy to a centralized governmental power in the nineteenth century, then Calcutta suffered a similar fate. Despite the 'segregation', it is incumbent upon the vanguards of politico-administrative power to project the 'city' as a *de-ontologized* unified entity by dint of 'strategic' intervention: by territorial-mapping, say for example, the city-map, public transit and so on (De Certeau, 1988a: 91-110). The underclass 'city-walker', ever epitomized by the figure of the indefatigable *flaneur* or the *dandy*, in contrast to the 'tourist', is threatening precisely because of this: s/he represents a bottom-up view of the 'city' from the location of the 'segregated', which transgressively, or 'tactically' in Certeau's parlance, tears the seam off the unified perception of the 'city'. The 1943 Vagrancy Act saw the rural 'immigrants' as a 'blemish' to be got rid of from the city; lest the 'profane' blew apart the imaginative geography upon which the discursive hegemony of the *we-you-they* triangularity would function.

The Vagabond as The Penumbra Tourist

Now that I emphasized the 'rupture' between the admired 'wanderer' and the despised 'vagabond', the next task is to determine what made the 'rupture' possible. Certainly, with the rise of Calcutta from an ordinary port town to an urbanized commercial city, nineteenth century Bengal witnessed in the emerging *bhadralok* (gentry) class the future patrons of tourism. However, my intention is not to say that the 'modern' Bengalees started to travel after the colonial exposure, but when I say 'tourism', as opposed to travel, I hint at an inculcated mentality towards traveling that would for the first time render possible the cultural polarity between the 'good traveler' and the 'bad traveler', a genre of traveling to be consented to and another to be refuted. What I mean by

tourism is an industry – 'predominantly capitalistically organised' to maximize the 'political economy of the social construction of 'reality' and social construction of place' (Britton, 1991: 475) – whereby all possible practices of itinerancy is increasingly rendered marketable through commercial standardization, and any kind of mobility outside the periphery of which is considered 'unproductive'. In 1865 Thomas Cook, banking on his experience of having organized a number of railway excursions in the 1840s and personally guided some Continental Tours in the 1850s, opens a shop in Fleet Street, London. This officialized Cook's professionalization as a travel agent, one that would remain unrivaled in the (guided) tourism industry for decades to follow. In the same year Cook organizes and leads the first round-the-world tour (1872-73), Maharaja Jagatjit Singh (1872-1949) would be born in India. The reason I dramatize Singh's birth is that he would soon be Cook's client, and possibly the first Indian to be so, according to the sources I consulted. George Routledge and Co. (now Routledge) publishes Singh's travelogue in 1895, which means Singh got in touch with Cook within a little more than twenty years after his birth and that of the world's first travel agency²⁹. Of course, Singh was no ordinary man (for he was a *Rajah*); he was not a Bengali either. Yet, I would like to underline this nexus as a model for emergent 'structure of feeling' towards traveling.

MacCannell (1976) sees tourism as grappling with the 'authentic other' – an 'imagined' authenticity, of course exoticized in the Orientalist gaze, that has disappeared from the post-industrial 'disenchanted' world, more appropriately from the increasing mundaneness of one's everyday life. Graburn (1983) argues that tourism is a practice of liminality, as if a temporary escape from the here-and-now till its restoration, what in a

²⁹ For a cursory glance on the landmark dates/events in the history of Thomas Cook, see their website < <http://www.thomascookgroup.com/history>>; last visited on 14 November 2012. Singh (1895: 2) acknowledges that his trip in 1893 had been arranged by Thomas Cook.

Deleuzian perception, could be seen as that phase between deterritorialization and reterritorialization³⁰. Nuemann (1988: 22) in saying: 'Tourism is a metaphor of our *struggle* to make sense of our self [sic.] and the world within a highly *differentiated* culture', already assumes an oppositional relation between the tourist and the toured. Be it the sixteenth century Renaissance 'discoverer', or the nineteenth century anthropologist, or even the colonial subject 'writing back' to the empire, tourism indeed is the strive to self-assert one's Self over the Other. More so for the racialized colonial subject because it involved a second-order differentiation: 'you' first had to differentiate themselves as 'modern-progressive' from 'they', then from 'we' in order to re-acquire *his* lost dignity³¹, the former being the premise for the latter.

Having reached England, Trailakynath Mukharji (1889: 27) writes:

At one o'clock in the afternoon I stood on the soil of England. My heart palpitated violently under different emotions. I was now in that great England of which I had been reading from my childhood, and among the great English people with whom Providence has so closely united us³².

Mukharji is not alone in the league; it seems an oft-used trope in the travel-narratives of maverick Bengali literary figures to invoke 'providence' while talking about the India-England linkage. 'Indians must come to England above all countries,' stresses

³⁰ This explains the idea behind 'excursion', a certain kind of touring-habit, being known as excursion. The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites 'excursion' to have meant 'deviation from a definite path or course', 'deviation from custom, rule, or property' in its 17-18th century usages.

³¹ I deliberately use 'his dignity' keeping in mind the essentially gendered historiography of colonial politics, resilience of the patriarchy within the schema of which is always glorified at the cost of domestication of the woman(hood). For detailed discussion on the women's question in Indian nationalist politics, see Sarkar (2001: 23-52), Sangari et al. (1989) and Chatterjee (1997b: 116-57).

³² Mukharji wrote his travelogue in English. Assuming that most of his target readers would actually be Bengalis, I am curious about the politics of his choice of writing and publishing in English, that too from Calcutta; and to what extent it bears testimony to a colonial mentality.

Annadashankar Ray (1973[1937]: 142), 'and Indians among all (nationalities) need to come to England. *India and England are characteristically antipodes!* India lacks what England possesses and vice versa. *This is the reason why among all countries these two were put in touch.* ' It is as though, not the political economy of myriad of complex colonial relations, but providence alone had linked two antipodes! These narratives were actually micro-patterns within a larger mosaic of a grand-narrative that must justify the coalition between 'we' and 'you' as a 'naturalized' phenomenon such that the 'castrated' colonial subject now may be able to seek redemption at the cost of further *other-ing* the 'they'. The colonial exposure during the nineteenth century engendered in the 'enlightened' Indians what Kosambi (1962) calls a 'creative introspection': a desire to first tally with the epistemological legacy set forth by the West and then determine on the basis of it what was fit for (not) being pursued or coveted. This fostered a gate-keeping attitude, an inhibitory mindset based on an exclusionary principle entirely determined by the extent of colonial exposure or the lack thereof. For the nineteenth century English-educated elitist Bengalees – envisaged by Macaulay as 'a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect'³³ – leisure-travel, hitherto mostly undertaken either for pilgrimage or 'going for a change' following health issues, would no longer mean simply spending one's leisure but would be intrinsically associated with pedagogical concerns.

With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 more Indians would set sail to Europe than ever before, albeit the Indians reportedly traveled to Europe since the seventeenth century. While travel narratives were increasingly recorded by these Indians at least since the mid-eighteenth century, those were generically not quite the

³³ Cited from *Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education, 1835*.

same as the 'travelogue' by the European standards³⁴. As of the Bengali context, Mukhopadhyay (2002) links the rise of travelogues as a genre with the high noon of Bengali nationalism. It is the nationalist self-assertion that propelled the late nineteenth century colonial subject to fashion himself as 'modern', showcasing cultural compatriotism with the colonizer, his tastes and customs. Mukhopadhyay (2002: 295, 298) maintains:

Similarly, It was the experience of a specific kind of travel – the word 'experience' understood here not in its usual subjective, existential connotation but rather in the wider sense of historically conditioned, epochal 'structure of feeling' – that gave rise to the genre called 'travelogue' It is remarkable that at least three illustrious Bengalis – Dwarkanath Tagore, Rammohan Roy and Michael Madhusudan Dutt – had been to Europe before the 1870s. Yet, none of them wrote a travelogue. Thus, travel per se was not the cause of the rise of travelogue as a genre in Bengali. What was instrumental in its rise was something else: the development of vernacular prose and the four basic genres that help express the modern self: novel, biography, autobiography, and diary. We can postulate that the rise of the modern travelogue in Bengali was part and parcel of the project of fashioning a 'modern' Bengali self.

Sen (2005), Mukhopadhyay (2002) and Chatterjee (1998) among others have clearly demonstrated how the nineteenth century Bengali travelogues generically differ in

³⁴ When I say 'travelogue', I intend its colonial context to be taken into account. The word 'travelogue' comes from the words 'travel' and 'logue' (<logos); and is intrinsically tied to the idea of colonial expansion. Bassnett (1993: 92-114) demonstrates how in the colonial context the newly explored lands in the European travelogues has been termed 'virgin', figuratively indicating passivity and barrenness that needs to be harnessed by penetrating and fertilizing them. In narrativizing how other cultures function as sign-systems, the 'travel writers constantly position themselves in relation to their point of origin in a culture and the context they are describing'; and the *logocentricism* involved therein reflects 'how prejudices, stereotypes and negative perceptions of other cultures can be handed down through generations' (99). As a genre been validated and popularized by colonial expansion, 'travelogue' thus always reinscribes the traveler's ethnic affiliation. This was not explicit in the 'pre-modern' Indian travel narratives. Take for example the genre of the *Safarnama* of Arabic-Persian origin, or the genre of quasi-fictitious *Samdesa Kavya* in the Sanskrit tradition; these are merely descriptivist narratives. This is however not to say that the latter were 'objective' or 'unprejudiced'; but my point is to emphasize the difference in degree of explicitness in self-identity-building rhetoric in the 'travelogue' and that in the 'pre-modern' Indian genres of travel narratives.

terms of mode of addressal, tonality of self-expression etc. with their 'pre-modern' counterparts. What all agree with is the fact that while the eighteenth century travelogues had been exploratory-curious in nature, the ones in the nineteenth century and beyond are all educative. They all underline that the over-arching experiential feeling that encompasses the eighteenth century travelogues is one of awe and wonder, arisen out of encountering anything Western: right from scientific-technological 'development', grand cultural artifacts to even know-hows of a mere navigational compass³⁵. Sen (2005: 39) contends:

Unlike that of our later travelers, this consciousness was in no way attended with any sense of diminution or particular unease. If they (the Westerners) had right to wonder, so had their Other.

The gradual withering away of this awe is explained unanimously by the trio in terms of the English-educated colonial elite's familiarity with (the idea of) Europe. 'England', for the nineteenth century travelers, Mukhopadhyay (2002: 298) posits, 'was "always there"'. Our travelers were already "insiders" of the West'. For that matter, the eighteenth century travelers, at least those whose travelogues are on records, were all educated; in fact over-educated to the degree that some traveled as personal tutors to the British expats³⁶.

³⁵ The euphoric tone in which Mirza Shaikh Ictisam al-Din (an 18th century traveler) narrates about his 'discovering' of how a compass works, given he knew a fair deal about the Indian navigational technologies, may indeed sound naïve today (Sen, 2005: 30; Chatterjee, 1998: 1334).

³⁶ Of six such travelers who had travel narratives published to their credit by the end of the 18th century, Mirza Shaikh Ictisam al-Din (also spelled as Mirza Shaikh Ihtisamuddin, 1730-1800) traveled to Europe during 1766-68 to lend his expertise on Persian diplomacy to Captain Archibald Swinton, an East-India Company employee-turned-European diplomat; Munshi Isma'il traveled to Europe during 1771-73 as a Persian language teacher to Claud Russell, the British diplomat; Mir Muhammad Husain ibn Abdul Azim Isfahani (d. 1790) during 1775-76 as a Persian language teacher to some Mr. Elliot; while Mirza Abu Talib Khan Isfahani (1752-1806) is known to have traveled to England during 1799-1802 in pursuit of knowledge. For a brief biography of the six travelers and the nature and contents of their 'travelogues', see Fisher (2007).

But it is the effect of Macaulean policy of colonial education 'implanting' the perception of Europe(an-ness) on the mental terrain of its recipients that constituted the main difference. As Chatterjee (1998: 1334) puts it:

The voyage acquires for him the moral significance of a rite of passage. Not everything he would see in England would necessarily meet with his approval; indeed, often he would be disappointed because the real England would sometimes fail to measure up to the conceptual image. But overall, he would have no doubt that what he was experiencing, and what he would need to convey to his countrymen back home, was a moral and civilisational essence, expressed in such virtues of the modern English people as the spirit of independence, self-respect and discipline, their love for art, literature and sport, and above all, their cultivation of knowledge.

The nineteenth century travelers' gaze towards Europe, and more generally speaking, towards the act of traveling in general, was already contrived by and within parameters of Western pedagogy. That been said, the onus now lay upon these 'travelers' to represent themselves fit for the social 'uplift' (and eventually for self-governance); and in doing so they deployed a carefully structured thematological narrative strategy: first, to confess about the 'lack' in Indian pedagogy, next, seek accreditation for having 'surmounted the lack', and then mount their nationalist self-assertion upon that credibility. Both Sen (2005) and Chatterjee (1998) note how these travelers shy away from or feel a sense of inherent inferiority in the 'Indian' systems of learning. The essence of this confessional thematic can be best captured in Trailokyanath Mukharji's (1889: 134, 135) observation:

The real inequality between Europeans and 'natives' rests not on the fact of the former filling a few high posts in the country... The European knows more of our mountains and rivers than we do: he knows more of the plants that grow around us, their names, their properties, even the size and shapes of their leaves; he knows more of what is interred in the bosom of our earth; he knows more about the capabilities of our land; in everything he knows more than we do of our own country. *Then he knows better how to use that knowledge for the benefit of men.* We do not know these things; hence we are 'natives'.

Now that the 'lack' has been 'diagnosed', how can it be 'repaired'? The legacy of the European Grand Tour had continued triumphantly in the eighteenth century through the sojourns of the propertied bourgeoisie class. DeBolla (2003) shows how the eighteenth century culture(s) of visuality had given rise to the practice of apprenticeship of one's ocular perception – what he calls 'the education of the eye' – meant to reinvigorate one's assertion to aristocratic inheritance of taste, to acquire an appreciation for the 'high' culture. Diametrically opposite to what the Romantics meant by 'wanderlust', though some of them in reality were known to have been undertaking travels of the kind I am talking about, the idea of travel seemed to be all about how a bunch of elites is seen to have seen canonical sites rather than secularized sights³⁷. By the nineteenth century, the genre of travelogues as a whole by the Bengalees³⁸, needless to say, educated upper-class Hindu elite males, reveal to have completely internalized the trope of itinerarized travel(ing), one that comes with pre-conceived tailor-made maps: geographical in terms of what is worth 'seeing', but more importantly pedagogical in terms of how and to what extent it would contribute to the traveler's spectatorial credibility, aesthetic connoisseurship, elevated personhood and so on because all of these virtually counted towards the possibility of the disempowered subject's upward mobility in the 'we-you-they' tripartite scale.

This explains the dominant recurrence of the motifs of the 'eye' and vision in the contemporary (Indian) travelogues. Instead of merely narrativizing travel expeditions, the travelogues were as though an emblem of achieving visual literacy, acquired only by dint of certain 'ways of seeing'. For Ramakrishna (1912: 1) '[t]o visit England was the

³⁷ I thank Ian McLachlan to have alerted me to the playfulness in the pair of words: site and sight. And, 'secular', the way I use here, has got no religious connotation; but suggests that unevaluated, yet-to-be-appreciated state of the 'sight' which when canonized become a 'site'.

³⁸ I am abstaining from saying 'Bangla travelogues because some wrote in English.

dream of my (his) life'. He says to have 'witnessed' speeches in the (British) Parliament. Likewise, Jagatjit Singh's 'great ambition to travel in Western countries' is finally satiated with his arrival in Europe, when he explains: 'I have *seen* something of the world outside India' (1893: iii). Mukharji (1889: 330) takes pride in assuming that he '*saw* things which no Indian remaining in his own country can hope *to see*, ...in the atmosphere of England which opens the *eyes* and widens the mind'. The incipit of 'babu' Bholanauth Chunder's narrative is an epigraph from Horace Walpole: 'If any man would keep a faithful account of what he *had seen* and heard himself, it must, in whatever hands prove an interesting thing' (1869 [I]: 1). On the same note, a British expat serving as an editor and professor in then-Madras (now Chennai), J. Talboys Wheeler introduces his travelogue as: 'the genuine *bona fide* work...(that) *looked* upon every scene with Hindoo *eyes*, and indulged in trains of thought and association which only find expression in Native society, and are wholly foreign to European ideas' (Chunder, 1869: xii). It is not without a reason that the idea of 'sight-seeing' comes as a rider to mind the moment we say 'tourism'. Marleau-Ponty (2007: 354, 367) uses the conduit of the ocular self while problematizing the foundations of Cartesian subjecthood:

Immersed in the visible by his body, itself visible, the seer does not appropriate what he sees; he merely approaches it by means of the gaze, he opens onto the world I do not see it according to its exterior envelope; I live it from the inside; I am immersed in it.

Inasmuch as when touching something, one touches and is being touched simultaneously; during see-ing (which is a *process* rather than a *state*) one sees and perceives her/himself as having seen at the same time. Likewise, the 'tourist' sees and knows about what he sees on the one hand; but on the other he now perceives himself as having known, and therefore feel elevated. It is this ocular self of the 'tourist' – arisen exponentially out of seeing what he sees, seeing been seen, seeing *his* 'seeing' being validated by the colonizer's pan-optic gaze – that reinforces the hierarchical difference

between the seer and the seen, the spectator and the spectacle.

The spectator, for Ranciere (2010), is a paradoxical figure. He effeminizes the spectator for she is ignorant, docile and passive; yet no spectacle is complete without it been viewed. The 'ignorant' spectator does not have the 'authentic' knowledge to interpret the spectacle, all she does is 'to venture into the forest of things and signs, to say what they have seen and what they think of what they have seen, to verify it and have it verified' (2010: 12). The politics of the travelers' *scopophilic* desire has to be understood in the broader context of the nineteenth century thrust in Realist modes of representations including photography. While reformers 'back home' were making a case for a radical revision of the 'faulty' systems of existing 'Indian' curriculum to be more 'modern' and empirical at par with the European standards³⁹, these travelers were

³⁹ The nineteenth century debate on educational reforms was contested by the Orientalists, who were in favor of the 'traditional' pedagogy; and the Anglicists, who were in favor of an entirely English system focused on the Natural sciences, based on empiricism. For the latter group, 'scientific knowledge', viewed as integral to western culture, was the most important modernizing force and the reason behind the western civilizational 'progress'. Rammohun Roy's famous letter (dated 11 December, 1823) on education addressed to Lord Amherst captures the whole scenario: 'This seminary [of allocation government resources in spreading of indigenous modes of learning] (similar in character to those which existed in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon) can only be expected to load the minds of youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practical use to the possessors or to society. ...[N]o essential benefit can be derived by the student of *Mimansa*...[or] by pronouncing certain passages of the *Vedanta*...The student of the *Naya Shastra* cannot be said to have improved his mind...In the same manner [as the pre-Baconian system] the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, with other useful sciences...' (Roy, 1885: 471, 472, 473; italics mine). Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, another notable proponent of 'modern' education in Bengal, while substantiating his view on the reform writes this passage in the 'notes' of the Sanskrit College (12 April, 1852): 'True it is that that the most part of the Hindu system of Philosophy do not tally with the advanced ideas of modern times, yet it is undeniable that to a good Sanskrit scholar their knowledge is absolutely required by the time that the students come to the Darsana or Philosophy class their acquirements in English will enable them to study the modern Philosophy of Europe. Thus they shall have mpler opportunity of comparing the system of Philosophy of their own, with the new Philosophy of Western World. Young men thus educated will be better able to expose the errors of ancient Hindu Philosophy

increasingly fashioning themselves after the classic figure of the European Grand Tourist, whose tours supplemented the Lockean *tabula rasa* thesis. One's 'eye', in this scheme, is not only the instrument to ascend to the pinnacle of empirical knowledge but also instrumental in determining the 'I', because what one sees and how s/he sees determine the class and rank of its possessor. For the ideal nineteenth century traveler, tourism therefore is as though, again to borrow Chatterjee's (1998: 1334) phrase, that 'rite of passage' from *being* 'ignorant' to *becoming* 'emancipated'. It is this genre of travel that the idea of vagabondage would be juxtaposed with. The vagabondage, what I emphasized, is but a nineteenth century counter-construct against the mirror of tourism.

The 'vagabond' transgresses the hierarchical abyss between the 'subject' and 'object' of knowledge. In order for there to be a transgression, there has to be a boundary in the first place. The socially constructed nature of his gaze renders the tourist to perform as a functionary to create this boundary. 'Problems are and will be there all the times, people are born to think and work on those. Why should an artist snatch their work? Why should an artist carry the burden?', writes Ray (1973: 45), evidently conscious of his image of an elitist pioneering literary practitioner. He distinguishes between the 'people' and the 'artist' – each with separate assignments and no overlaps, in a fashion reminiscent of Theophile Gautier's ideals – based on an 'imagined' notion of (self-)enculturation. This reflection of Ray's can actually be read as a testimony to how the 'dominant aesthetics' of nineteenth century colonial modernity, to borrow Bourdieu's (1984) evocative phrases, fostered 'class fractions', a legacy I see still overwhelms the discursive oeuvre of contemporary Bengalee

than if they were to derive their knowledge of Philosophy from European sources. One of the principle reasons why I have ventured to suggest the study of all the prevalent systems of Philosophy in India that the student will clearly see that the propounder of different systems have attacked each other and pointed out each other's errors and fallacies. Thus he will be able to judge for himself his knowledge of European Philosophy shall be to him an invaluable guide to the understanding of the merits of the different systems' (cited in Bandyopadhyay, 2001: 23).

intellectuals when Partha Chatterjee (1997: 8) writes: 'What thrives as mainstream public theatre in West Bengal or Bangladesh today is modern urban theatre, national and clearly distinguishable from "folk theatre".' I do not intend to say that Chatterjee is mistaken; but all I want to point to is his legacy of inheritance.

Mukharji's (1889: 324) experiences have been belittling and embarrassing when he encountered the grandeur of the British museums. His mind was overwhelmed by 'a feeling of humiliation and sorrow' because he found Indians were 'ranked among *barbarous tribes* with their cannibalism, human-sacrifice, tattooing and all sorts of cruel and curious customs that denote a *savage* life' (italics mine). The rhetoric of the 'folk/tribe/savage/barbarity' is indeed a nineteenth century 'invention' for the interest of politico-administrative taxonomy. The tourists' affinity towards it in particular bears an imprint of a colonial legacy – that of having internalized the imperialist tropes so frequently used in the novels, by Conrad, Foster and suchlike – which groomed and nurtured the (literary) tastes of this *bhadralok* (gentry) class. While on the one hand the '...(in Conrad's novels) Western man has constructed the *savage* as the other to impose his own *savagery* on him' (Viswanathan, 1988: 257), the native elites on the other hand were keen on appropriating this trope to disenfranchise their colonially un(der)exposed counterparts.

Having traveled extensively across India, including its more remote parts, Bholanauth Chunder, as his Anglicized surname indicates, another English-educated 'babu', observes:

The *Santhal* is a curious specimen of the human species – an interesting *subject for the ethnologist*. He belongs to the Tamulian family of mankind – a race existing from *prehistoric*, perhaps antediluvian, ages, and the progenitors of which were the ancients of *our ancient Aryans*. He is the descendant of a cognate branch of those who are styled in the oldest hymns of the Rig-Veda, a work forty centuries old, under the

denomination of *Dasyas* – afterwards the *Asuras* of the Poorans (Chunder, 1869 [II]: 182).

Earlier, from Chunder's (1869 [I]: 1) epigraph we have known that keeping empirical travel accounts can produce 'an interesting thing'. Knowledge is never innocent or neutral, but always meant to cater to the interests of those who produce it. Chunder's account is reflective of the class that he envisages would find his account 'interesting'. This piece of his observation is not only inconclusive, but also de-historicized. It is possibly more a commentary on the 'location' the observer sees things from, rather than on what he sees. Chunder shares allegiance with the Aryans, who came to India from as far as the Caspian Sea, while for him the *Santhal*, who had been India's 'original' inhabitants, is ironically the 'outsider'. No wonder he finds the *Santhal* 'prehistoric', for his version of 'history' understandably begins with Aryanization. He equates the *Santhal* with *Dasyas* (slaves) and *Asuras* (demons) – an erroneous Brahmic-Aryan trope that would recur throughout late eighteenth-nineteenth century historical literature – ridiculously drawing on the *Rig-Veda* and the *Puranas*.

Conversely, in the *Rig-Veda* the *Asuras* are not sub-ordinate to the pantheon of gods⁴⁰; and it is anachronistic for the concept of the *Dasya* to have crystallized before the introduction of the *Varna*-system. It is in the *Puranas* though that the *Asuras* are invoked as diametrically opposite to the gods, but that again *Puranas* were a much later compositions in which demonization of the '*Asura*' is a part and parcel of a larger political agenda of Aryanization of 'India'⁴¹.

⁴⁰ *Mitra* and *Varuna* have been classified as *Asuras* in an earlier hymn in the *Rigveda* (5.63.3), while as *Devas* (gods) in a later hymn (7.60.12). This is, however, not paradoxical; but indicative of the overlap between the two groups. Furthermore, the *Rigveda* contains 46 among 1028 hymns in total dedicated to *Varuna*, which is a significant figure compared to that dedicated to other deities.

⁴¹ The Aryanization 'myth' was initially revived in India by the 18th century (German)

There is actually a paradox in Sen's (2005: 13) observation on the nineteenth century Bengali travelers as 'a community that at once saw itself as an inferior Other of Europe and strove to distance and differentiate from it'. In order to 'differentiate from it' they had to first demonstrate that they had acquired the repertoire to be able to 'differentiate from it'; and in order to demonstrate that they had acquired the repertoire they had to 'integrate with it' to a certain degree. Differentiation arises from comparison, and comparison is based on difference-in-identity. In order for an apple to be differentiable from an orange, first we have to acknowledge that both are homologous entities, fruits. Likewise, 'you' must attain comparability with 'we' prior to differentiation. Traveling practices are one of many domains 'you' sought to be like 'we', out of 'the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.' (Bhabha, 1994: 85) Thus the model of the Grand Tourist becomes the paradigm of traveling, whereby the 'tourist' ought to render himself to 'emancipation', then only his traveling may count as 'productive'. Unless the 'will to travel' comes from 'will to know', itinerancies without a 'rationale' are reduced to vagabondage.

Indologists; later taken up by the Hindu revivalists. The myth of the 'civilizing mission' associated with Aryanization is challenged by scholars like Thapar (2003) and Chattopadhyay (1984) among others. The usual logic of refutation is that the Dravidians already had urban settlements, therefore were more 'developed', prior to the advent of the Aryans who were still then pastoral migrants. This is true, albeit the very index of evaluating development in this argument is not entirely unproblematic. This strand of argumentation, however, does not value 'differences' and evidently has an Occidentalist supremacist side to it. The premise of, say for example, Chattopadhyay's (1984) argument is that atheism, secularism, scientificity, technology etc. – the cultural staple of 'modern' West – historically pre-exist in the non-West. That been said, the Aryan myth has been incisively deconstructed by Romila Thapar here: 'The word 'arya' has its own history. The Buddhist monk for example, in a later period, was frequently addressed as arya which was an honorific even though Buddhists did not by any means accept the teaching of the *Rigveda*. In the Ramayana, Ravana, who is depicted as a demon is addressed by his wife as *aryaputra*, literally the son of an arya. So it's a word that is used in multiple contexts. This is a tendency today to collate them and give it one meaning instead of looking at the context and recognizing that the word itself undergoes change historically' (in Jahanbegloo, 2008: 16).

Back in the nineteenth century with 'his wonderful familiarity with English ideas and turns of thought, which could only have been obtained by an extensive course of English reading' (1869 [I]: xi) Chunder traveled and produced what Wheeler testifies to be 'a survey of India with the *eyes* of a Hindoo' (1869 [I]: xii). While his 'survey', needless to say, had been valuable documents for the state, and he accredited as a 'traveler', only forty-eight years after the publication of Chunder's travelogue the state orders forfeiture of a man's entitlement to pension for he became a 'vagabond'. The former is the prototype of the 'good traveler' for he had a utilitarian rationale. After all, he was producing an interesting thing! The 'vagabond' is the anti-thesis of the 'traveler'. She is the 'non-emancipated spectator'; she does not care for 'emancipation' either. Think of the *flaneur* who travels and keeps staring kaleidoscopically at signposts, passing pedestrians, prostitutes, whatever that comes to sight; neither to produce a 'survey', nor for self-recognition as an aesthete; but as just token of refusal to Parisian high-modernity. The vagabond's 'will to travel' thus comes from a sense of *oikophobia*: rejection of the conventions she herself belongs to, rejection of her 'world' as it is. Her journey is a conduit for political resistance rather than one involving any functionality. Hers is an end-in-itself, unlike '(t)he new notion of the journey itself as an education, as a civilizing and cultivating process, implied its systematization as a curriculum' (Leed, 1991: 185). She decries the authoritarian foundations in the *ethnoscopic regime* of formalized traveling: the regimentation involved in stratification of the 'ethnos' based strictly on an empirico-visual register⁴². Does that mean she has to quit home? Renounce family? Bring down the tourism economy? Dispossess all entitlements? There are no definite answers to these. These are a set of *undecidables*, precisely because the vagabond never self-asserts her

⁴² I have coined 'ethnoscopic regime' taking (phonetic) cues from Appadurai's (1995: 27-47) notion of the 'ethnoscape' and Ranciere's (2010) notion of the 'mimetic/aesthetic regime'.

identity. Therefore, all travelers 'outside' of the pre-conceived map of 'normative' tourism – the rowdy European sailor sometime, and the famine-hit destitute at some other – are pinned down to the 'vagabond'.

Counter-Insurgency Centering The Vagabond: The Postcolonial Turn

The 1940s had possibly been the most turbulent era in India's history. The horrors of the World War still loomed large. Following the Lahore Resolution in March 1940 when the demand for an independent Muslim state was officially pitched in by the Muslim League, communal divide of India seemed inevitable. Determining the contours of the border was now just a matter of time. Gandhi's call for civil disobedience led to massive political unrest during the Quit India Movement launched in August 1942. With the other two major national political parties on the scene disapproving the Movement – the Communist Party prioritizing to oppose Nazism and the Muslim League safeguarding its 'separatist' demand suspicious of being out-powered by the Congress in the terrain of nationalist politics – the Congress Party's attempt to unleash an *unified* freedom struggle movement failed miserably. Mass arrests including that of almost all major Congress leaders followed; thus, the political fate of India was left jeopardized, adding to the chaos and confusion. Meanwhile, 1943 witnessed the Bengal famine and 1944 the Japanese invasion in the Indian North-East against the British.

The British had sown the seeds of communal distrust way back in 1905 in the form of adopting 'Divide and Rule' policy that separated West Bengal and the East Bengal (East Pakistan after 1947; Bangladesh 1971 onwards) apparently, as they explained, in order to facilitate administration, but implicitly to turn Hindus and Muslims against each other. Although Bengal reunited in 1911, the breach remained irreparable. The Muslim League was already formed in 1906. The distrust increasingly

thickened until the 1940s things when turned apocalyptic. When the British Cabinet Mission of 1946 discussed the prospects of transferring power on to the Indian leadership, the Muslim League stuck firmly to its demand until the blueprint for partition on the basis of religious demographics was sanctioned. Communal tension escalated, reaching its crux in the 1946 Bengal riot, which set tremors in the form of series of genocides across Noakhali (now in Bangladesh), Punjab, Bihar just within a few months. According to some estimates, about 100,000 people were turned homeless within 72 hours of the riot broke out in Calcutta on the morning of 16 August 1946 (Das, S., 2000: 281-306). Despite the Calcutta Corporation is known to have announced pecuniary incentives to (professional-)cremators as compensation for over-time, heaps of decomposing corpses piled across Calcutta. Indian independence came in 1947, though at a hefty cost of an estimated death toll of about a million in communal atrocities and about 12 million people been rendered 'homeless' in the process of relocating to the other side of the border (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006: 221-22).

Significantly, in the face of massive homelessness (which was the compelling issue of the 1940s) vagabondage lost its charge. As I already pointed out in regard to the 1943 Bengal Vagrancy Act, the British administrators made little distinction between the 'vagabond' and the 'refugee', to be precise, the migrants from the countryside in search of food. With the consecutive passage of similar acts – the Hyderabad Prevention of Beggary Act (1941), the Mysore Prevention of Beggary Act (1944), the Bombay Prevention of Beggary Act (1945), the Madras Prevention of Beggary Act (1945), the Cochin Vagrancy Act (1945), the Travancore prohibition of Begging Act (1945), the Bhopal Prevention of Beggary Act (1947), all incidentally brought in effect in the 40s – vagrancy was increasingly being reduced to beggary. The Bombay Prevention of Beggary Act, XXXIII of 1945 defines the 'beggar' as: 'A person without means of

subsistence and *wandering* about...'; the Mysore Prevention of Beggary Act, XXXIII of 1944 similarly lays down: 'Begging includes *wandering* from door to door, soliciting alms...' (cited in Sharma, 1998: 96). The British administrators did precisely what Hacking (1998: 69) had warned us against: against: collapsed vagrancy with homelessness. It is understandable that the homeless refugee in penury would wander about; but that does not make the 'vagabond' a beggar. Given the ages-long cultural ethos implicit in the concept of the 'vagabond', it has now to be rescued and sanctified from swarms of beggars-refugees, and restored to its former glory.

The 'residual' in the 'structure of feeling' towards vagabondage as a 'pre-modern' cultural practice of defiance re-surfaced, no wonder, in the late 1940s. But meanwhile, the Hindu-Muslim relation has turned discordant. The colonial administrators had mercilessly marginalized the vagabond to the point of complete erasure; it is from here that the vagabond would now be resurrected. No matter how desperately the bourgeoisie nationalist Indian strove to cope with the British in respect to the outer domain, the nationalist politics in the inner emphasized the need for a sanctimonious 'Indic' revivalism⁴³ (Chatterjee, 1997b). In 1948 Rahul Sankrityayan publishes his

⁴³ The 're'-words appear like leitmotifs in the nineteenth century Indian pedagogy, both in the Orientalist and the nationalist discourses alike. While on the one hand Marx (1953) writes: 'England has to fulfill a double mission in India: one destructive, the other *regenerating* the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and the laying the material foundations of Western society in Asia.', on the other hand, Vivekananda (1892: 342) feels: 'We must travel, we must visit foreign countries If we have to *rebuild* ourselves as a nation, then we must have unrestrained access to what other nations think' (italics mine). Gandhi (2010: 8) held that if Indians 'would but revert to their own glorious civilisation, either the English would adopt the latter and become Indianised or find their occupation in India gone' (italics mine). Examples can be multiplied. However, this idea of imagined 'revival', be it articulated from an Orientalist viewpoint like that of Marx or from a nationalist viewpoint like that of Gandhi, is derived from having internalized the Eurocentric historiographic model, in which the ancient stands for glory, the medieval as Dark Ages and the modern for Enlightenment. Bandyopadhyay (1999) problematizes this issue elaborately. Being acutely critical about the Indian Sanskritic-Vedic past, he argues that the revivalist propaganda was not only baseless but also an elitist-nationalist Hindu ploy to de-historicize and dismiss the glory of the Muslim era in order to project themselves as more

handbook for the nomads and vagabonds: *Ghumakkar Shastra*⁴⁴. A polyglot and polymath, Sankrityayan is himself known to be an ardent nationalist and inspiring vagabond who

within this almost-too-neat 70-year span,... lived many lives. He traveled indefatigably, wrote incessantly, changed his name thrice, and with it and beyond it, his ideological affiliations, and left behind him an enormous archive of writing that is rarely done full justice to in any one academic department (Joshi, 2009: 121).

Born in an orthodox peasant family in a little-known village of northern India, he became a *sadhu* when he was still a child, in his youth a brigadier of the *Arya Samaj* (a Hindu reformist organization aimed towards 'revival' of the country), converted to Buddhism when disillusioned, and eventually a socialist-Marxist later in his life⁴⁵. His travels are symbolic of his journeys from one school of thought to another; his restlessness is evinced in his inability to stick to any ideology, political or religious, for long.

His vagabondage too is a manifestation of rejection. Another piece of biographical information on him says:

Rahul had an insatiable urge for wandering in the most difficult and unapproachable terrains within the country and outside. He devoted decades of his chequered career to rambling and attributes all that he achieved in life to this wandermania... To Rahul [,] rambling is the greatest of all religions, a universal religion that has existed for ever and has inspired generations after generations of people who yearn to know [sic.] more and more (Datta, 2005: 1407).

‘The purpose of this book’, he explains in the preface, ‘is not to arouse the spirit of vagabondage, but to nurture the same in those it has already sprouted’ (2009: 3).

competent future administrators in the eyes of the British. For more discussions on the politics of this communal exclusion, see Chatterjee (1997b: 95-115), Chatterji, J. (1994) and Datta, Pradip K. (1999).

⁴⁴ All citations of it made here are my translation from its Bangla translation.

⁴⁵ For brief information on Sankrityayan's biography, see Joshi (2009).

Ghumakkar Shastra stands out to be a unique piece of work in the ambit of any Indian language both in terms of its generic composition and the content. It is a no-nonsense treatise on vagabondage, one that literally justifies a carefree disposition to the conventional parochial ethos including parental or spousal anxiety at the thought of their dear ones leaving home towards becoming a vagabond. Citing innumerable instances across history that includes Indian religious figures like the Buddha, Mahavir, Nanak, European Renaissance 'discoverers', the Mongolian travelers, Darwin and Marco Polo alike, he argues that the 'progress' of the world has always depended upon the vagabonds and therefore the libratory discourse of vagabondage integrates its practitioner with the world as a 'family'. He thus stresses on the notion of cultural integration, which is to how touristic identity always differentiates itself from the Other. 'Young men and women who have guts, who are venturesome and who are gifted with an indomitable spirit,' Sankrityayan (2009: 16, trans. in Datta, 2005: 1408) appeals invigoratingly, 'should never lose this unique opportunity. Gird up your loins, O potential rambles! The whole world fondly awaits you with open arms!'

The book is divided into sixteen chapters in total, each with a different sub-topic. Some among them are on the right age of embarking upon vagabondage, vagabondage among tribal culture, love, reflection on death, utility of documentation and so on. The fifteenth chapter on duties of young female vagabonds has been inserted in the second edition. Sankrityayan lays the foundation of his treatise in the first chapter. He begins with the nomenclature: Why is his a *Shastra*? The object of inquiry of the *Shastra*, he reminds, is what its composer deems to be of supreme importance for the benefit of human beings and the world at large. According to him, of all things vagabondage is of pinnacle importance for the world and its inhabitants. One needs to note here that *Shastra* (< √shas + tra = shastra) etymologically owes its origin to the root

compound 'shas' meaning '(to) govern' and the suffix 'tra' has allusion to 'relief/to relieve'. Thus, *Shastra* literally means: relief/to relieve from being governed, or governmentality. The *Shastra* is undisputedly an ancient genre featuring a treatise, a didactic discourse with allusions to the art of governing. The postulates of the *Shastra* are not necessarily of demonstrable wisdom but, because of having been repeated ritualistically over time, had become unquestionable. It is not as though there are punitive measures for violating or reward for abiding by the *Shastra*, but generally speaking, the *Shastra* represents the 'normative'. In this sense, the *Shastra* caters to the interest of governmentality. Given that vagabondage and the 'normative' are poles apart, it can in a sense be said that Sankrityayan's nomenclature invokes a neologism.

The difference in the literal and conventional referents for the *Shastra*, however, prefigure in the text as an allegory of Sankrityayan's own inner contradictions. The allusion to a sense of 'relief from governmentality' implicit in the nomenclature is irreconcilable with Sankrityayan's inclusion of Columbus and Vasco da Gama into the category 'vagabonds'. His 'order of things' for 'vagabond' tellingly includes among others this pair of travelers who are held in high esteem precisely for having effectively mapped the resources of their destinations, later to be governed by their funders-patrons. He writes:

Columbus and Vasco da Gama were both vagabonds. They opened up horizons before the Western countries. America then was barely inhabited. The Asians had forgotten the wonder of vagabondage, which is why they could not set up colony there. Australia had been lying empty a couple of centuries ago. The Chinese and the Indian cultures take pride in themselves, but it did not occur to their basic senses to go and thrust their flags there. China and India are burdened with a population of 40-50 hundred thousand while there is none in Australia. Asians can't enter Australia today, but it wasn't the case a couple of centuries ago. Why did India and China remain deprived from the vast

resources of Australia? The reason is that they had simply turned their backs to vagabondage, they had forgotten about it. (2009: 10)

There is apparently no harm in eulogizing the explorer duo vested with the interest of Renaissance 'discoveries', patronized by the Spanish and Portuguese monarchs respectively. While there is little doubt in the fact that they had 'opened up horizons before the Western countries', we should not lose sight of the fact that it was only at the cost of not-so-good consequences for the indigenous cultures. Yet Sankrityayan is evidently delighted at this 'achievement' of the 'Western countries' to the degree that he laments India and China's failure to have colonized the Americas and Australia. Known to have been a nationalist jailed for his anti-British propagandas, what follows therefore is that he is not opposed to the idea of colonizing itself as long as India is not colonized. He falls prey to the predictable *terra nullius* argument, which had paradoxically been the pro-imperialist argument of the British in favor of retaining their colony in India, purportedly an un-unified geo-political entity been conquered and ruled by different 'foreign' monarchs with different interests. He makes a case for vagabondage, a project his handbook is eventually dedicated to, by legitimizing colonization as its immediate pay off, which is alarming.

'Seven centuries have passed,' complains Sankrityayan, 'since then (the demise of Buddhism), and that *our country* had been stuck with this slavery and subjugation for seven centuries is not accidental' (13). Subjugation first in the hands of East India Company as traders and then the British as the administrators cumulatively account for about three centuries; then how come he calculates seven? Is that just a slip? Has he got his Maths wrong? Secondly, who is the 'we' he is sharing allegiance with when he says 'our country'? The answer is buried only a few lines ahead. Sankrityayan says in appraisal of Nanak's spirit of vagabondage: 'Nanak went to Mecca and lay down with his feet

facing the *Kaaba*. Had the Muslims been tolerant they would have been different beings altogether. They rushed and tried to turn his legs to a different direction' (13). Firstly, it is an oral narrative retrieved, therefore its historical accuracy arguable. Secondly, had there been any prohibitory gesture on Nanak's part that offended the Islamic religious sentiment, it would have been naïve to imply from there that the Muslims are intolerant. This essentialization of the Muslims basically follows from the former mistake of his in the form of the dubious Maths, both understandably being cases of serious de-historicization with malicious intentions. It does not take much wisdom to be able to understand that he has basically taken into account three centuries of subjugation under the English and added it with four centuries of Muslim rule during medieval times, which together makes it seven. He falls prey as much to the logic of the communal 'dividing practice' perpetrated by the British as he does to the *terra nullius* argument. Thus for Sankrityayan, the Muslims are as much 'outsiders' as are the British; the Islamic rule is as much 'colonization' as the British's. Interestingly enough, for him, the Buddhists are admirable, so is Nanak who happens to be the founder of Sikhism; but it is only the Muslims who are abominable. Since Sankrityayan himself is known to have converted to Buddhism and had spent years with 'tribal' communities during his ramblings, I would refrain from saying that his utterance of 'our country', like that of most of the vanguards of nationalism during his time, necessarily meant to stir the nationalist pathos of the elitist Hindu Indians under the guise of an innocent pronoun; but it would not be unjust to say it certainly did exclude the Muslims.

If Columbus and Vasco da Gama qualify for vagabonds, so do many medieval Muslim travelers. Sankrityayan mentions none. He mentions a host of religious itinerants, but none of the Sufi wanderers. Finally, what comes as the most shocking surprise is that his book has no reference to Ibn Battuta, the archetypical vagabond of all

times, but lamentably a Moroccan Muslim! The 'order of things' in determining the 'vagabond' points to the transience and amorphousness in its epistemic construction: 'explorers' of the fifteenth-sixteenth century Europe are being called 'vagabonds' in the twentieth; also 'vagabonds' who would be despised in the Vedic time are now in the same league as the 'explorers'; then again a fourteenth century African Muslim 'vagabond' of repute has been now totally silenced and erased out. The nomenclature of the 'vagabond' is thus purely contextual; and it depends more on the epistemic orientation of one who names it than any 'truth claim' inherent in the identity of one who is being named. While on the one hand I emphasized the 1940s as that *caesura* wherein the idea of vagabondage becomes the lightning rod for *aporetic* possibilities – of marginalization and romanticization, of exclusion and inclusion, of erasure and retrieval – simultaneously, but all necessarily hatched within matrix of a very complex equation of colonial worldviews; on the other hand the communalization of the 'vagabond' can be read as a metaphor of contention about who deems fit to be a 'vagabond', and hence a prelude to the vagabond's invocation from the exile.

Imag(in)ing the Vagabond: Virulent Mobility in Post-Colonial Times

'When I asked one of the authors of the Bombay Plan why population was practically not mentioned in their report', complains A.V. Hill, 'he replied that his colleagues could not agree and so had decided to leave the population problem to God. I asked him why they did not leave industry and housing to God, too' (cited in Kumar, 2006: 254). Hill held the position of the Biological Secretary of the Royal Society in 1944 when he was sent to India⁴⁶. The purpose of his official trip was to prepare a first-hand report on India's scientific 'progress' including the field of health and technological research. As a British emissary, Hill's primary task was to scrutinize under the colonizer's gaze the impact of the 'civilizing mission' and how it had purportedly ushered in a 'modernity' intrinsically tied with the spread of science and technology. The most crucial thing Hill noted to have terribly gone wrong with India's scientific endeavors is demographic management vis-a-vis population planning. Amused at the omission of population from the Bombay Plan, Hill stressed that unless population planning is implemented 'all *our* efforts will be brought to nought' (ibid.: 255). It is hard to speculate on what exactly Hill meant when he wrote 'our efforts': whether 'our' refers to the British or the pool of 'scientific tribe', to borrow Popper's idea, whom he was working with and advising. However, there is little doubt in the fact that Hill was bothered with the population factor so much so that he would stress population control invariably on all occasions he spoke or wrote on India. Set out on a path of rapid techno-scientific development, India, as Hill diagnosed, faced hindering challenges primarily from

⁴⁶ Hill was the Biological Secretary during 1935-1945 and Foreign Secretary during 1945-1946 of the Royal Society, UK. The Royal Society website confirms: 'The Physical Sciences Secretary ('Sec. A') and the Biological Sciences Secretary ('Sec. B') are responsible for overseeing the Society's scientific business. The Foreign Secretary is responsible for overseeing the Society's international business' (online).

population issues that negatively impacted on issues of health, nutrition, agriculture⁴⁷. Earlier in 1922 Hill had won the Nobel Prize in physiology/medicine 'for his discovery relating to the production of heat in the muscle' (official website of the Nobel Prize). So, one thing he knew best, and indeed with distinct profundity, was the human body. It is no wonder that Hill as an 'external' evaluator of the state of Indian science and technology would clearly envisage the emancipatory potential of the 'body' and perceive the Indian population as a Malthusian threat to its progress.

Almost a year after this, the *Famine Commission Report* of 1945 reiterates precisely what Hill had observed:

[A] deliberate state policy with the objective of encouraging the practice of birth control among the masses (eg., by the free distribution of contraceptive devices) is impracticable. For religious reasons, the public opinion is not prepared to accept such a policy. Further, the economic condition of the poorer classes and their lack of education, together with the factor of expense, seem to make the widespread encouragement of birth control a practical impossibility.

Besides citing a number of administrative, civil, rationing and military policy 'failures' as the cause of the 1943 famine the Commission turns its attention to the unrestrained growth in population, on top of which there had been a refugee influx from war-ravaged Burma. Though thoroughly critical of the administrative malfunctioning the Commission rather posits the famine to be 'accidental', as suggested by the word 'failure', and thereby sets the administration free of all allegations that the famine was man-made. Revisionist claims like that of Sen's (1982) among others, however, do insist that the

⁴⁷ For details see, Kumar (2006: 228-63). It is worth knowing in this context that India under the Raj had the world's first birth-control clinic as early as 1930. Banerji (1980), Alhuwalia (2008) and Hodges (2008) among others discuss the colonial politics of population control in India while pointing to the diverse interests of different stakeholders, including the Raj, the Indian nationalist elites, the evangelists, the 'modern' feminists et al, in the debates concerning birth control. All three provide interesting insights in unpacking the centrality of the issue at the crossroads of colonial governmentality and Indian nationalism.

famine was (hu)man-made. Sen (ibid.: 62) retrieves official estimates of rice production in Bengal during the years 1938 and 1943 and dismisses the oft-cited logics of 'crop failure', administrative 'failure' to deal with the warning thereof, inadequate surplus from previous year etc. as important factors contributing to the famine. He reveals that the harvest was 8.474 million tons in 1938, 7.922 in 1939, 8.223 in 1940, 6.768 in 1941, 9.296 in 1942 and 7.628 in 1943; and demonstrates that the 1943 yield, though low, was not unusually beyond the standard deviation of recorded average production. Together with Bengal's total wheat supply this would mean that per capita food grains supply in Bengal in 1943 was 109 units against 127 in 1938, 120 in 1939, 123 in 1940, 100 (taken as the base index) in 1941, 130 in 1942. In other words, there was famine in 1943 when per capita supply of food grains was actually 9% more than that in 1941 when there was no famine. This riddle provokes Sen to argue that in the year of the famine people with greater purchasing power – presumably the urban folks – cashed in on the wartime inflation and had hoarded and consumed food crops to an extent that it left too little for others (ibid.: 54). This explains why although the production in 1943 exceeded that in 1941 the supply of food crops in the market in 1943 was far less than in 1941.

Sen's theory, however, fails to explain why all wartime inflations do not lead to famines. What needs asking then is: why did the 1943 inflation in particular lead to a famine? Madhusree Mukherjee (2011) sets out to examine this problem. Anchoring on Sen's thesis, Mukherjee goes one step further in questioning whether Churchill (and his associates) at all counted the lives of Indians whom he declaredly hated as 'a beastly people with a beastly religion' (Churchill, cited in Mukherjee, 2011: 78) as being worth saving. Despite appeals from Leo Amery, the then-Secretary of State for India, and Roosevelt, the President of the United States, to send in relief to India

Churchill remained indifferent because more important to him, as claimed by Mukherjee, was to excessively stock up food crops in the UK in the face of wartime crisis on top what already seemed like an adequately sufficient stockpile⁴⁸. As a result, while the condition of the famine back in the colony was fast worsening relief dispatched for India by Canada and Australia was being steered into Britain and Subhash Bose's offer to send rice from Burma being completely turned down. Amidst all these, Churchill and his advisor Frederick Alexander Lindemann (Lord Cherwell) stayed firm in their Malthusian belief: sending food crops (even) in the form of relief would mean Indians already 'breeding like rabbits' (Churchill, cited in *ibid.*: 205) would breed even more. The irony of the situation has been captured poignantly by Mukherjee (*ibid.*: 205) in the following passage:

In his memo to Churchill, Lord Cherwell suggested that the Bengal famine arose from crop failure and high birthrate. He omitted to mention that the calamity also derived from India's role of supplier to the Allied war effort; that the colony was not being permitted to spend its sterling reserves or to employ its own ships in importing sufficient food; and that by his Malthusian logic Britain should have been the first to starve – but was being sustained by food imports that were six times larger than the one-and-a-half million tons that the Government of India had requested for the coming year.

On the other hand, not only does Bowbrick (1986, 1987) accuse Sen of having manipulated statistical data but also of failing to provide any empirical evidence

⁴⁸ Mukherjee, M. (2011: 209) estimates: 'Throughout the autumn [of 1943], the United Kingdom's civilian stocks of food and raw materials continued to swell, so that by the end of 1943 they would stand at 18.5 million tons, the highest total ever. The United Kingdom imported 4 million tons of wheat grain and flour, 1.4 million tons of sugar, 1.6 million tons of meat, 409,000 heads of live cattle, 325,000 tons of fish, 131,000 tons of rice, 206,000 tons of tea, 172,000 tons of cocoa, and 1.1 million gallons of wine for its 47.7 million people – a population of 14 million fewer than that of Bengal. Sugar and oilseeds overflowed warehouses and had to be stored outdoors in England under tarpaulines'.

whatsoever of the consumption and hoarding of the food he says took place in 1943⁴⁹. With intricate mathematical calculations Bowbrick shows that in order for the people with 'vanishing purchasing power' to be left to starve a handful of people with 'purchasing power' – understandably so few in number during the inflation – had to eat as much as 12 to 46 times the amount of their normal diet at least for the entire duration of the famine. This is not 'physically possible for one group to eat so much that most of the population goes hungry and millions of people starve' (Bowbrick's website); hence he suggests invoking other tangible factors. Although apparently a convincing argument it does not take into account the 'hoarding' aspect Sen is stressing. But then again, Sen does not empirically explain it either. While Sen, as proponent of welfare economics, dismisses the viability of invoking the Food Availability Decline (FAD) theory – by which most famines are usually explainable - in the case of the 1943 Bengal famine (because he believes there was a shortage in food *supply*, but no decline in *availability* par se) Bowbrick, by the orthodox logic of classical economics, reinstates that it is theoretically infeasible to have alteration in the 'supply' side of the equation without having undergone changes in the 'demand'. The Bowbrick-Sen debate continued vigorously during the mid-80s in the pages of the reputed journal *Food Policy* and elsewhere⁵⁰; and what seemed to have started as a debate on the causation of the 1943 Bengal famine soon became reflective of their respective schools of

⁴⁹ Bowbrick writes that Sen 'has systematically misstated his facts to support an untenable theory' (his website). The integrity of Sen's sources has indeed been also questioned by Tauger (2003), Goswami (1990) and Dyson & Maharatna (1991), Padmanabhan (1973) among others. Bowbrick's website features a more exhaustive list of works that refute the credibility of Sen's sources, all cited here: <<http://goo.gl/zOCqhE>>. Sen (1986, 1987), however, has replied to some of Bowbrick's objections. For a handy summary of the Sen-Bowbrick debate, see Allen (1986).

⁵⁰ For other resources helpful in following the debate, visit Bowbrick's website <<http://goo.gl/gDwtZX>> where he methodically lists all the sources.

disciplinary orientation and their worldviews on economics as a discipline. With solid points in either argument it hard to determine whose side to take. The whole point in invoking the literatures on causation of the 1943 famine, though inconclusive, is not to re-evaluate and determine what *actually* lead to the famine. What I want to point to, instead, is that the crucial issues in the 1940s and the debates, contentions, stakes pitched in centering the key debates were all dramatically unfolding against the question of demographics. In the historic 'rupture' that marked India's shift from *agrarian* to *scientific*, from *traditional* to *modern*, from *feudal* to *techno-capitalistic*, what I insist on taking note of is the centrality of demographics. On the one hand, colonial documents (from the decade) are replete with references to and stresses on demographics. On the other hand, contemporary revisionist scholars, those who set out to refute the colonial historiography, cannot help but re-animate the same trope.

To come back to what I started with, sensing that India's (economic) reliance on agriculture is keeping her out of the threshold of the much-awaited 'modernizing project', Hill (1944a, 1944b) made a strong case for massive techno-scientific investments in the sectors of mechanization, land utilization, fertilizers, irrigation, logistics, food processing and so on. The faster India's 'agrarian mode of production', to borrow a favorite Marxist epithet, started to graduate to scientific-industrial capitalism, the more was the need to have an accurate demographic mapping in order to maximize the utilization of the nation's resources. Clearly in the footsteps of Viceroy Linlithgow who in 1936, apparently his very first viceregal year in India, wrote: 'I am wondering how far I shall feel able to tell India that the overgrowth of population is the factor limiting the standard of living...' (cited in Ahuwalia, 2008: 115), Hill in his letter to the first railway minister of India mathematically lays down the crisis he had been consistently drawing attention to: $H = f(X, Y, Z, W)$, where H stands for total human

welfare, X for population, Y for health, Z for food, and W for other natural resources (Kumar, 2006: 254). The pseudo-scientificity of Hill's equation apparently pointed toward the mathematization of demographics. This calls upon setting up various *identifying* techniques that highlighted different types, patterns, and characteristics in the lives and living practices, habits and habitats of the citizens in order to efficiently mobilize resources and strategize targets for capital investments. Capitalist intervention of the magnitude and rapidity Hill (and the nationalist ideologues) had in mind, and the illusory hope that it would unfailingly push India into the league of 'modern nation', required harnessing the potential of a totally new kind of subject-in-making: more of a bourgeois citizen than a colonial subject, vulnerable to the state apparatuses⁵¹, and her sense of 'possessive individualism' calibrated (only) against the logic of profit principle (MacPherson, 1962). The new political economy involving the capitalization of living matter – what Melinda Cooper (2008) has called 'life as surplus' – deploys discursive and technocratic enterprises of population control.

⁵¹ I have borrowed the phrase 'state apparatuses' from Althusser (1971) who posits that reproduction of existing relations of production is reinforced by *state apparatuses*, both repressive and ideological, whereby one is provided 'with the ideology which suits the role it has to fulfill in class society' (ibid.: 166). Althusser writes: '[T]he Repressive State Apparatus functions 'by violence,' whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses function 'by ideology'... Schools and Churches use suitable methods of punishment, expulsion, selection, etc., to 'discipline' not only their shepherds, but also their flocks. The same is true of the Family...' (ibid.: 147). This shows the stakes the State and its acolytes have in targeting to discipline the family. In other words, the family, or at a more micro-level, the human body, becomes the site for exercising the Statist techniques of power. This has been Foucault's concern too after his turn to the bio-politics. 'If the development of the great instruments of the state, as *institutions* of power, ensured the maintenance of production relations,' maintains Foucault (1991: 141), '[then] the rudiments of anatomo-and bio-politics, created in the eighteenth century as *techniques* of power present at every level of the social body and utilized by the diverse institutions (the family and the army, schools and the police, individual medicine and the administration of collective bodies), operated in the sphere of economic processes, their development, and the forces working to sustain them' (Foucault's italics).

And, this mathematicization of population and the bio-political intervention that Foucault (1990: 11) calls the 'polymorphous techniques of power' normalize the reinscription of the (human) body within discourses of scientifically-knowable *truths* governed by 'will to power'⁵². Hill diagnosed the threat when it reached its crux. The symptoms, however, had first appeared in the 1931 Indian census that revealed: the rise in population

since 1921 is 33,895,298 that is to say, 10.6 percent on the population at the last census [1921] and 39 percent on the population of India fifty years ago and an increase of 12 persons per square mile in 50 years...[while] in Tranvancore state, where the percentage of literacy is much higher than in most parts of India, but where the population has increased by 27%, the proportion of literacy has fallen from 24.2% in 1921 to 23.9% in 1931 though in India as a whole it has risen from 7% to 8% (Section IV).

Literacy being a crucial index of welfare, it clearly shows how genuine Hill's, and for that matter Viceroy Linlithgow's, concerns were. This been revealed, the efficacy of the modernizing project and the welfare of the nation-state were at stake. Fearing that 'the rise of population on the subsistence margin must reduce the standard of living' (*Census Report*, 1931) the acolytes of the nation-statist project joined hands with 'liberal' Western feminists, namely Marie Stopes, Edith How-Martyn, Mary O'Brien Beadon and Margaret Sanger, in pervasively scrutinizing this alarming over-fecundity under a Malthusian-Eugenicist gaze, and turning the colonial demographic enterprises into a functional tool for reforming the citizen's sexual-procreative behavior. Sanjam Ahluwalia (2008) clearly maps the terrain in which Indian and Western campaigners alike, feminists or otherwise – all with disjunctive, and often competing, iterations on

⁵² Foucault (1990: 141) attributes this penetrative anatomo-bio-political gaze towards the human (body) to the rise of Capitalism, which 'would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes ... [Capitalism] had to have methods of power capable of optimizing forces, aptitudes, and life in general without at the same time making them more difficult to govern'. In this context, also see Foucault (1980, 1991).

freedom, femininity, and family etc.; but necessarily rationalizing themselves in the name of modernity and national welfare – functioned as stakeholders in the question concerning birth control. Dismissing the local medical practices and indigenous modes of healing and care-giving as 'backward', the 'liberal' feminists on the one hand, as Ahluwalia (ibid.: 57) argues, bore a 'racist, eugenicist, and class-specific logic in seeking to advance their program to determine and control fertility'; and on the other hand, by keeping the question of exploitation of colony's resources at bay they *underdetermined* India's poverty, now appearing as if been caused *only* due to its overpopulation⁵³.

The prevailing obsession with *scientia sexualis*⁵⁴ within the gamut of the nationalist agenda had cast a classist tension within the *we-you-they* triangular relation I discussed in the last chapter. Crestfallen in all aspects of the *outer domain*, the

⁵³ I am using the expression 'underdetermine(d)' as an antonym for 'overdetermine', alluding to the neo-Marxist understanding of the concept of 'overdetermination'. Althusser (2005: 87-128), taking cues from Freudian methods of interpretation of dreams, uses *overdetermination* as a (political) phenomenon that ascribes an effect to multiple causes: explains (political) outcomes in terms of a combination of a number of simultaneous but diverse politico-ideological forces into play, rather than in terms of the simplistic base- superstructure binary in Classical Marxism. When using 'underdetermine(d)', what I am pointing to is that all other forces leading to India's poverty have been dismissed or discounted, while stress has only been put upon over-population.

⁵⁴ I am borrowing the concept from Foucault (1990). *Scientia sexualis*, for Foucault, is the objectively knowable, scientifically determinable 'truth' concerning the discourse of sexuality. While this concept comes as extremely handy tool in making my point I must signal it at the very onset that I am not in complete agreement with Foucault on what he has to say about it. Foucault distinguishes between *scientia sexualis* and *ars erotica* and attributes them respectively to the West and non-West: 'China, Japan, India, Rome, the Arabo-Muslim societies – endowed themselves with an *ars erotica*... (O)ur civilization possesses no *ars erotica*. In return, it is undoubtedly the only civilization to have developed over the centuries procedures for telling the truth of sex which are geared to a form of knowledge-power strictly opposed to the art of initiations and the masterful sacred' (ibid.: 57). Pierre Hadot (1995: 206-12), however, has refuted the foundations of Foucault's idea of sexuality and accuses him of *reductionism*. For Hadot's own position and the basis of his refutations, see Hadot (1990). Somewhat along the same lines, both Nie (2011: 51-68) and Bandyopadhyay (2001: 25) accuse Foucault of *ethnocentrism* in the contexts of China and India respectively. Burton (2013) too charges him of apathy to the question of cultural differences, broadly speaking, prevalent in the non-European cultures.

Indian nationalist elites saw this statist bio-medical intervention as a threat to their *inner domain*⁵⁵. In their rebuttal attempt, the 'you', that is the nationalist elites, pointed fingers at 'they': they sought to mimic the Malthusian agenda deployed by 'we' and imposed it upon whom they had already disentangled and disarticulated themselves from, that is the 'they'. The *Census Report*, for that matter, vouches that there is an 'apparent' co-relation between 'enculturation' and fertility:

In order that a highest standard of living may affect the rate of reproduction it is apparent that not only is an increase in *education and culture* involved, since it seems definitely established that *intellectual activity* acts as a check upon fertility, but also the psychological appreciation of a higher probability of survival. (Section IV)

This grand proclamation in the *Census Report* has not been supported by any empirical findings whatsoever, but mentioned as though an *apriori*. The entire *truth claim* precariously rests on the phrase 'apparent', pointing to how the conviction seems more like a *naturalized* appropriation of the dominant discourses than logically deduced. However, my point is not to either believe in or disbelieve the co-relation, for figures can be misleading⁵⁶. What I am pointing to is: first, the lack of empirical evidence to prove it; and second, the obscure way in which this phenomenon has been linked to the question of 'education and culture', which implicitly meant colonial exposure and proximity. This meant that it would become prerogative of the upper-class, upper-caste, urban Hindu elite males not only to administer the birth control

⁵⁵ At this point, I ask the readers to recall the we-you-they relation from toward the end of the 'The Rupture: Colonial Bengal and The Case of Mimicry' section in my first chapter. Taking cues from the Saidian formulation, I envisage 'we', 'you' and 'they' as insulatory categories respectively representing the colonizer, the native bourgeois and the internally colonized subaltern. The 'inner' and 'outer' domains with respect to Indian nationalism are, however, Chatterjee's (1997b) concepts that I am borrowing in context of the bio-medical intervention.

⁵⁶ However, if I were to provisionally trust in numbers, then evidences are rather on the contrary. For 7.1% rise in total Indian population over 1901-11, the rural population in India increased by only 5.7%. For 1.2% rise in total Indian population over 1911-21, the rural population in India actually decreased by 0.3%. For 10.6% rise in total Indian population over 1921-31, the rural population in India increased by 11%. (*Census Report 1931*; Sekher, 2011: 171)

initiatives, but also reinforce their class identity as spearheading the domain of nationalist politics. With a moralizing pedantry of the highest order, they, therefore, set out to 'enculturate' the subalterns. The Muslims, the lower castes and the peasants in particular became the immediate target of this essentially elitist 'salvaging' mission, not to mention the women, decisions on whose reproductive health were ironically more often than not made by their male counterparts (Ahluwaliai, 2008).

Referring to the figures of 'the maximum population which can be supported by agricultural occupations' in Europe and the US, the 1931 *Census Report* draws attention to:

The number is as we have seen, very much greater than this in many parts of India, and the *rural population* which attains the extraordinary density mentioned of parts of Bengal and of the Malabar coast indicates the extent to which fertile land intensively cultivated together with fish yielding waters could sustain a population whose material wants are reduced to the minimum by the natural environment of a tropical climate. (Section IV)

Although the rate of increments in population among the rural and urban folks in India as a whole has been studied separately in the 1931 *Census* there is no data available in the *Census Report* that attests to the fact that the rate of increment in population in rural Bengal far exceeded that in urban Bengal. In other words, state-wise distribution of rural versus urban increment in population has not been reported in the *Census Report*, if at all been studied. The *Report* (Section IV) cites only a set of bar diagrams representing the comparative rates of increments between 1921 and 1931 in pan-Indian population over different variables (like gender, literacy, and the rural-urban distinction), which clearly points to the fact that there was no major statistical variation/deviation among the parameters⁵⁷. However, when it comes to

⁵⁷ It is indeed hard to believe that in a *Census Report* that had compared even the number of Savings bank accounts, five-year-cash-certificates issued, and capital assets of loans and

interpreting the data and verbalizing the threat it posited, the *Census Report* seems to be limited to targeting the 'rural population' alone, at least evidently in case of Bengal. It is true though that the density of population in Bengal became obscenely thick in 1931, and for that matter, along with that in the tiny patch of province on the Malabar coast, the thickest in the country. Apart from the concern for resource availability, this on the one hand further escalated the Hindu- Muslim communal rivalry already in air, and then the urban-rural conflict on the other⁵⁸.

deposits held among the provinces over 1921 and 1931, actually did not compare the province-wise urban versus rural population. While it is difficult to find an answer for this strange elision, there is an important point worth taking note of here. The establishment of birth-control clinics (1930), apparently the first initiative of its kind in the world (see supra n.47), immediately preceded the 1931 Census. There is a passing reference to the clinics while the *Census Report* mentioned the 'Mysore State, which in 1930 sanctioned the establishment of birth control clinics in the four principle hospitals of the state' (Section IV). What I am pointing to is that the population threat seemed to have already been perceived; the *Census Report* takes the role of charting out and endorsing its antidote. Stressing on the importance of artificial birth-control, the *Report* renders support to what it itself calls 'Neo-Malthusian': 'Madras can boast [of] a Neo-Malthusian League with two Maharajas, three High Court Judges and four or five men very prominent in public life as its sponsors. Meanwhile it would appear, in view of the present rate of increase, that efforts to reduce the rate of infantile mortality should be preceded by precautions to reduce the birth rate...' (ibid., italics mine). Now that the expression '(Neo-)Malthusian' has acquired a negative connotation, at least in the academics, it is interesting to note the semantic slant of the expression as it has been used in the *Report*. I doubt whether one would consider the expression as a compliment today.

⁵⁸ For details on the factors that worsened the Hindu-Muslim relation in Bengal, see the first couple of paragraphs of the last section 'Counter-Insurgency Centering The Vagabond' from my first chapter. The British Partition of Bengal (1905, although revoked later in 1911) and foundation of the Muslim League (1906) demanding separate electoral for the Muslims can be viewed as two events following which the relation was worsening unbridgeably. That said, the Muslims had perennially been the target of accusation in context of the population panic in India. The Hindu right-wing always fears that Muslims in future would eventually outpopulate the Hindus in India, now having the third-largest Muslim population in the world, though as minority (*Indian Foreign Review* [3], 1965: 11). Believe it or not, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the extremist right-wing organization, right in 2013 has advised the Hindus to have at least 3 children to combat the 'population imbalance' (*The Indian Express*, 27 Oct 2013). The *Sachar Committee Report* (2006: 47), however, points to: 'Muslim population growth has slowed down, as fertility has declined substantially clearly showing that Muslims are well into demographic transition'.

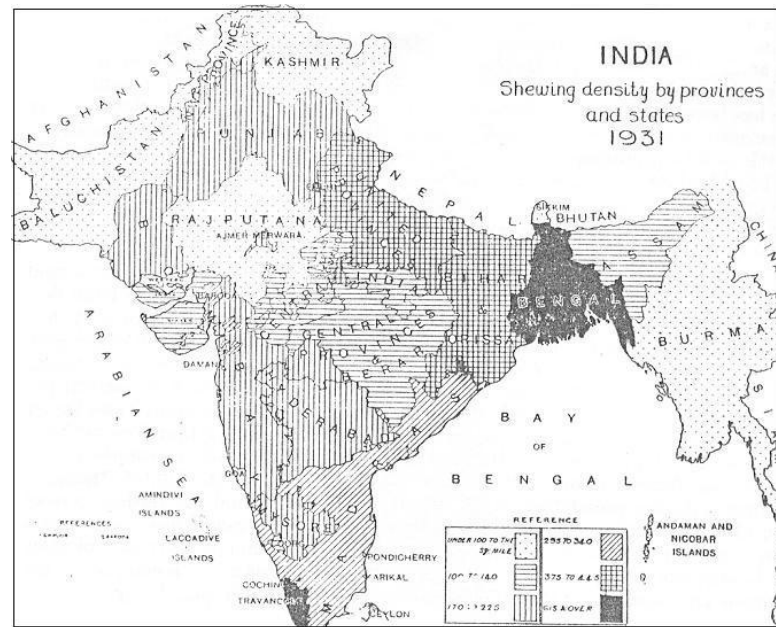


Image retrieved from the Indian Census Report, 1931

The *Report* takes the threat pretty seriously and eventually turns it into a case for rationalizing rapid industrialization. This is actually the forerunner of Hill's project in India. Not all nationalists at the time unanimously agreed on the question of industrialization, Gandhi himself being a major adversary⁵⁹. Now that it has been

⁵⁹ I am aware of the subtle generalization involved in calling Gandhi an adversary of industrialization right away. With more than 100 volumes of collected writings plus variations in the translations of those, Gandhi has different phases in his career, during which his takes over issues changes over time so much so that he often sounds self-contradictory. Say for example, Gandhi, the iconic figure of Indian independence is known to have encouraged the Indians in South Africa to serve the British Empire as a reserve force in the Army against the Zulu uprising in 1906 (Gandhi, 1958-1994[5]: 273-74). In other words, there are many Gandhis, by which I mean Gandhi is full of contradictions. This is why Nandy (2000), teasingly writes: 'There are four Gandhis who have survived Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's death... The first Gandhi is the Gandhi of the Indian State and Indian nationalism... The second Gandhi is the Gandhi of the Gandhians... The third Gandhi is the Gandhi of the ragamuffins, eccentrics and the unpredictable. This Gandhi is more hostile to Coca-Cola than to Scotch whisky... The fourth Gandhi is usually not read. He is only heard, often second- or third-hand'. As of technology and industrialization, Gandhi (2010: 76) himself writes: 'Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilisation; it represents a great sin', while on the other hand, he (2002: 254) is in eloquent appraisal of (manufacturing/use of) the Singer Sewing Machine. Prakash (1999: 214-26) points to the ambiguity in Gandhi's critique of industrialization. '[A]s a general rule', argues Nandy (1987: 138), 'Gandhi was against technologies which replaced the uniquely human aspects of man'. In Gandhi's (1957: 37, 43) own words: 'The spinning wheel itself is a machine, a little

invoked in respect to the national population crisis, hopes were that it would certainly gain more ground. I shall come to this issue in more details in the next section. As of now I would like to draw attention to the pathological undertone of the rhetoric in which industrialization has been legitimized. 'The employment of this surplus in industrial activity,' the *Census Report* ambitiously hopes, 'would of course, meet the difficulty for a time'; nevertheless it simultaneously warns that this solution 'can only prove a *permanent cure* if the increase of the population be limited not only to the food producible but also to the saturation point of the demand for industrial labour.' As I demonstrated in the last chapter, the eighteenth and nineteenth century European literature is replete with instances where *disease* appears as a metaphor of worklessness, idleness, homelessness and so on. The pathological slant in the vocabulary comes from having accepted the UK as the point of reference: 'a point of origin, or what seems like one, a set of initial circumstances in which the idea came to birth or entered discourse' (Said, 1983: 226-27); and accordingly, in order to tangibly establish the correlation between unemployment and population overgrowth the *1931 Census Report* calibrates the crisis with respect to that in 'the United Kingdom, where

toothpick is a machine. What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such...I am totally opposed to when it [machine] masters us'. For Gandhi's critique of capitalist industrialization, scientism and that of the 'modern' West, see Gandhi (2010) and Saharabudhey (1985). Gandhi's condemning of the capitalistic, rationality-maximized, instrumentalist understanding of technology – what Nandy calls 'technicism' – has often been (re)interpreted as his techno-pessimism and complete disavowal of the 'modern' West. I am myself critical about this strand of reading Gandhi. However, in saying that Gandhi was an adversary of industrialization, I am provisionally going by the popular/conventional perception of him being 'retrograde', 'unreasonable' etc., which has been epitomized in what Nathuram Godse had said in self-defense before the court during his trial for Gandhi's assassination. Godse (1987: 154, 155) held: 'Indian politics in the absence of Gandhiji would surely be *practical*, able to retaliate, and would be powerful with armed forces...[The] nation would be free to follow *the course founded on reason* which I consider to be necessary for sound nation-building' (italics mine). Believe it or not, several Indians sent money orders to Godse's family after he assassinated Gandhi (Viswanathan, 2013).

the increase in population during the last decade was approximately equivalent to the number of unemployed in 1931’.

Caldwell (1998: 680) reminds us that 'Malthus wrote little about India, in spite of the fact that – or perhaps because – he was Professor of Political Economy, teaching India's future administrators, at the East India Company's College at Hertford and then Haileybury from 1805 until his death in 1834.' Malthusian ideas, therefore, did literally travel to India with his students at some point. But, even when the need for shipping the administrators to India had completely ceased, there was no dearth of agencies through which ideas could still continue to travel. Take this instance: when Longmans Green & Co. published a massive 348 pages book, *The Prevention of Destitution*, in 1916 from London, it simultaneously marketed the book from its India offices located at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Presumably, the publisher saw a niche market for the book in India. Let me retrieve a few passages from this book to make my point clear.

Massed in mean streets, working in the sweating dens, or picking up a precarious livelihood by casual jobs; living by day and by night in overcrowded one-room tenements, through months of chronic unemployment or persistent under-employment; infants and children, boys and girls, men and women, together find themselves subjected – in an atmosphere of drinking, begging, cringing, and *lying* – to unspeakable temptations to which it is practically inevitable that they should in different degrees succumb, and in which *strength and purity of character are irretrievably lost* (2).

For our growing consciousness of the stress of international competition is reminding us that, unless we do take the necessary steps to rid our society of this *disease*, we shall fall still more behind, and eventually succumb before *younger and healthier and more energetic rivals* (5).

There are those who hold – along with Professor Bernard Bosanquet and the Council of the Charity Organisation Society of London – that destitution in all its forms is

invariably associated with *a defective "citizen-character," a "failure" in the person who is destitute* (8, italics mine).

With moralizing pedantry, not only were the homeless and vagrants being considered redundantly menacing but also homelessness as a phenomenon was being held responsible for 'mental perversion, demoralisation of character, and actual crime.' (49) In order to get rid of what has been called the 'undesirable acquaintanceship' (53), the writers of the book suggest:

Such, indeed, are our present arrangements that the only necessitous persons who are effectively deterred from accepting public assistance at these crises are the very persons whom, as Eugenists, we should like to encourage to increase and multiply (54).

Lest I am misunderstood I must stress here, I do not mean to say that pathologization of vagrancy traveled to India with this particular book. But, the case serves in context of my hypothesis as an exemplar (among many similar cases) of how ideas traveled and were received, how those shaped and characterized the outlook known to have emerged in India at a parallel historical point, and how, to put in Said's (1983: 227) words, the outlook underwent 'a passage through the pressure of various contexts as the idea moves from an earlier point to another time and place and where it will come into new prominence'.

From here, if we step back toward the *1931 Census Report*, and also at the *1943 Vagrancy Act* for that matter, and compare with *The Prevention of Destitution*, we would find an uncanny 'family resemblance' in the conceptual vocabularies, which is a testament to Said's notion of 'traveling ideas'. The population boom of 1931 was a genuine administrative problem, so was the influx of refugees in 1943.

Notwithstanding the seriousness of the issue, what I want to underline is that the discursive rhetoric in which the problems were framed and voiced was evidently

'foreign' in their articulations. Fervently determined to establish homelessness as a crime, these documents symbolized a sense of rivalry, rather than association; a sense of competition, rather than co-operation; a sense of hostility, rather than hospitality; and perhaps bore a banal allusion to the Hobbesian (2011: 192) metaphor of 'a perpetual war of every man against his neighbour'. Be it the population crisis or the famine, influx of 'man' [sic.] was understood as disturbance of 'natural' equilibrium and decrement in availability of resources for his 'neighbour' and hence for the sake of safeguarding one's interest must be fought against at all cost.

Now, let us imagine Calcutta in the 1940s. Further industrialization could not absorb all the surplus population. Rather, if we go by the Gandhian premonition, industrialization is supposed to have rendered humans jobless. Anyway, the population crisis of the 1930s was still persistent, if not aggravated. On top of that, during the famine 'unattended dead bodies could be found everywhere in the city – 3,363 had to be disposed by relief organizations in October [of 1943] alone' (Sen, 1982: 57). As the *spectacle* of famine unfolded as 'theatre of cruelty'⁶⁰ in the tapestry of a visually impoverished topography of the city there had been constant administrative disavowal 'of a continuum with the silent violence of malnutrition that precedes and conditions it [the famine], and with the mortality shadow of debilitation and disease that follows it' (Davis, 2002: 21)⁶¹. Though quite late in officially acknowledging it,

⁶⁰ I have borrowed this phrase from Artaud (1958). 'Theatre of cruelty' exposes before the bourgeois audience what they disavow or refuse to see on the stage. The foundation of Artaud's idea is based on subverting the status quo, which is why Foucault (2013: 286-87) makes passing remarks on Artaud in context of 'madness'. Artaud (1958: 82) writes: '(F)ar from copying life, (it) puts itself whenever possible in communication with pure forces...[that is,] whatever brings to birth images of energy...' (ibid.: 82). By appropriating Artaud's expression, on the one hand, I want to hint at the administrative disavowal of the famine, and on the other hand, preface the 'forceful' and 'energetic' form of engagement with the famine by the painters I am going to discuss next.

the Governor of Bengal, on 2 July 1943, wrote a confessional letter to the Viceroy saying: 'I am sorry to have to trouble you with so dismal a picture, Bengal is rapidly approaching starvation' (cited in Mukherjee, J., 2011: 182). It took exactly a year after this for the Famine Commission to convene at Delhi in July 1944, 18 July to be precise. Headed by Sir John Woodhead as its Chairman and S.V. Ramamurty, Manlal Nanavati, M. Afzal Hussain and W.R. Aykroyd as its members, the Commission then traveled widely across Bengal for about six weeks before proceeding to other famine-hit parts of India (*Famine Commission Report*, 1945: iii). In order to prepare 'a report of the highest practical value in shortest possible time' and to be able to study it *impersonally* 'in a calm and dispassionate atmosphere' (ibid.: iv) the Commission *objectively* recorded 130 witnesses, 45 official and 85 non-official, all on camera.

Picturing The Vagrant: Resurrecting From The Abyss of Proscription

Ashis Nandy (2001) explores the theme of the journey – that from the village to the city – as a metaphor of the 'ambiguous' relation between the city and the village in 'modern' India. For the villager, 'the seductive charms of urban life' (ibid.: 57) would mean liberation from caste-based hierarchical dominations and offer a life of reasonable comfort free from rural 'primitivism'. Used to travelling to the city mostly as a pilgrim in the past, the villager knew of the 'rite of passage' in the prospect of relocating to the

⁶¹ As of the disavowal, it is interesting to note that there had been an administrative reluctance to call the famine 'famine' in the first place. This is understandably because there were already 14 famines in British India since 1765 (*Imperial Gazetteer of India* [3], 1908: 501-2). Calling another famine 'famine' would not only cast a doubt over the efficacy of administration, but also increase its liabilities. What followed the reluctance was 'an extraordinary discrepancy in regard to the use of the word 'famine' by different persons' (Ghosh, 1944: 25). Ghosh points to how the colonial administration in 1943 actually played on a subtle technical distinction, whereby 'scarcity' meant 'the case when there is no food to be had for money as distinguished from [famine being] suffering from dearness and want of means to buy' (Famine Commissioners, 1867, Cited in Ghosh, 1944: 25), in acknowledging the famine quite later than it ought to have been done.

city, knew that by living in the city he would acquire certain status, besides all 'enchantments' the city has to offer. Yet the villager was somewhat cautionary in making the 'leap', for s/he was aware of the cultural differences in manners and etiquette between city dwellers and their country cousins, bolstered by the rise of the presidency cities: Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras typifying the idea of the 'city'. Indeed, s/he knew how much the city dweller (de)valued this 'difference' and to what extent it would count as an evaluative criterion for his/her inclusion into (or exclusion from) the city⁶². For the city dweller, on the other hand, the village was as if a monolithic entity frozen in time (Nandy, 2001). Although Nandy does not quite historicize he uses the theme of the mythic journey in cultural representations as an explanatory tool for unpacking the primordial psychological affair between the city dweller and the villager. In his passing reference to the 1943 famine, Nandy (2001: 89) mentions: 'The victims [of the famine] seemingly took their suffering as an act of fate and the concerned citizens of Calcutta, unable to seriously intervene, had to pretend to the same fatalism'. As evident, the 1943 famine in Calcutta unfolds within the backdrop of two critical issues: one, an acute population crisis persistent since the 1930s; and two, splintering class confrontations. This heightens the vulnerability of any immigrant into the city, let alone the refugee. Nevertheless, the refugee makes his way into the city, and eventually into the painter's canvas. It seems that the more unwanted he is the more transgressive he becomes.

During November 1943, Chittaprosad (1915-1978), a 'socially committed

⁶² This is not, however, to say that cities per se have a linear relation with or are direct causes of (colonial) modernity. On the contrary, say for example, the 5000-years-old Indus Valley civilization was necessarily urban in nature. Rather, what I mean to say is, and I agree with Nandy (2001) on this point, that the emergence of colonial-presidency cities redefined the urban-rural relation. Instead of the existing complementary relation, the urban and the rural turned to two distinctly insulated spaces. In Nandy's words, it exerted a 'seductive pull' (ibid.: 73) upon the villages, and in doing so negated the importance of the old colonial cities on the one hand and that of the village on the other.

graphic artist...[and] major player in the rise of revolutionary popular art in India in the 1940s' (Mitter, 2011: 13), was traveling extensively across Midnapur district making journal entries on and drawing sketches of the famine that were soon published in the form of a book under the title *Hungry Bengal : a tour through Midnapur District in November, 1943* only to be banned by the Government of India. Sarkar (1998: 5) confirms that the Government of India seized and destroyed 5,000 copies of Chittaprosad's book immediately after its publication⁶³. In a way, Chittaprosad precisely did what the Famine Commission intended to do, except for the fact that he recorded his accounts in pen and ink, and on lithographs rather than on a camera. One of his contemporaries, Zainul Abedin (1914-1976), whose sketches along with his would become visual icons of the famine, however, was luckier: his series of *famine* sketches were highly acclaimed when exhibited at Calcutta in 1944 and were to soon become his claim to fame⁶⁴. Tragic though, for Chittaprosad it took several decades for his sketches to be recognized and appreciated. That said, both their works do overlap in a number of different ways: not only are they thematologically overlapping but also stylistically very close to each other. Both were rebels in their own ways. Chittaprosad de-classed himself by choosing not to use his patronymic surname 'Bhattacharya', reflective of his Brahminical origin. Instead, he solidarized with the working class, had been vocal against the feudal system, and before the publication of his *Hungry Bengal* been contributing sketches satirizing the colonial policies and administration to the Bengali communist weekly *Janayuddha* (*People's War*) on a regular basis, not to mention of his complete disregard for conventional art school

⁶³ For a comprehensive overview on Chittaprosad's works and political background, see Mallick (2011). Sarkar (1998) presents a more general overview of how visual artists, including Chittaprosad, engaged with and during the famine.

⁶⁴ For a cursory glance over Abedin's profile and a list of his exhibits, visit: <http://goo.gl/pDyxjA>. Website last visited on 20 March 2014.

training. Abedin, on the other hand, was more an *internal critic* who after attending the Government Art School, Calcutta and going on to serve as the faculty of the same institute eventually came to realize the futility of the 'system' and thenceforth increasingly dissociated himself from the mainstream conventions of artistic practices. Chittaprosad and Abedin were rather two kindred souls who were up to re-inventing a visual language craftily doctored to the content of their paintings.

Image 1: Woodcut, by Chittaprosad



Image 2: Ink on paper, by Chittaprosad

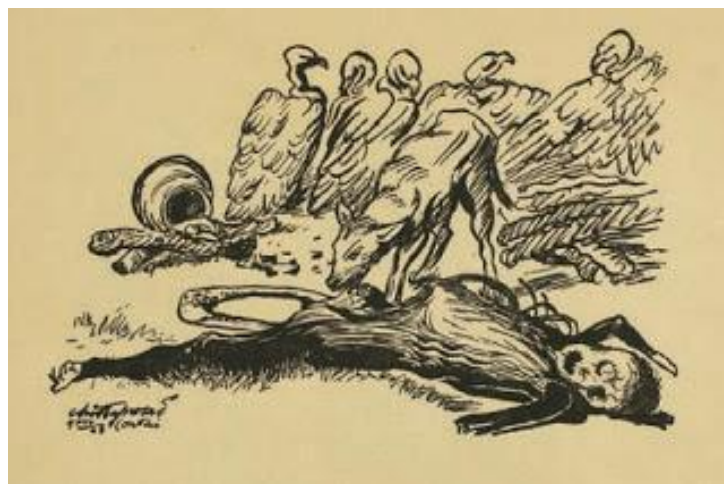


Image 3: Ink on paper, by Chittaprosad

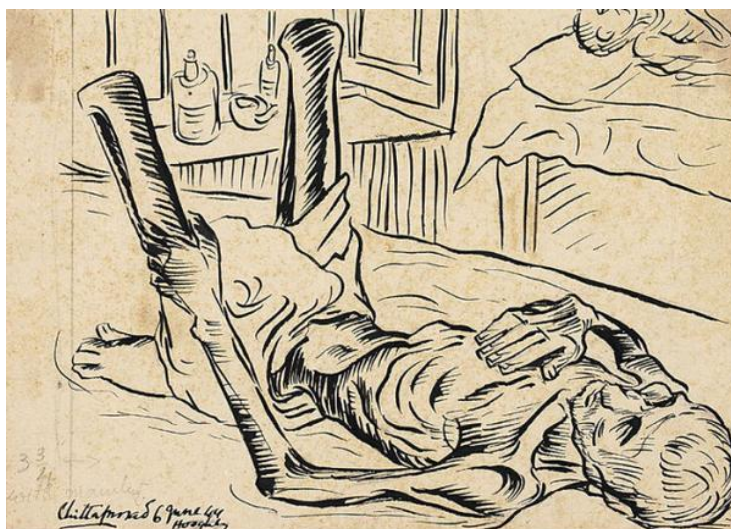


Image 4: Ink on paper, by Abedin



Image 5: Ink on paper, by Abedin



With the Government Art College, Calcutta, India's foremost art school at that time, being its intellectual hub and Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951) and E.B. Havell (1861-1934) as its founding figures, the *Bengal School*, which was the dominant artistic tradition of the 1940s, denied espousing the academic techniques of the commercially successful Ravi Verma legacy of oil-and-easel 'salon' painting pervaded by Western realism. Pitching themselves as 'retrograde-traditionalist' competing against the 'modernist-realist' modes of representation, the *Bengal School*, however, was preoccupied with re-discovery of the oriental style and religious symbolism that aligned perfectly with Hindu revivalist ethos of the nationalist agenda⁶⁵. In the words of the pioneering Indian artist Amrita Sher-Gil '(t)he work of the Bengal School is...entirely illustrative in quality, and depends for its popularity not on pictorial merit, but on *romantic* appeal...' and they fall short of 'arousing serious intense emotion and causing profound reactions' (cited in Mitter, 1994: 380). It goes without saying that when it came to pictorially narrativize the depravity centering the 1943 famine, Chittaprosad and Abedin had to first attenuate this effete de-politicized vocabulary of wishy-washy depiction of overtly romanticized themes still ruling supreme. Emancipating themselves from the all-encompassing *traditionalist versus realist* debate, to which basically everything to do with art at that point had been boiled down, they *discovered* a radically new painterly materiality: not only in terms of the (subject) *matter* of their paintings but also in terms of the *form* of their apprehension of the 'real'. The real here-and-now before their eyes was so terribly grotesque that it demanded intervention beyond merely imitating the 'real'. Their zeal for capturing the here-and-now together with their immanent passion for politics heightened in an ocular rendering of the

⁶⁵ For details on how the nationalist ideology steered the Bengal School, see Chattopadhyay (1987), Guha-Thakurta (1992) and Mitter (1994: 219-374) among others.

'vagrant' poignantly associated with an iconoclastic genre of painting: the famine series. What makes these paintings stand out is their vitality and spontaneity. Unlike 'salon' paintings, these are location sketches hurriedly drawn with bold lines and unmatched tempo, as if under the compulsion to finish fast and move on to capture the *spectacle* at the next locale. In the paintings, the re-presentation of *lifelessness* of the famine-hit city on the brink of being completely impoverished of its 'humanely' qualities, for the first time becomes so fizzing with energy and *liveliness* within an otherwise vapid art(istic) circuit, that it emphatically kindles, to reiterate Sher-Gil, 'intense emotion' and 'profound reactions'.

I ask the readers, at this point, to take a close look at the contours of the bodies of the subjects in the images. The figures in Chittaprosad's woodcut (image 1) emerge from an abyss of mysterious darkness, and two of them, possibly with an accusatory but insistent gaze, look straight into the eyes of the viewers. In the second image, it is hard to tell if it is an animal carcass or a human dead body that the animals are devouring. The bodies are skeletal, exposed, fragile, vulnerable, and starkly differ from the glib and formulaic Rubensian bodies in Ravi Verma style paintings or the divinized, etherealized bodies in the Bengal school paintings. This makes the images constitutive of an intrepid avant gardism, and therefore quintessentially modern. The ghastliness of the images and their obsession with the grotesque are reminiscent of the paintings from the later phase of Goya's career as well as German expressionism. This grotesqueness, however, is a testament to a particular event in history. The stylistic practice of picturing perceived time (as opposed to homogenous empty time), in other words, anchoring the image to an event, radically breaks away from the Bengal School and the Ravi Verma traditions that had taken time off the frame. To be precise, these images serve a mnemonic function that Deleuze (2003: 17) calls a 'direct relation

with time and thought'. The viscerality embedded in the images cannot but evoke 'the disturbances of memory and the failures of recognition' (Deleuze, 2003: 55) while functioning as a mnemonic of the politics of testimonial evidentialism, colonial disavowal of the famine, and cultures of temporality in contemporary aesthetic practices.

Specifically, going out into the streets off the 'ivory tower' of the salon equipped the artists with the 'intensity' to engage with the *real* in a fundamentally different way. Chittaprosad himself, in fact, embodied the 'traveling artist' making his sketches always on the move. Abedin's sketches, for example, were often painted on cheap wrapping papers, or whatever came handy in the rapid rendering of a fleeting experience (hence the yellowish tinge; see images 4 and 5). Their pictorial proposition vividly reflecting the immediacy of the lived moment would, on the one hand, unleash a salvo in the face of political apathy of the generic painter and would question the *blasé* attitude⁶⁶ of the average middle class bourgeois city-dweller, which is the 'we', on the other. Resonating with Baudelairean description of Monsieur G, this striking extemporaneity is what, according to Baudelaire (2001: 6), makes the painter of the modern life 'not precisely an *artist*, but rather a *man of the world*.' The tendency of going *out*, if I may call it *outward mobility*, is what I would like to underline as the generic marker of a new form of emerging artistic expression, a political repertoire to aestheticize the *deprivation*⁶⁷ when it came to depicting the 'vagrant'. In other words, this avant-garde practice shows the bourgeois viewer precisely what he does not want to see, and in so

⁶⁶ The idea of *blasé* attitude has been borrowed from Simmel (2002). The city, for Simmel, 'stimulates the nerves to their utmost reactivity until they finally can no longer produce any reaction at all...The essence of the *blasé* attitude is an indifference toward the distinctions between things...[toward] the meaning and value of distinctions between things...' (ibid.:14).

⁶⁷ The idea of 'deprivation' is actually what Sen invokes while writing of the famine. The phrase is also embedded in the (sub-)title of his (1982) book.

doing, in good modernist style deflates the bourgeois ego and the conventions associated therewith.

According to Susan Sontag (2003: 47), the function of the painting is 'to evoke' while that of the photograph is 'to show'. I want to appropriate Sontag's distinction between *evoking* and *showing* as an apparatus to think through the painter's mastery of and inventiveness with style here. Implicit in showing is an element of neutrality, a certain distance between the one who shows and that what is shown. Say for example, the projector *shows* a movie. To evoke is to (selectively) retrieve something from the totality of pastness, and therefore involves situating oneself with respect to that what came before. In their evocation of the 'vagrant', Chittaprosad and Abedin pushed the boundaries of the 'horizon of expectation': they declined to work with the formal traditions that already existed, and instead invented one that made the previously occluded reality visible. This is quite a political statement in itself, for their quintessentially modernist technique maps their position with respect to what Bourdieu (1993) calls the 'artistic field'. Their profound and self-conscious will to style, in a way, becomes:

(t)he space of literary or artistic position-takings, i.e. the structured set of the manifestations of the social agents involved in the field – literary or artistic works, of course, but also political acts or pronouncements, manifestos or polemics, etc... (Bourdieu, 1993: 30).

In other words, their style becomes the metaphor of their position. Their dissenting style functions as, to put in Barthes' (1981: 26) evocative phrase, the *punctum* 'that rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me', that, in this case, latches my attention immediately onto something 'I' have completely disavowed until now.

Baudelaire's (2001: 15) observation that Monsieur G 'began by being an observer of life, and only later set himself the task of acquiring the means of expressing it' is

acutely true of the famine paintings. The style of expression here could not be more suited for the *evocation* of the 'vagrant'. Not only did these paintings attain a cult status of their own but they would also become the precursor of a(n-other) *realist* style outside of *Realism*⁶⁸ and possibly more real than *Realism* could ever be. In retrospect, it can be said that this *outward mobility* was passed on to a bunch of neo-realist artists, film makers in particular, for whom taking the medium out in the street was of paramount importance, both from an ethical and aesthetic standpoint, in order to record those who are at the 'outside'. Say for example, the first Indian film to go *out* with the camera in the streets, *Chinnamul (Uprooted, 1950)*, that also happens to be the first Indian film on Partition, found the film making inventory *within* the studio system insufficient when it came to depicting the lives of refugees in post-Partition Calcutta. Biswas (2007: 81,82) observes:

The first part of the film, set in a village in east Bengal, was largely shot in the studio and mixes the most conservative aspects of the studio style with documentary exposition (for example, voice-over narration) and agit-prop visual modes (allegorical pantomime) without much success. *As the peasants arrive in Calcutta, however, the cityscape invades the frame of representation* and works to disperse the narrative line, It is not accidental that the principles of film-making mentioned by the director, Ghosh, echo those of neorealist filmmaking. (italics mine)

This dichotomy in *Chinnamul*, as observed by Biswas, serves as a testament to how the paradigmatic shift – from Realism to Neorealism – perforce coined a new language of expression when it came to imag(in)ing the new subject, that is the 'vagrant'. There is no other text, not one I can remember, that enunciates this transition so

⁶⁸ I am abstaining from calling this Neo-Realist, because Neo-Realism demarcates a break away from a particular technique and stylistic representation of Realism, which was yet to be prevalent in the Indian context. It is in the Italian context that Neo-Realism, roughly speaking, is associated with the year 1944. In the Indian context, however, it is not until the 1960s – with Satyajit Ray's early films – that what is retro-actively called Neo-Realism gains currency as an aesthetic technique both for practicing and discussing art.

significantly. The novelty of the expression was organically coupled with the birth of a new kind of agency, rather a new object of inquiry for the work of art, which was hitherto a taboo within the dominant aesthetic regime. *Chinnamul* would provide us with the thread to enter into the discussion on film to follow, but I shall leave it mothballed here for the time being and resume the discussion on painting.

Another domain the genre of paintings hit hard in the shift described above was the basic organizability of space, both at the level of painterly composition and the reconfiguration of the cityscape under process. Let us revisit the paintings. They show an absolute rigor in terms of economization of space. First, they defy the immaculate orderliness of spatial distribution immanent in academic painting: the conventional arrangement of the foreground, midground and background. The *backgroundlessness*, typified in images 1 and 5, can be read as a metaphor of lack of situatedness of the homeless 'vagrant', now a refugee literally with no *ground* to hold on to. Secondly, look at the amount of space that has been framed (refer to images 3 and 4). In image 3, the subject's head marginally fits into the frame while the other person (top right corner) in the background has been thrown out of the frame. Similarly, in image 4, the figure, depicted to be anatomically disproportionate because of malnourishment, barely squeezes itself into the frame. It appears as though had the figure been horizontally aligned it would not have fitted in the frame, hence the diagonal composition. The austerity in depiction of space in the compositions, on the one hand, can be read as a metaphor of the urban denial of room to the liminal figure of the 'vagrant' only to be quarantined with surgical precision. On the other hand, the break from the tradition of spatially configuring the compositions in terms of fore, mid and backgrounds can be read as a subversive act of de-hierarchization. The Renaissance technique of allocating space into fore, mid and back grounds is meant to

reinforce the status quo: it reflects the relative importance, often determined in respect to the weight of one's social stature, among those who feature in the painting, and also that between the painter and the painted⁶⁹. Bachelard (1994) posits that representation of space often restricts our way of experiencing the space and keeps us away from 'an apprenticeship to freedom' (xxvii). Inasmuch as an architect who moves beyond the system of set rules or a poet who surpasses using stock metaphors 'awakens images that had been effaced' (Bachelard, 1994: xxvii), Chittaprosad and Abedin in abolishing the layering of fore-mid-backgrounds zeroes in (the viewer's) entire attention on to images under-represented in traditional painting. In other words, the spatial maneuvering in these paintings in the form of chiseling out the 'vagrant' from obscurity impacts a change in the on-looker's relationship to the image, to the image of the 'vagrant' in particular.

For the Realist painter, copybook distribution of space is quintessentially important because it reflects her (subjective) position, quite literally, with respect to what she paints (the object), and the impression of realism in fact depends upon these precisely calculable distances. Therefore, it requires that the artist must dissociate herself from the image, and so must the onlooker in order for the impression of reality to be perceived accurately. Conversely, in case of the famine paintings, the re-presentation and its fidelity to the *real* is not as important as the 'simultaneity of being-with' (Nancy, 2000: 68) the 'vagrant', making the ethos of vagrancy palpable to the onlooker. Jean-Luc Nancy (2000) asserts that we perceive ourselves as individuals only in relation to, when in dialogue with, not necessarily in contrast to, others. In that sense, for Nancy (2000: 32), *being* by default means 'being-with': 'the singularity of each

⁶⁹ For details on the techniques of spatial arrangement in Renaissance paintings, see Richardson (2007); and for an overview on the psychological impact of the said technique, see Kubovy (1986). Johnson's (2005: 55-60) passing reference to the style of linear perspective while writing of Renaissance art in general, however, is a quick and easy introduction on this topic.

being is indissociable from its being-with-many...because, in general, a singularity is indissociable from a plurality'. It is this *being-with-ness* that, I argue, characterizes these famine paintings as a separate genre. By rendering the background invisible all it does is to make the invisibility of the 'vagrant' more 'obvious' (Nancy, 2005: 12). 'In the ground of the image,' writes Nancy (2005: 97), 'there is the imagination, and in the ground of the imagination there is the other, the look of the other, that is, the look onto the other and the other as look'. For Nancy, therefore, the 'singularity' of the image 'comes from the "other", and not from the auto-intuited self...' (2005: 97). This is precisely what I see at the heart of Chittaprosad and Abedin's paintings. By obscuring the spatial coordinates they make it impossible for the viewer to gauge the point of reference with respect to which the painting has been framed. This means the viewer now cannot re-situate herself in the artist's position, that of the omnipotent *seer* (as it demands in the case of an orthodox Realist painting), rather the 'look' constituted in viewing the painting now has to emit directly from the image itself, that is the object of the image.

This reversal of the 'look' is particularly de-hierarchizing because it blurs the distinction between the subject and the object of painting and dissipates the authority of the painter over the painted. It appears, in these paintings, as if the 'vagrant' is self-representing from the edge of urban amnesia, and immediately what this puts into stake is the relation(ality) of the 'vagrant' as the Other with the connoisseur of painting, the salon-going *bhadralok* (gentry). This is, however, not to say that these painters efface themselves. Rather, this effect is achieved not only by the centrality of the figures but also by the style in which they are represented. It is hard, as I argued before, not to notice them consciously showcasing their extraordinary will to style. What I am insisting here is that the impetus for inventive style inevitably characterizes a new form of mediation: the underpinnings of style actually bring about a change in how

the bourgeois viewer looked at paintings. Take for example, in a classic Realist painting (as opposed to, say, a Cubist painting) the grammar of spatial distribution that renders the pictured space navigable. By virtue of realist simulation I can imagine myself navigating within the representational topography. This experience of simulated mobility delineates my position-takings with respect to that which is moved through, and by extension, the 'artistic field', in the sense that I can now keep myself off that which I want to be (symbolically) distant from. Now, consider the famine paintings. I do not see the 'vanishing point' in any of the images, and therefore, cannot make sense of the geographics of the pictured space. In this minimalist representation of space, my gaze is overwhelmingly captured by the 'vagrant' whom I can no way evade. The *backgroundlessness* of the images invites the viewer to dip into the frame and directly engage with the 'vagrant'. There is no surplus space in these frames that the viewer in disavowal of the 'vagrant' can move on to. The spatial coordinates of these paintings operate on an ideological level rather than an informational one. It rather becomes a question of ideological position-takings within the 'artistic field'. Inasmuch as the 'author function', for Foucault (1984: 107) 'performs a certain role with regard to narrative discourse, assuring a classificatory function' and renders certain texts to 'differentiate them from and contrast them to others', the (nature of the) painter's authorial intervention, if I may call it the 'painter function' paraphrasing Foucault, renders 'differentiability' between who looks onto the canvas and what/who is being looked onto. The painter decides what has got to be on the frame, his style hints at how those should be viewed, his composition determines their relative importance. Until now, the painter, with the *bhadralok* being her patron, was a mediating figure who would conform to the aesthetic sensibility of the *bhadralok* class. What happens now is the sacrilegious act of the betrayal by the painter: the painter is no longer looking at the

'vagrant' in the way the *bhadralok* would have expected (in some cases commissioned) her to have looked at. The painter outrightly brings into the frame the witness of an event, a traumatic past that the *bhadralok* are upto disavowing. In *evoking* the abjected figure of the 'vagrant, the painter falters to fulfill her role of 'differentiation', to safeguard the crevasse between the *bhadralok* and the 'vagrant'. In that case, the hierarchies immanent in the triadic relation among *we*, *you* and *they*; that among the connoisseur of the work of art, the subject of the work of art and the object of the look; that among the *bhadralok*, the painter and the 'vagrant' all stand irreparably disrupted.

Now, let us contemplate for a while on Nandy's (2001: 89) statement: 'The victims [of the famine] seemingly took their suffering as an act of fate and the concerned citizens of Calcutta, unable to seriously intervene, had to pretend to the same fatalism'. What I argue in context of the famine paintings is that this 'inevitability of suffering' was being questioned: not only because a handful of painters were committed to intervene as 'concerned citizens of Calcutta', but also the very nature of their intervention, involving the grammar and style, in which the vagrant finally found his agential subjectivity. This implies that the 'vagrant' is no longer merely a passive painterly object posited at the receiving-end of the spectatorial gaze onto the canvas, but acquires an emancipatory expressibility that pummels the bourgeois aesthetic values and provokes the city dweller to engage with. This rise to prominence from obscurity in the realm of painting can be read as an allegory of the real 'vagrant' sneaking into the city as the 'dangerous outcast'⁷⁰ laden with the potential to de-hierarchize the social co-ordinates, devour the spatial organizability of the city, destabilize the city's

⁷⁰ Banerjee (1998) uses this expression while writing of prostitutes in colonial India. Banerjee's project demonstrates how prostitutes, who used to be an integral part of the 'pre-modern' Indian society', have been perceived as 'dangerous outcast' in the colonial era. In this sense, there is an overlap between his project and mine, for I am tracing a similar trajectory of the 'vagabond'.

coherent sociality that David Harvey (1993: 8) calls the 'serial replication of homogeneity'.

Despite his all social engineering attempts – since the Malthusian-Eugenicist endeavors of the 1930s to the Vagrancy Acts and Beggary Abolition Statutes of the 1940s – geared towards erasure of the 'vagrant', the city dweller suddenly realizes that this unwelcome visitor from the village would be here at the city to stay, for the village life and the agrarian economy entering it has completely dissipated after the famine, and the latter has apparently nowhere to *go back to*. While reporting of the famine K.C. Ghosh (1944: 86-87) cites the instance of:

An unclaimed dead body of a Hindu boy of about 12 years partly devoured by jackals and vultures was found yesterday morning lying in front of the Government Grain Shop near Chashara Police Outpost at Narayangunj. It is suspected that the boy was molested by jackals and vultures in the preceding night when he was in a precarious condition owing to starvation.

Now consider this reportage in juxtaposition with Chittaprosad's sketch, retrieved here as image 2. I do not wish to reiterate how vivid the sketch is. In fact, there is no evidence to support that Chittaprosad sketched the same incident Ghosh had reported. What I want to draw attention to is the fact that the famine among all atrocities initiates this temporal rupture whereby 'non-rare sights', grotesque as they are, literally from the edge of the streets make way into the artist's canvas. At a time when '[a] fight between vultures and dogs [over dead bodies] is not a rare sight' (Ghosh, 1944: 109), the salon-going city dweller sees *in* the paintings what he is seeing *out* there in the streets. That the gap between the *real* and the *artistic* is narrowed down, that the serenity of the *artistic* is impacted by the grotesqueness of the *real* is not something the art connoisseur was used to and hence found disturbing for the status quo. The shadowy images of the 'vagrant' haunt him both *in* and *out* of the salon, as if the 'vagrant' as an entity has now become non-disavowable. Now that 'they' could not be gotten rid of,

the concern for 'we' was: how to quarantine the 'vagrants'? How can the 'vagrant' be domesticated? How can the antithetical Other be subsumed within the coherent sociality?

Consequently, 'in the interest of the destitutes themselves as well as of the citizens of Calcutta' (*The Statesman*, 6 Nov, 1943), the city dweller took it upon himself to 'rehabilitate' the 'vagrant'. In the first chapter, I showed how the *Bengal Vagrancy Act* deemed:

any officer authorized by Government to apprehend any person who, in the opinion of such officer, is a destitute, and detain him or her in a place provided for the purpose until the person is repatriated. (Cited in Ghosh, 1944: 123)

In congruence with the repatriation project, destitute homes started mushrooming in rapid succession. In no time, the intake capacity of the destitute homes far exceeded the number of repatriation-seekers (*The Statesman*, 6 Nov, 1943). In October 1943, '(t)he number of starving destitutes in Calcutta was estimated to be at least 100,000' (Sen, 1982: 57). In an early November *Statesman* reportage, the figure has been estimated to be 150,000 (*The Statesman*, 6 Nov, 1943). In the face of 'continuous tides of population' still pouring in from the villages and the 'tumultuous sea of human heads' (Poe, 1960: 215-6) that have already gathered in the city, the government managed to 'repatriate' only 3,000 destitutes to what it has in the official documents often referred to as temporary 'homes'⁷¹ (*The Statesman*, 1 Nov, 1943). On 6 November, *The Statesman*

⁷¹ The naming of these shelters as 'homes' is very evocative. Implicit in calling the shelters 'homes' was the idea that people should stay *at home* at their places of habitual/originary residence, thus making the homeless people, that is the rural immigrants and refugees, appear deviants. It is also to be remembered in this context that the idea of 'home/house' itself is very amorphous and yielded different perceptions in different times. The *Census Terms* of Govt. of India briefly traces the evolution of the concept: 'The term 'house' in India covers the greatest diversity of dwellings. In 1872 a house was defined as "any permanent structure which on land, serves or would serve for the accommodation of human beings, or of animals, or goods of any description provided always that it could not be struck and removed bodily like a tent or a mud hut". An attempt was also made to classify the houses as of the 'better sort' and of

reported that lest the setting up of these 'homes' would appear counter-productive the government stressed on the need for faster repatriation. Relief Commissioner O.M. Martin, however, had a very different explanation to this dismay. According to his version: '[P]eople did not want to go into shelters...[even if] they got two good meals a day and also got clothes – they kept running away' (*Nanavati Papers*: 529).

What needs asking then is: why would people run away? However, some other testimonies⁷² in the *Nanavati Paper* do conform to what Sen (1982: 57) has drawn our attention to: the very fact 'that 'repatriation' was rather more firmly achieved than 'relief' in many 'destitute homes' and 'camps' set up *outside* Calcutta' (italics mine). If the repatriation itself is forced then understandably there must have been resistance to it. The use of *force*, ironically in question of providing relief that the 'vagrant' clearly refuses to receive, unfolds like what Foucault (1995) calls 'the spectacle of the scaffold' threateningly bringing forth a message loud and clear for the refugees: mobility in the urban space outside of 'instrumental rationality' was immediately incarcerable. This

'inferior sort'. In the census of 1881 house was defined as the dwelling place of one or more families with thier [sic.] servants, having a separate principal entrance from the public way. The same definition with slight modification continued till 1951. In 1961 census 'House' was defined as a structure or part of a structure inhabited or vacant, or a dwelling, a shop, a shop-cum-dwelling or a place of business, workshop, school etc. with a separate main entrance. In 1971 census, 'House' was defined 'as a building or part of a building having a separate main entrance from the road or common courtyard or stair case etc. Used or recognised as a separate unit. It may be inhabited or vacant. It may be used for a residential or non-residential purpose or both' (*Census Terms*, online). In retrieving the passage, what I am pointing to is the increasing order in the definitional broadening of 'home/house'. More amorphous the definition of the 'home' is, easier it becomes for the administration to disavow the homeless people. Therefore, the Census data is not always the most reliable source in analyzing homelessness over across time, for one has to factor in the shift in definition of 'home' itself.

⁷² Dr. Maitreyee Bose of the All-India Women's Conference Relief Committee, for example, brought up a poignant narrative in her testimony: 'A maid servant's daughter in my sister's family was sitting on the doorstep waiting for her mother to finish her job. A lorry came and took her *forcibly* in sight of the mother, thinking her to be a destitute child. No one would listen that she was not a destitute child' (*Nanavati Papers*: 783; italics mine).

phenomenon and its implications have been succinctly summed up in Janam

Mukherjee's (2011: 209-10) observation:

In the context of famine, establishing a "right" to remain in Calcutta often meant the difference between life and death. A right to Calcutta meant a territorial claim. The round up and removal of "sick destitutes" from the streets was, in this sense, only a more stark and authoritarian means of establishing "priority." The question of who "belonged" in [sic.] Calcutta and who did not, who was to be granted residence and who removed, who was "essential" and who disposable – al [sic.] these had been central to patrolling the space of Calcutta...

This regulatory intent is symptomatic of the desire to territorialize 'social' space into what Lefebvre (1992) calls 'differential space' – a (re)organization of the coordinates of space and movement based upon the dialectics of (in)admissibility – that disenfranchises and expels those that are unwanted, all in the name of relief, and without having to deploy coercive interventions.

Let me bring up another evocative excerpt from Martin's testimony as a case study to better illustrate what Martin calls the 'mentality of wandering', the dynamics of refusal to be recipients of relief, and the politics of culpability involved therein. Martin (*Nanavati Papers*: 540) emphatically complained:

The wandering habit amongst the children was difficult to be stopped. Famine orphanages had to have prison rooms. Children – skin and bone – had got into the *habit* of feeding like dogs. You tried to give them a decent meal, but they would break away and start wandering about and eat filth. You had to lock them up in a special room... they [had] developed the *mentality* of wandering (italics mine).

This remarkable passage probes into a number of issues: is this an exaggeration to save the face of the colonial administration? Is Martin blinded by his ideological view of the destitute? Or, above all, if they did run away, which is indeed conceivable given that the repatriation was forced, why did they do so? I am not up to scrutinizing the evidentiality of Martin's testimony, but rather concerned with the discursive articulation centering the *wandering mentality*. The rationalization

for the cleansing project is evidently being couched in a rhetoric of delinquency. What is interesting to note here is that Martin surgically locates the 'symptom' of wandering *in(side)* the subject, more precisely, *in(side)* the body of the delinquent wanderer, and in so doing, discounts all socio-political conditions at play and the colonial liabilities that come therewith.

Martin's incrimination of the 'wandering mentality', in a sense, invokes the positivist axiomatics of the 1871 Criminal Tribe Act, wherein the etiology of wandering had been reduced to non-culturally embedded gene. This immediately makes certain bodies repudiable, disposable and outcast. I, hereby, underline the aspect of performativity immanent in Martin's proclamation that, by invoking the right authority, deems certain practices of wandering 'mental'. In other words, fleeing forced repatriation within the ambit of performative discourse of testimonial evidentialism can be seen as what Turner (1969) calls the 'liminal ritual', that what renders the refugee 'vagrant'. Mary Douglas (2002) argues that identification of 'dirt' and inhibitions about 'purity' do not convey anything about the dirtiness of the 'dirt', but is rather reflective of the culture and context that perceive the 'dirt' as dirt. Along the line of Douglas' argument, what I propose is that symptommatization of wandering as a 'mental' phenomenon (as opposed to a social one) rather reflects the stakes in 'separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions' (Douglas, 2002: 4). It immediately legitimizes the disposability of certain pathologized bodies that now characterizes what, after Butler (1993: 243), may be called 'certain abject zones within sociality'⁷³. To note, the vagrants are fleeing from rehab 'homes' *outside* of Calcutta.

⁷³ In appropriating Kristeva's notion of 'abject', Butler's project is to bring the concept from the realm of the symbolic into that of the social, the political. In Butler's (1993: 243, n.2) own words: '[T]he notion of *abjection* designates a degraded or cast out status within the terms of sociality. Indeed what if foreclosed or repudiated *within* psychoanalytic terms is precisely what may not reenter the field of the social ...I want to propose that certain abject zones

Inasmuch as 'dirt' functions as a symbolic demarcation between the 'home' and the *outside*, the systemic peripheralization, stigmatization and deprioritization of the 'vagrant' symbolically delineate the topography of Calcutta, which is further to say, an essentially bourgeois territorializing of the city.

Urban geography, according to Barthes (1997: 159), 'can be considered as a kind of obliteration, of censorship that objectivity has imposed on signification [of the city]...'. Martin's testimony is the obliterating censorship par excellence. It characterizes the undercurrent of a collective agonizing over the unworthiness and disposability of the transgressive bodies, which, to paraphrase Butler (1993), are the bodies that *do not* matter. The *abandonment* of the 'vagrant' from Calcutta, from the objectivized urban space in general is evocative of the figure of the *homo sacer*, the killing of whom, according to Agamben (1998), is not condemnable for homicide, but rather totally legitimate. The scathing scrutiny of sacrificial subjects, disposable bodies, un(co)habitable citizens typifies a certain epochal perception of the 'vagrant', the two flagposts that bracket this era being the famine and the Partition. Between the famine and the Partition, the refugee inhabits the body of that queerly interstitial subject who is made to appear as 'vagrant' before the sacrificial ritual. Inasmuch as the performative discourse of law tends to turn the terrorist into an anti-national in order for his marginalization to be sanctioned, the welfare state turned the refugee into a vagrant to socially sanction his ostracization. Along the trajectory of episodic

within sociality also deliver this threat, constituting zones of uninhabitability which a subject fantasizes as threatening its own integrity with the prospect of a psychotic dissolution ("I would rather die than do or be that!"). Or, in context of Martin's testimony: 'I would rather be a vagrant than a refugee'; or, 'I would rather be homeless than struck at the rehab' etc. In segregating the un(co)habitable bodies, Martin renders the delinquent 'psychotic', his tendency of fleeing 'mental', while I argue that it is more a problem of the social than of the mental. I am reappropriating the notion of 'abject' here, following Butler, as an apparatus to underline how the problem cuts across the interface of the mental and the social.

marginalization of the vagrant, the population crisis of the 1930s, rise in refugeehood in the 1940s (due to the famine and the Partition), and the discourse of development 1950s onward all unfold as a causal grand narrative. While the refugees appeared transgressive particularly in the face of population crisis, the aid-refusing refugee was rendered 'vagrant' by the welfarist ethos of development discourse, set out to restore the very coordinates of bourgeois sociality that the transgression of the refugees had unsettled. Following the 'modern' nation-state's new liaison with developmentalism, the 'vagrant' would break with the shibboleths of refugeehood, and be posed as the figure of the 'lumpen' always in the receiving- end of development. For the new nation-state, the shadowy figures of the 'vagabond', after all, would haunt as awkward 'memories of underdevelopment'⁷⁴.

Subarnarekha: The Cultural Politics of Home

The indefinite delaying of Indian independence was, in fact, based upon the colonial accusation that the Indians lacked national imagination. Indeed so, the rationale for 'not-fit-for-now' logic justifying the continuation of colonial rule, particularly when independence seemed to be just around the corner, pointed to the overall incohesiveness of the Indian society being obliterated by two splintering forces: class and caste. 'The truth is', confesses Harold Laski in his letter to his friend Felix Frankfurter, '...that we (the British) ought not to stay in India (cited in Martin, 1953: 58). He goes on to say:

Literally and simply, we are not morally fit to do the job...*I add my grave doubts whether the Indians can govern themselves. But it is better for them to make efforts than to have this running sore at the heart of things.* If they fail, let it be their failure. Our success (if it were not too late) would only deepen their sense of inferiority. (italics

⁷⁴ I am borrowing the expression from Tomas Gutierrez Alea's (1968) film of the same title.

mine)

Although written in 1923 Laski's letter best encapsulates the temperament of the British as the parting administrator that, among all things, credited itself for having bestowed upon the Indians the sense of national integrity. The challenge before the (Hindu) nationalist elite in accomplishing the transfer of power in their favor was to evade what Guha (1982: 5-6) calls 'an important historical truth, that is, the *failure of the bourgeois to speak for the nation*' (Guha's italics). This fueled an unprecedented momentum in expressing concern for the subalterns, the down-trodden in various capacities, which was captured in the ethos of the concept of *seva*. With its implicit reference to the *yogic* tradition of selfless service to god, *seva*, within the domain of nationalist politics, acquired a new valency in rebutting the British's vulnerable denial of independence.

Seva, in other words, concern for development of the marginalized, was, therefore, symbolic of the bourgeois-elite Indian earning his capability of self-rule. Once again, what it did was to reinforce the hierarchy between the donor and the recipient of *seva*. According to Srivatsan (2009: 26):

It (*seva*) permitted the caste-Hindu middle classes to occupy the ethical high ground through the practice and discourse of *seva* in the public space conducted through the proxy of the *seva* activist, i.e., the *Sevak*. The *sevak* was the ideal figure of the fully formed citizen, often represented in the Gandhian journals such as the *Harijan* and the *Harijan Sevak*.

In tandem with this rite of passage demarcating his emancipation from a subject (of the colonial rule) to a citizen (of the nation-state), the nationalist bourgeois engineered an 'ethical hegemony' of dissemination of development that 'was based on the principle of authoritarian charity, rather than on the principles of right or justice' (Ibid.: 27). As evident in the forced rehabilitation project in context to the famine victims, in this form of welfarist articulation of development the agency of the recipient is totally

nullified. For the welfarist state vested with a sense of benign benevolence towards the marginalized, the paradigm of development thus becomes 'the governing rationality in twentieth-century India' (Ibid.: 27).

Edwards (2010: 763-807), in pointing to the inadequacy of legal frameworks to be able to take care of refugee problems, sufficiently argues that welfare agencies, however, reduce refugees to enumerable protection-seekers, rather than considering them as discrete individuals capable positively contributing to the host communities. What Edwards points to, in essence, draws our attention to the implicit patron-client relation between the provider and the recipient of welfare, rather than one based on hospitality. In that case, what follows from Edwards' arguments is that the 'ritual' of aid-giving mechanisms more often than not turns out to be quite destructive for the target groups, for it showcases more of the granter's 'ability to govern' than his ethical responsibility towards the grantee. In this schema of development discourse, the home constitutes as a positivist index of development, as a function of modernity, and hence counts as the centrality of welfare idiom. In that case, *not wanting* to be home is not a valid choice. This development paradigm is symbolic of systematic erasure of a cultural past that had tolerated the *choice* of itinerancy as a legitimate practice. As of the Indian context, the seismic break from the colonial to the post-colonial rendered the 'imagined community', that is India, as 'Third World', by definition in need of 'a guided, tutored, coaxed process of transformation...[to] meet the norms and standards of the First World' (Srivatsan, 2009:15).

The construction of 'underdevelopment' has been designed in a theoretical framework by and for the First World, which now takes place of colonial logic of civilizational/racial superiority, such that 'developing' nations keep approaching, but never quite reach 'development'. In keeping pace with this illusory standard of

'development' which is perennially deferred, 'the Third World ruling elite...collaborates with the First World seen as a guide or tutor in the process of transformation' (Srivatsan, *ibid.*:15). The 'manufacturing' of the Third World, which to say manufacturing *the world of the third*, third as in the Other, as pointed to by Said (1993: 332), has:

... produced more refugees, migrants, displaced persons, and exiles than even before in history of, most them as an accompaniment to and, ironically enough, as afterthoughts of great post-colonial and imperial conflicts. As the struggle for independence produced new states and new boundaries, it also produced homeless wanderers, nomads, vagrants, unassimilated to the emerging structures of institutional power, rejected by the established order for their intransigence and obdurate rebelliousness.

What is important to note in this context is the 'vicious circle' of development: how the undercurrent of development manufactures refugees, migrants, wanderers, nomads, vagrants etc., who are then rounded up for *forced* rehabilitation for the sake of development.

With the pathos of homelessness centering the Partition, the cumulative aspiration for (re)locating oneself at home deepened, which made the 'imaginary signifier' of the home appear as an 'obscure object of desire'⁷⁵, and in contrast, the homeless as jarring within the backdrop of nationalist integrity. I will argue that Ghatak's *Subarnarekha* (1962) can be read as a metaphor of the normalizing force behind making home appear seductively desirable. This also allows me to tuck in the thread I had left suspended while mentioning *Chinnamul* (1950) in the context of the famine paintings. Ghatak's career in cinema took off as an assistant director to Nemai Ghosh on *Chinnamul* (1950), the first Indian film to have dealt with the Partition. During a climactic moment in the film an elderly woman, upon finding that after the Partition leaving her home in East Pakistan for India is now inevitable,

⁷⁵ In borrowing the expression, I have paraphrased the title of Luis Bunuel's last film (1977).

'refuses to let go of her home's door-post and shouts out in the local Bangal dialect, 'Jamu na, ami sosurer bhita chaira jamu na' (I'll not go, leaving my in-laws' house behind. '; cited in and translated by Mandal, 2008: 67). This symbolizes the resistance of the refugee to leave her home in the first place. However, the irony is now that she is a vagrant in the streets of Calcutta she is accused of refusing to go to 'destitute homes', which rationalizes the whole enterprise of *forced* rehabilitation. If we are to assume that prohibition precedes resistance, in this case *Chinnamul* (1950) sheds light on the prohibitory construction of an urban social space with selective-discriminatory accessibility.

Ghatak watched Ghosh from close proximity and when it came to making his own films the theme of Partition directly or tangentially ran across his entire oeuvre, not to mention of the Partition-trilogy⁷⁶, his magnum opus. The expression 'new home' (*natun bari*) appears like a leitmotif in *Subarnarekha* (1962). It is uttered by Sita, the film's protagonist, almost as a refrain throughout the film, but apparently all protagonists in *Subarnarekha* do embark upon finding 'new home' at some point or the other. In fact, the discursive trope of home(lessness) is something that most, if not all, of Ghatak's major protagonists have to negotiate with – jobless Ramu (Satindra Bhattacharya) in *Nagarik* (1952/77), delinquent Kanchan (Param Bharak Lahiri) in *Bari Theke Paliye* (1958), Shankar (Anil Chatterjee) in *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960), Bhrigu (Abinash Bannerjee) in *Komal Gandhar* (1961), invariably all characters in *Titas Ekti Nadir Nam* (1973) and Neelkantha (Ghatak) in *Jukti Takko Ar Gappo* (1974). However, it is in *Subarnarekha* that Sita fixatedly utters 'new home'. As a child she had been uprooted from her home, orphaned because of the ordeals of Partition.

⁷⁶ *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960), *Komal Gandhar* (1961), and *Subarnarekha* (1962) are considered Ghatak's Partition trilogy.

At one level, Sita's obsessive utterance and search for 'new home' can be viewed as an allegory of the Partition-torn nation's search for salvation; while at another level, depending on exactly where we put the stress, it can be interpreted as Ghatak's attempt to demystify the 'newness' of the 'new home'. Ira Bhaskar (1983) has written in details on Ghatak's treatment of the mythological in context of *Meghe Dhaka Tara* and his Jungian obsession with myths in general, although Ghatak's Partition-trilogy is replete with mythic references. In that case, it would not be too far of a stretch to imagine that Ghatak knew of the mythic figure of the wanderer venerated in the 'pre-modern', which possibly made it difficult for him to conceive why the welfarist nation always perceived the refugee always in *want* of home⁷⁷. By making Sita utter 'new home' obsessively, is Ghatak then gesturing towards how the home shifts away from 'habitual residence' to a development index?

The film opens with Ishwar and Sita having 'settled' in the *Nabajiban* refugee colony, the name evocative of a new beginning, where Haraprasad is hoisting the Indian flag as an inauguration of a precarious-looking self-founded primary school. Sita's elder brother Ishwar has been appointed as teacher in Haraprasad's school. The shot then cuts to a low-caste widow with her son seeking shelter in the refugee colony. However, the refugee colony even is not free from its own sectarianism: this colony only shelters refugees from Pabna while this widow is from Dhaka. Accordingly, her earnest persuasion to provide her with a little place at some corner turns futile. The man responsible for allocating the refugees and whom she was speaking to uncouthly says: 'Unless we keep alive the differences between the districts, what else are we left with?' Meanwhile, some goons appear on the scene. Her son runs away in fear; the mother and the son are thus separated. One of the goons grabs the widow by her

⁷⁷ See supra n. 71 in this context.

hand, drags her and throws her off into a truck filled with other refugees the goons had captured, as she keeps yelling her son's name: 'Abhiram, Abhiram!' Let us take a look at the frames below and refer back to Martin's testimony collected by the Famine Commission, which I retrieved earlier. Martin's poignancy of testimony characterizes the predicament of a juvenile delinquent fleeing forced repatriation. The delinquent in Martin's testimony as though transfigures to Abhiram now fleeing to avoid his mom's fate, being rounded up by the goons.



Ishwar adopts Abhiram without actually knowing of his low-caste origin. But, Ishwar has to, in Haraprasad's words, 'desert' the colony not too long after this, for he has promised to find a 'new home' for Sita. Ishwar brings Sita and Abhiram to Chatimpur, but decides to send Abhiram off to a boarding school soon after. Ghatak juxtaposes the serene riverine landscape of Chatimpur where Ishwar thought Sita (and Abhiram) would find a 'new home' with the haunting run-down aerodrome, a site little Sita and Abhiram used to play around. Incidentally it is the same site where Sita would

encounter the *bahurupēe*, disguised as Kali, that not only scares Sita but the suddenness of his appearance also brings a visual jerk for the audience, as though to symbolically premonish the collapse of the 'new home' to follow. The protagonists of *Subarnarekha*, Ishwar, Sita and Abhiram, all perpetually sway back and forth between finding and losing home, between rooted in and uprooted from the home. In other words, Ghatak never allows his characters to settle; whenever they do their 'new home' collapses only to kickstart the quest for the next. It is the desire for finding a home which is at the core of the film.

'Bridges and hangars, stadiums and power stations', reminds Heidegger (1971), 'are buildings but not dwellings; railway stations and highways, dams and market halls are built, but they are not dwelling places'. For Heidegger, there is a fundamental distinction between the building and the place of dwelling; he posits: 'dwelling and building as two separate activities'. The latter is a way to be in the extended world, rather the resolute way of emerging from the anonymity of the mass of the 'they', as in the non-I. The place of dwelling, rather, couches the distilled core of one's experiences, nurtures one's *being*, that is the Heideggerian *dasein*. In other words, the dwelling is an extension of oneself, which is further to say, is by itself an embodied experience of *space*, rather than a piece of architectural structure. On the same note, Heidegger continues:

The truck driver is at home on the highway, but he does not have his shelter there; the working woman is at home in the spinning mill, but does not have her dwelling place there; the chief engineer is at home in the power station, but he does not dwell there. These buildings house man. He inhabits them and yet does not dwell in them, when to dwell means merely that we take shelter in them. [...] For building is not merely a means and a way toward dwelling – to build is in itself already to dwell.

The refugee who has lost his 'former habitual residence', has lost his 'dwelling', and thereby a part of himself. The welfarist state *builds* destitute homes to *shelter* the refugees,

which by extrapolating Heidegger's formulation can be said to have been designed to meet the 'means-end schema', but never quite suffices the requirement of *dwelling* Shacknove (2010: 163). posits that a refugee is 'a person [who is] fleeing life-threatening conditions... a well-founded fear of persecution'. 'The term "alienage"', he reminds, in the legislative sense, has to be understood as, 'a person who is *outside* the country of his nationality, or if he has no nationality, the country of his former *habitual* residence' (European Convention, Art. 1A [2], cited in Shacknove, 2010: n.164, italics mine). The question concerning territoriality, as discussed earlier in context of the famine, couches itself into a dichotomous idiom of *inside-outside*; and those who resist to be the docile recipients of the statist welfare in an environment of hostile 'alienage' become 'vagabonds', residual to the modernist project.

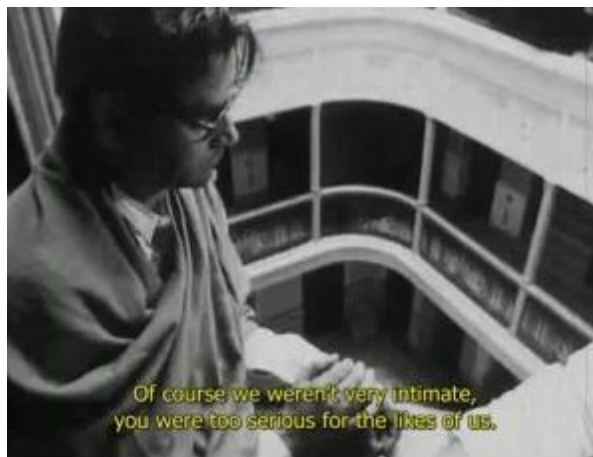
Haraprasad's founding of the primary school in the colony is reflective of his lack of faith in the official bureaucratic aid-dispersal mechanisms. It is ironic that the moment he is hoisting the flag Abhiram's mom is 'taken away' at a distance stone's throw away from Haraprasad's school. As Ishwar proceeds to intervene, Haraprasad tells the kids: '*Tomra sab Bharat-mantra ucharan karo!*' (Sing praise for the Indian nation!), which symbolizes Haraprasad's intended satire towards the nation-state's welfarist agenda. The quest for 'new home' in *Subarnarekha* is perhaps the cultural allegory of the refugee questing for the ability to 'dwell', to be *at home*, typified by Sita and Abhiram, while Ishwar, technically as the guardian vested with the duo's welfare, as if embodies the nation-state. Ishwar, however, 'deserts' the colony and Haraprasad eventually becomes a vagabond. Interestingly enough, the most-cited frame we now associate *Subarnarekha* with – as seen on DVD jackets, the film-poster, Google images and so on – on contrary to capturing the characters in some climatic sequence, shows Sita motionlessly engaged in a spectatorial gaze [See image below]. Sun-guarding

her eyes with her fist, she gazes towards the horizon where Mukherjee, caretaker of the unit of factory in Chatimpur where Ishwar has been newly appointed, points their fairytale-esque 'new home' is. Ghatak avoids the predictability of a point-of-view shot to track Sita's gaze; instead Ishwar interrupts and upbraids Mukherjee for lying to children. The 'new home' that is only shown to have been attempted by Sita to see, does not exist in reality; rather constitutes a purely metaphysical entity that exists only in the realm of the symbolic. The 'new home' in *Subarnarekha* is, therefore, by no means is a physically inhabitable *place*, but a *space* evocative of utter desire, which appears normative in contrast to the enforceability of the forced rehabilitation project, an apparatus that whose efficacy if and when questioned one is rendered a 'vagabond'.



Even before he sets off to Chatimpur, Ishwar, when offered a job by Rambilas, his erstwhile classmate, is shown confused for a moment, for the offer of the job was conditional: he had to officially sign off the pay roll against receipt of a salary higher than he would actually receive; and he might have also apprehended that Haraprasad would accuse him of 'deserting' the colony as an 'escapist'. A dramatic top-angle shot shows Ishwar standing in the balcony of Rambilas' house, architected in the pattern of a few stories of housing running around a central courtyard, with the curvilinear

structure of the lower stories across the other side in the background [See image below]. Ishwar, against the depth-of-field descending to the lower stories of the building, is looked down upon by a disembodied gaze – as if that of the *building* personified – as a potential renegade to have compromised with his idealist nature and now symbolically sliding down into the abyss of despair. While writing on the innovative use of music in *Subarnarekha* Suman (2005: 106) notes that in the shot in question, when entrepreneur Rambilas is offering Ishwar to join his factory at Chatimpur, Ghatak uses the background music of strings of a *sarod* being adjusted. Rambilas is hosting a *sarod* performance at his place when Ishwar is visiting. The *sarodist* has just finished playing a note and would begin playing the next in a while. It is at this interval Rambilas takes Ishwar out to the balcony and offers him the job. Ghatak avoids the conventional trope of using a dramatic score here, rather we hear in the background the extra-diegetic sound of the chords of a *sarod* being adjusted, which, according to Suman, is reflective of Ghatak's sense of economy of music. The adjustment of strings in the intermission is a metaphor of Ishwar's negotiation with the transformation of his own character: from being idealist to 'escapist'. This signals his journey from the community-oriented poverty-stricken refugee colony to an insular 'new home' based on parochial interests (Suman, 2005: 106).



The 'new home' at Chatimpur, however, starts falling apart the moment Ishwar

distantiates Abhiram after it is known that he is a *Bagdi* by caste and is in love with Sita. Partly in fear of thwarting his career prospect if Rambilas comes to know of this, and partly in fear of losing Sita, Ishwar stands in between their relation. Haimanti Banerjee (1985: 72) in this context sees Ishwar been projected with the characteristics of *Kali*⁷⁸, hinted earlier by the *bahurupee* disguised as *Kali*, for overbearingly shattering the dreams of Sita-Abhiram duo, and along with it his own, that of securing a 'new home' for Sita. Sita leaves Ishwar to settle in with Abhiram at Calcutta. Later in the film, Ghatak purposefully juxtaposes the sequence where Sita is singing *Aaj Dhaner Khete RoudraChhayay* (*The Sun shines on the Paddy Field Today*) in order to put Binu (her son) to sleep with one showing Ishwar entering his deserted home. The sun being the symbol of life, the song suggests Sita's is now a (poor but) happy family, the way she desired it. On the other hand, in the next sequence Ishwar, his mental stability completely depilated by now, unable to bear the loss would attempt to commit suicide. The coming into *being* of a new 'new home' is thus met with the annihilation of another. Ghatak orchestrates these two sequences back-to-back to render poignancy to the fact that while Sita has *founded* her home in Calcutta Ishwar no longer has a home to *go back to*. Haraprasad, who has become a vagabond by now, suddenly shows up and interrupts Ishwar from hanging himself. The film comes to a full circle when towards the closure Binu, now orphaned, insists Ishwar to take him to

⁷⁸ Banerjee invokes the trope of fierceness in the imagery of Kali in order to be relevant to the discussion on Ghatak's film. However, Kali has different manifestations, and some are not fierce at all. Say for example, the nineteenth century mystic saint Ramakrishna (1836-1886) worshipped Kali as a benevolent mother goddess. For details on some of the diversities in perception of Kali, see McDermott & Kripal (2005). The fierce imagination of Kali in particular seemed to have gained currency in conjunction with the discourse of armed struggle within Indian nationalism. Guha (2008) takes up this issue though in context of iconography of Bharatmata, the nationalist personification of India. I have discussed elsewhere (2013) the Hindu nationalist politics in discarding Kali as the fierce goddess of the subalterns and then attempting to subsume her into the 'Aryan' pantheon.

the same 'new home' his mom always used to tell him about. Ishwar brings Binu back to Chatimpur again. Excited about his 'new home' Binu marches ahead at a pace Ishwar is finding it difficult to cope with. In the background we hear the tune of *Aaj Dhaner Khete RoudraChhayay*, the song Sita once used to sing to Binu; but the 'new home' still continues to remain out of sight. That neither the audience nor the characters ever get to see the 'new home' renders the *desire* for home more vivid than the home itself.

During the nationalist phase, as I discussed in the last chapter, the home functioned as an 'inner domain' safeguarding 'the spiritual quality of the nationalist culture' (Chatterjee, 1997b: 239). Therefore, for the independent nation-state now, the repertoire of home was readily appropriable in order 'to protect, preserve and strengthen the inner core of the national culture' (ibid.: 121). Among the myriad of homogenizing forces, say for example an unified system of law, state-imposed national language, , standardizing a time zone, single currency, an unified postage system etc., the home was re-configured as a tool for 'homogeneous cultural branding of the flock' (Gellner, 1983: 140), otherwise very heterogeneous. The ruling elite, in fact, had taken the colonial accusation about his 'failure...to speak for the nation' (Guha, 1982: 5) way too seriously. But, the irony is, as it has often been argued, the 'nation-state' itself is an overtly restrictive projection of a model derived from western European experience onto the non-West where it was incompatible (Chatterjee, 1997b). India, in the first instance, had no one *Indian-ness* that could be spoken for – its Sanskritic past is too Indic, the name 'India' mistakenly given by Alexander, Hindustan by Islamic conquerors, Bharat (as it appears on Indian passports) is reminiscent of a mythic king (Spivak, 1990: 39). On the contrary, the notion of ethnicity, as Paul Gilroy (1993: 5) aptly problematizes, is often a corollary to the 'unthinking assumption that cultures always flow into patterns congruent with the

borders of essentially homogeneous nation states'. In this schema, the home and the family become the microcosm of the nation. Gilroy (1987: 43), however, pushes this argument in further saying: 'families are not only the nation in microcosm, its key components, but act as the means to turn social processes into natural, instinctive ones.' In other words, the *naturalization* of synthetic homogenizing of the 'nation', at a micro level, starts from the home and the family, the home being the breeding ground of the citizen who legitimizes the nation. This explains why the home has to be desirous, and those *lacking* the desire are perceived as threat to the integrationist fabric.

Always having been inspired by Jung⁷⁹, in *Subarnarekha* Ghatak resurrects the archetype of the 'home' in the collective unconscious as the eternal site for enactment of ethnic politics. *Subarnareka*, thus, can be read as a case study to better illustrate how the welfarist nation interpellates the 'desirability of the home' to domesticate the vagabond. If we take Ishwar, with his overbearing welfarist concern (for Sita) at the cost of political apathy towards the homeless people of Nabajiban refugee colony, as a symbolic representation of the nation-state, then the advent of Haraprasad as a vagabond while Ishwar attempts to hang himself acquires a metaphorical significance. The vagabond's ironical advent is as if an act of chastising Ishwar for having played an important part in the manufacturing of 'desirability of the home'. The vagabond, of whom Haraprasad is a representative, thus, emerges as the typical troll that makes fun of the welfarist nation-state. What I am arguing, therefore, is that the historical seismic break from the colonial to the post-colonial, that has

⁷⁹ Jung's influence on Ghatak has been discussed by Cooper (1999) among many others. Cooper writes: 'The individual, Ghatak felt, needed "archetypes" or collective frameworks by which his unconscious could project into the conscious' (ibid.: 99). Also, Bhaskar (1983) writes on Ghatak's treatment of mythology and the archetype in context of *Meghe Dhaka Tara*. However, for a quicker and handier guide, see Ghatak (2003: 78) himself speaking of Jung.

affected economies, national and regional historiographies, protocols for aesthetic strategies of representations, had actually brought about a definitional shift in the 'vagabond': the 'vagabond' is now more of an urban underclass *outside* of the spectrum of welfare than readily associable with rurality, poverty, destitution and so forth. The 'vagabond' is the conscientious figure who lives at the edge of the society and makes fun of the society as it is from *outside*. Think of the dramatic timing of Haraprasad's arrival: he had no contact with Ishwar whatsoever for decades ever since Ishwar had 'deserted' the colony, yet miraculously shows up just at the moment Ishwar is about to hang himself, peeps in through the window and prophetically throws in his famous catchphrase, '*Rat koto holo? Uttor mele na!*' (How late is it at night? Answers can't be found!). The implicit satire in Haraprasad's jingle points to Ishwar's failure to find an answer to his quest for 'new home' gone terribly wrong. With the Nehruvian slogan of 'unity-in-diversity' in the air, the vagabond's is the voice of dissent among the nationalist strategies to proliferate what Gilroy (1993: 3) calls 'cultural insiderism', the founding principle of the modern nation-state. Homi Bhabha (1990a) argues, though in contest of diasporic communities, that peripheral voices and marginal spaces are empowered in a unique way, for the nation-state always tends to subsume or at least negotiate with the 'lonely gathering of the scattered people' (1990: 291). The vagabond, accordingly, inhabits the marginal and interstitial space that he uses as a launching pad for his schizoid critique of high modernism.

The Vagabond as a Critic of Modernity

Barely a few months prior to the Indian independence, in March 1947, with the Truman Doctrine having been put in place, it was evident that the USSR had become the centre of gravity of the 'Second World' and thereby an emerging threat for

the US, now the epicenter of the 'First World'. In this reconfiguration of power dynamics in the global arena, the Indian nation-state, nascent as it was, was still trying to reconcile the US brand of capitalist technocracy, epitomized by the Fordist economy, with the USSR model of extensive state-control towards achieving its goal of 'modernization'. Meanwhile, no sooner had India been independent, the ultra-left faction of the Communist Party of India, under the leadership of Ranadive, started to shout slogans: '*Ye Azaadi Jhoothi Hai*' (This is false independence). They accused the bourgeois to have notionally replaced the colonizer as the ruling elite while having the least concern for the nation's 'development', a phenomenon Fanon (2004: 97-180) was deeply critical of. Their idea of 'development', instead, was based on a Mao-ist line of intervention. If at all there was something in common in these contentious and competing ideas of 'development' pulling the nation in all different directions, it was the emphasis on the need for investing in science and technology, which was arguably featured as the *only* common index of modernity. In arguing that:

The colonial effort to configure India and Indians as resources forged this relationship, manifested in the state's central role in establishing a network of railroads, irrigation, mining, industries, and scientific and technical agencies of administration. India as a territory, that is, as a geographical entity, had become organized as a space constituted by technics. As the nationalists reinscribed this technological order as the space of the nation, they also staked their claim on the state, which had become an embodiment of technics. The nationalists argued that colonial rule had impoverished this space, throttled its industries, and exploited its resources for Britain's benefit. The demand for the national development of the territory quickly and imperceptibly became the demand for state power, which as seen as nothing but an extension of the space constituted by technics. This analysis casts a different light on nationalist politics, illuminating how its fight to institute a nation-state was an attempt to seize the functions of governmentality from British rule, to bring the people within the hegemony of the nation. (Prakash, 1999: 11)

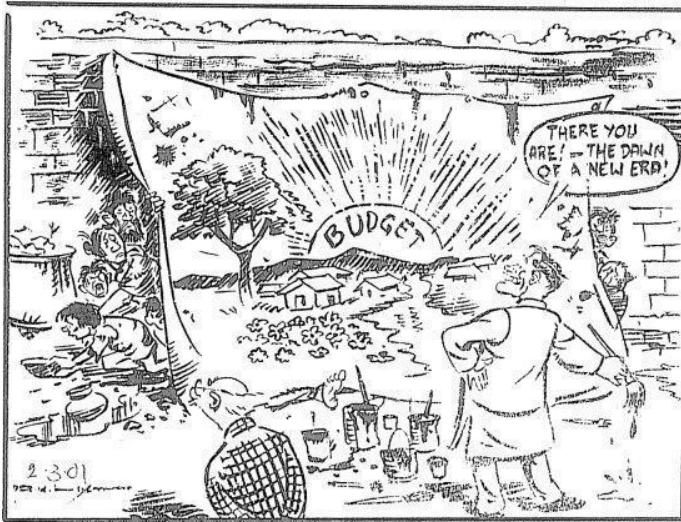
Gyan Prakash succinctly sums up how the metaphor of science in 'modern' India has

functioned 'beyond the boundaries of the laboratory as a grammar of modern power' whereby '(t)he idea of India as a nation...meant not a negation of the colonial configuration of the territory and its people but their reinscription under the authority of science' (p.7).

Throughout the 1930s the Congress deeply felt the need for implementing a nationalized Planning Committee that came into being in 1938. As the future ruler the Congress had actually foreseen the trajectory of India's 'progress'; the official transfer of power only accelerated the process. The coalition of mechanisms of statecraft and scientific modernity, evident in Prakash's formulation, were accordingly reflected in India's *First Five Year Plan* (1950): a total 35.6 percent of the national budget was allocated for industry, irrigation, and energy plants. In the hindsight, it is worth taking a look at Nehru's (1946: 396) reminiscence:

One thing led to another and it was impossible to isolate anything or to progress in one direction without corresponding progress in another. The more we thought of this planning business, the vaster it grew in its sweep and range till it seemed to embrace almost every activity...

The all-encompassing rhetoric of national 'progress' was subservient to the imposition of the developmental regime of modernity that readily peripheralized those that were antagonistic to or uninvolved with the logic of techno-centricism in the name of national 'progress'. The discourse of scientific 'modernity' was tailored more for the need of governmentality than capturing the need of the 'common man'. In order to cope with the pace India wished to 'modernize' itself, dams and energy plants proliferated, which cost large-scale eviction. For the thousands rendered homeless by this modernization project, the government allocated only 4.1 percent of the budget for rehabilitation (*First Five Year Plan*, 1950).



The 1961 Census actually put the Indian government to shame by revealing the unprecedented number of homeless people⁸⁰. 'The key to national prosperity, apart from the spirit of the people', drafted the *Scientific Policy Resolution* of 1958 in a

⁸⁰ In this context, one has again to keep in the back of one's mind the fact that the definition of 'home' too was changing alongside (See supra n.25). That said, one cannot deny the direct correlation between homelessness and massive urbanity. Consider this: while the total number of homeless persons has decreased by 63723 over 1991-2001 the number of urban homeless persons, on the contrary, has increased by 53007 over the same decade. Similarly, over 1981-1991, while the total number of homeless persons has decreased by 335465 the number of urban homeless persons has increased by 106749 (*Selected Socio-Economic Statistics*, 2006: 136).

forceful iteration, 'lies, in the modern age, in the effective combination of three factors, technology, raw materials and capital'. Barely in less than three years, the *1961 Census* exposed that what appeared far from the envisaged 'national prosperity'. Like Haraprasad, it took another 'common man' to come up with a sharp critique. As the creation of eminent cartoonist R. K. Laxman (b. 1921), the *Common Man* has continued to capture what *Wikipedia* entry aptly sums up as 'the hopes, aspirations, troubles and perhaps even foibles of the average Indian' in the pages of the popular English daily, *The Times of India*, since 1951. With glasses askew, clad in a dhoti, half-bald, the common man has sufficed as a middle-aged ordinary Indian for more than six decades, but with little changes in his appearance. Speaking of which, the common man is resilient to the changes brought about by large-scale 'modernization'. He is not a vagabond per se in the conventional understanding of the term. He has a home, is married, looks decent and respectable, seems to be from the middle-class background as his appearance suggests, and is far from the likes of destitute or squalor. However, he embodies a peculiar vagabond-ly habit. He has miraculous access to literally everywhere: from the corridors of power to the filthy slums, from space research labs to famine-hit villages, from cricket playgrounds to the ministers' speeches. The common man hardly ever speaks; he is rather a silent witness of India's evolution. Yet the common man unfailingly captures 'the entire gamut of contemporary Indian experience' (Laxman, 2000: blurb). He does not take part in any of the events, neither in any ceremonial speech nor any famine relief activity; he is just omnipresent. The question, then, is: why does he have to travel to everywhere incessantly? Why does he have to be so restless? What is it that fuels his verve for non-participant observation?

The common man is perhaps the Indian equivalent of the flaneur featuring in

the seminal works Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin. The common man is as much a product of the Indian high modernity as the flaneur is of the nineteenth century imperialist capital-centric European urban reconfiguration. The common man inasmuch as the flaneur is the indefatigable city walker whose pleasure is only in seeing: 'to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world' (Baudelaire, 2001: 9). Alienated by the flurry of modernization, the common man, even among the crowd, is the schizoid figure 'who everywhere rejoices in his incognito' (ibid.: 9). The common man, like the average Indian, is perhaps too common for his voices to be heard. His silence, however, does not mean that he is aloof. Rather, his flaneuristic gaze symbolizes his suspicious-scrutinizing spectatorial gaze with a tacit disapproval for modernity. R.K. Laxman (1998: 3) writes in his autobiography:

...[I] keep neither diary nor calendar and I have never worn a watch! So without fumbling for dates and times, I plan to ramble on, taking help from my memory for what it is worth recounting my experiences, reactions and anecdotes, and describing people I have met and places I have visited. All these are the normal contents of anyone's life and in my case they moulded me into a satirical cartoonist.

Running the risk of projecting Laxman's ego onto his creation, one can in fact say that the timelessness of the cartoons is a symbol of the common man's refusal to adapt to the 'fleeting' modernity. The diary, the calendar and the watch being the emblematic marker of (Western) modernity, the common man, in the footsteps of Laxman, questions the efficacy of the developmental paradigm of modernization. Unlike the journalist who reports information, the common man silently satirizes, and with it passively empowers the thousands of other common (wo)men seeing him regularly making fun of the institutional system on the pages of a morning daily, that too for six consecutive decades. In that sense, the common man is an embodiment of the vagabond, for his travel lacks instrumentality and cannot be readily pigeon-holed into

the state-approved profiteering modes of traveling, and he is always subverting the *normative*, in Laxman's own words, that what is 'normal contents of anyone's life', into impudent satires. He is as though traveling in order to keep track of the 'fleeting' indices of modernity such that he himself never has to give in to those.

In *Awaara* (1951), Raju (Raj Kapoor) plays a Chaplin-esque tramp who is the representative of the innocent common man clueless about the complexities of modern urban life. Raju lives on his wits swindling unsuspecting pedestrians and is heard singing: '*Gharabaar Nahin, Sansaar Nahin/ Mujhase Kisiko Pyaar Nahin*' (I don't have a home or a family, nobody loves me either), which is perhaps the best introduction to him. Born in the slums, and of unknown father, Raju allegedly faces a criminal charge, and in the dramatic climax during his trial the judge owns up to Raju being his own son. In the courtroom, the repentant judge (Prithviraj Kapoor, Raj Kapoor's real-life father) further acknowledges that the state apparatuses – the society at large and its outlook – of which he is an integral part, have thoughtlessly deprived, dehumanized and criminalized Raju. With the judge owning up his responsibility, Raju's paternal lineage is clearly traced. Raju is thus housed within the mainstream society, thus dismissing the possibility of vagabondage as one's self-chosen lifestyle, seemingly to be permitted only in case of bastardy (as Raju was initially thought to be). Legless Abdul (Mazhar Khan) in *Shaan* (1980) seems to be another of the figures fallen out of the modernization project, and presumably one among the appalling number of people the *1961 Census* revealed to be homeless. The amputation of his leg can be imagined as a testimony to his negotiation with modernity, if we are to assume that he had lost his leg to some industrial hazard or road accident, both typically 'modern' problems. He is homeless, that too crippled, which makes him doubly subaltern, and purportedly a burden on the more competent, economically productive

taxpayers. He wanders across the city on his wheeled cart, pushing forward with his hands and is continually exposed to the underbelly of the metropolis, that is Bombay, and all the clandestine sights therein. This empowers him uniquely, and eventually he would be used as a spying agent in order to bring down the villain. Immediately after the possibility of him being used as a spy has been hinted, the film jump cuts to the famous sequence where Abdul sings: '*Aate jaate hue main sabpe nazar rakhta hoon, naam Abdul hain mera sab ki khabar rakhta hoon*' (I keep an eye on everybody as move about, my name is Abdul and I keep track of everybody).

The establishing shot features Abdul against Bombay's Haji Ali mosque in the background, which is indicative of the musical form the song would be cast in: *qawwali*. Next, a dramatic low angle shot captures Abdul through the spokes in the wheel of a bullock-cart, followed by consecutive low angle shots showing him pushing his cart through the clumsy cityscape, while in the background the music keeps picking up rhythmic tempo for the actual number to begin. As Abdul squeezes past the city traffic while singing, POV shots show us his gaze of a bottom-up view of the city's high-rises. Abdul's bottom-up view is an allegory of the immanent inequality within political economy of modernity, an apparatus to have rendered him a vagabond. He sings:

Kisne liya kisne diya/ Kisne kahan maal chhupa rakha hai

Maine is dil mein sari duniya ka/ Haal chhupaa rakha hai

Bol sakta hoon/ Zubaan bandh magar rakhta hoon

Naam Abdul hain mera/ Sab ki khabar rakhta hoon

(Who's the taker, who the giver, who has hidden stuff where

I keep world's all information hidden inside my heart

I can speak out, but still keep mum

My name is Abdul and I keep track of everybody)

The expression 'magar' (but still) carries a prophetic undertone: despite being omniscient he chooses to be silent. It reinforces the vagabond's schizoid silence, often a product of

the modernist angst, which is his symbolic disapproval of the state of the world as it is. Jarring out of the grand narrative of linear progression of modernity, Abdul's silence, however, eventually proves to be an instrumental *deus ex machina* towards deliverance of poetic justice, the functionality of which renders Abdul and his vagrancy instrumental for the society.

In *Agantuk* (1992), the 'vagabond' Manomohan Mitra (Utpal Dutt), who went missing for 35 years and given up for dead, visits his only surviving relative Anila (Mamata Shankar) and her family. Anticipating a case of identity theft, the family invites their family friend and lawyer, Prithwish Sengupta (Dhritiman Chatterjee), to interrogate Manomohan in a friendly manner over an evening tea. What unfolds during the course of the conversation may loosely be called a debate over ethnocentric perception of civilization. A brilliant student with degrees in Anthropology earned abroad, Mitra had spent several decades among the 'tribal' people in different nooks and corners of the world. He narrates his escapades, which leads Sengupta to conclude: 'These experiences have taught you that civilized life as in a city is illusory. Tribal civilization is the real one'. Mitra, however, clarifies: 'I'm not a tribal myself. It's something I lament about'. When the conversation reaches a rousing climax, Mitra takes on Sengupta for his reliance on techno-scientific modernity:

You know, what civilization is? It's when a man presses a single button to release a single atom bomb, and obliterate a whole city and its inhabitants in a moment. And, you know, who else is civilized? Those who can take decisions on using these weapons without turning a hair.

The vagabond in Mitra thus slaps the society in its face. When Sengupta trips in Mitra's surname (Mitra, literally meaning 'friend') when addressing him by name, Mitra comes up with a smart wordplay: 'How'll you call me a friend? You haven't decided on yet whether I'm a friend or an enemy!'. He says that he would instead love to be called by

his pseudonym under which he used to publish his anthropological notes: Nemo, in Latin, meaning 'no one'.

Reminiscent of Jules Verne's Captain Nemo, the prototypical the anti-hero, Mitra's witty remark points toward the preoccupation with imag(in)ing the 'vagabond' as the apocryphal anti-hero who is parergonal to sociality, not in the sense that he comes from elsewhere, but he is precisely the 'no one' *in* the society. The four snippets of the 'vagabond' that I have presented attest to the heterogeneities and internal differences among the (non-)forced migrant figures and their respective *raison d'être* for being/becoming a 'vagabond'. They are all from very different classes, different dispositions and differ considerably in terms of the extent of precariousness they embody. This is to say, there is no one locale, spatial or symbolic, that the vagabond could be associated with. However, the common thread that links them all together is their resistance, if not impudence, toward high modernity's exercise of power. Accordingly, the *modus operandi* of marginalizing the 'vagabond' now shifts focus from an idiom of transgression to that of subsumption, from exteriorizing the 'heterotopic' subject to lumpenizing him as anti-modern⁸¹. This characterizes the change in gaze with the shift away from the colonial to the post-colonial: the 'vagabond' as the disposable *homo sacer* is no longer the transgressive subject (like the indocile refugee) who comes from the *outside*, but one from *inside* the fabric of the sociality, yet contrapuntal with what Marcuse (1998: 41) calls 'the technical considerations of imperialistic efficiency and rationality'. I invite the readers, at this point, to invoke the opening sequence of Agnes Varda's *Vagabond* (1985), where a disembodied voice-over

⁸¹ I use the expression 'lumpen' here not necessarily in the sense of underclass, but as one who, in the Marxist understanding, is imagined as having little interest in the revolutionary emancipation. By lumpenization of the vagabond, I mean that the vagabond is imagined as one who does not answer to the call of modernity.

introduces Mona (Sandrine Bonnaire), who is one without roof or law (*Sans Toit ni Loi*), as suggested by the film's French title, as: 'It seemed to me she came from the sea'. The ebb and flow of vagabond(age) – the saga of how the 'anti-modern' vagabond is born out of the ashes of the refugee – against the juggernaut of developmentalism renders the metaphor of sea vivid. It is from the nodal point of (op)positioning with respect to the *zeitgeist* that the 'vagabond' resurges and recedes as a tide, only to metamorphose into one with a different historical referent altogether.

Literarizing The Vagabond: Towards a Radical Theory of Wandering

When asked 'Who is truly happy?', Yudhisthira, the eldest of the Pandavas, answers: 'A man who cooketh in his own house, on the fifth or the sixth part of the day with scanty vegetables, but who is not in debt and who stirreth not from home, is truly happy' (Ganguli, 1974[3]: 610). The dialogue between Yudhisthira and Yaksha is unfolding near some pond in the wilderness of a dense forest. All Yudhisthira wants is to fetch some water while Yaksha poses before him a series of incredibly philosophical questions. Yaksha's condition is that Yudhisthira has to answer all his questions correctly in order to earn the right to drink water from the pond. This episode takes place in the third book of the *Mahabharata*, the *Aranya Parva* (*The Book of the Forest*), that features the Pandavas wandering in exile for twelve years, a condition arisen out of a gamble Yudhisthira had lost earlier. The dialogue unfolds on the last day of their twelve-year exile to be followed by yet another year of exile in disguise. Previously, a deer in the forest had run off with a brahmin's fire-sticks. In order to restore the fire-sticks, the Pandavas chased the deer, but in vain. Exhausted and thirsty, they take shelter under a tree while Nakula, the youngest of the Pandavas, goes out to fetch some water. The Yaksha alerts Nakula that he had to answer him satisfactorily before fetching water from the pond, or else the water would turn to poison. Nakula, however, without paying any heed proceeds to drink water from the pond and immediately falls dead. On the look-out for Nakula, the next of the brothers comes to the spot only to encounter the same fate for his impudence. One after the other, four of the Pandavas die in the same manner; and it is now Yudhisthira's turn. He approaches the pond and on finding the corpses of all his brothers, knows for sure he has to answer Yaksha or will die, either of thirst or in the way his brothers did.

This is, in short, the context of Yudhisthira's utterance. Now, Simonti Sen

(2005: 2) concludes from this answer of Yudhisthira's that '[b]anishment from home is *thus* a curse that befalls an ill-fated person' (italics mine). For a number of reasons, Sen's claim is contentious. There are at least three layers of problems in Sen's argumentation: first, in the context-specificity of the dialogue, which loses significance in Sen's gross generalization; second, in the credibility of her textual reading; third, in the politics of the selection of her citations. But before taking Sen's claim to task purely in terms of textual analysis, it is worth spending a while contemplating the background of this highly metaphysical dialogue. It is from the same dialogue that she concludes: 'It was *only* in the instance of pilgrimage that venturing out of home could not only be permitted but also prescribed' (ibid.: 2, italics mine). The expression that has been translated into English as 'who stirreth not from home', which Sen's inference is apparently founded upon, appears in the 'original' Sanskrit, the source language text, as *aprabasi* (<a+prabas+I, wherein *a* is the prefix meaning *non*, *prabas* meaning exile, and *I* is the syntax meaning *one who*). Therefore, *aprabasi* literally translates as *one who isn't exiled*. *One-who-is-not-exiled* is not necessarily the same as *one-who-is-at-home*. In other words, no expression in the source language text alludes to the idea of home. Where does, then, K.M. Ganguli's translation invoke the idea of home from? I will later come to the politics of translation in the nineteenth century rendition of the *Mahabharata* and that of Sen citing it unproblematically without cross-referring to other sources/translations. But for a moment, let us assume, hypothetically, that there is nothing in the translation worth being critical about. Even then, would Sen's argument suffice? How practical is it to draw an inference on prevailing customs based on a single utterance by Yudhisthira?

And, this is where understanding of the context of the utterance and that of the plot in the larger narrative structure counts. Let us not forget that the Pandavas lost

their kingdom, mainly because of Yudhisthira's irresistible addiction to gambling, of which Yudhisthira was indeed aware. During the moment of the dialogue, he was on the verge of completion of twelve long years of exile while the anxiety of another year of exile in disguise still lay ahead. Last but not the least, imagine how excruciating it must have been for him, already exhausted and thirsty, to find his beloved brothers all lying dead. In this situation, it is perhaps unjust to take an utterance of someone, given Yudhisthira's state of mind at the moment, and generalize it as the prevailing worldview of the time and place. Skeptics may, however, argue that Yudhisthira was a perfect exemplar of what in the *Bhagvatgita* has been explicated as the *sthidadhipurusa*⁸², which is also prefaced by his name itself, Yudhisthira (Yudhi=war; sthira=steady), literally meaning one who remains steady in war. In that case, it is indeed conceivable that he was totally composed while answering the Yaksha. This is a fair-enough counter argument. What needs asking, then, is: Did Yudhisthira by any means represent the ethos of an average Hindu of his time? Going by Bakhtin (1981), embedded in any representation is the hallmark of its 'chronotope'. Nevertheless, there are also differences-among-identities between the *real* and the *representation*⁸³. In fact, Yudhisthira was an embodiment of *dharma*

(righteousness), often going out of his way to practise *dharma*. In the *Mahabharata*,

⁸² S.N. Dasgupta (1922[2]: 440) translates 'sthitadhi' as 'unperturbed wisdom'. The idea of 'sthitadhi' occurs in the 56th *sloka* of the *Geeta: Dukhesu anudvigna nanah/ Sukhesu vidata-sprha/ Vita raga bhaya krodha/ Sthitadhi munir uccyhate*, which has been translated by Amarnathananda (1998: 67) as: 'He is a steady minded man who is not dejected at the time of sorrow and agitated at the time of happiness. A wise man is always free from evil desires, fear and anger'. For analysis of Yudhisthira's character and how he fits into the criterion for 'sthitadhi', see Basu (1998: 71-81) and Bhaduri (1998: 84-163).

⁸³ Basu (1998: 21-23), for that matter, takes on Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1954 [1888]) for attempting to seek historicity in the *Mahabharata*. Chattopadhyay aimed 'to show that the character of Krishna was, in the ancient writings, an ideal perfect man, and the commonly-received legends of his immorality and amours were the accretions of later and more depraved times' (Frazer, 1898: 420). Basu, however, argues that trimming the 'accretions' is decremental to the literariness of the narrative.

there is surfeit of instances that portray Yudhisthira as someone beyond an average human and his actions in ways unexplainable in terms of average humanly motions⁸⁴. He is indeed, to borrow Shulman's (1996: 152) evocative expression, the 'dharmic hero' of the epic, and singling out his one utterance, among 80,000 couplets in total⁸⁵, as a representative of the ethos of his time is perhaps as erroneous as essentializing about the Americans from having seen some Hollywood stunt.

Seeking the answer to 'Is there an Indian way of thinking?', A.K. Ramanujan (1989) observes modernity to have marked the shift from the 'context-sensitive' to the 'context-free'. What Ramanujan points to is the fact that 'pre-modern' Indian narratives are typically 'context-sensitive', a characteristic that gave way to 'context-free' aesthetic standardizations with the advent of modernity. Say for example, Ramanujan recalls the story of Nala, narrated to Yudhisthira, as capable of functioning as a stand-alone narrative. However, embedded within the larger epic, this micro-narrative is actually subservient to the narrative progression: 'Yudhisthira, following the full curve of Nala's adventures, sees that he is only half-way through his own, and sees his present in perspective, himself as a story yet to be finished' (Ramanujan, 1989: 49). This story-within-story narrative structure of the *Mahabharata* is meant to metaphorically bring out the complexity of the complete plot, and micro-narratives, if and when extracted individually, will fall short of a holistic reading of the text. Accordingly, Ramanujan (ibid.:47) signals: 'Actual behavior may be more complex, though the rules they think with are a crucial factor guiding the behavior'. It is important, therefore, to situate the micro-narratives within the rules, contexts and conjectures, and be open to the

⁸⁴ For details, see Basu (1998: 71-81) and Bhaduri (1998: 84-163).

⁸⁵ The number of couplets varies according to editions. This is a rough estimation from the Critical Edition of the *Mahabharata* published by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune.

nuances of interpreting, rather than jump to hasty conclusions. Taking cues from Ramanujan, what I insist on is that the Yaksha-Yudhisthira narrative will be likewise prone to misreading if liberated from its context. Let us not forget sage Sounaka's discourse with Yudhisthira on the idea of contentment and happiness right in the beginning of the *Book of Forest* (3.2.15-3.3.1). In that light, one can read Yudhisthira's answer to the Yaksha's question as a metaphor of his minimalist belief, reinforced after Sounaka's discourse, in being happy in life for less. As a poetic device, this understandably brings a cyclic closure to what the *Book* started with: Sounaka's advice on contentment.

Seen from another angle, Yudhisthira's answer can also be interpreted as totally didactic, as opposed to reflective of the prevailing customs. 'The so-called narrative and didactic material', asserts Matilal (1989: 5), 'are found inextricably fused together in the text, such that they cannot be often differentiated'. Without even going into the details, one can tell just from a cursory glance over what Yaksha asks Yudhisthira that the dialogue has a metaphysical aspect to it. Take for example, in another of the questions, when Yaksha asks: 'What is heavier than the earth?', Yudhisthira holds one's mother to be heavier than the Earth. Are we, here, going to take his words *literally*? In fact, there is no one straight-forward meaning, let alone literal meaning to these utterances. Shulman (1996: 153), in this context, reminds:

[L]et us bear in mind that they [Yaksha's questions] are classed precisely as such, as *prasna* not "riddles" in a strict sense ... the *prasna* points to a baffling, ultimately insoluble crystallization of conflict articulated along opposing lines of interpretation ... Both questions and answers tend to be metaphysical.

The distinction between *prasna* and *riddle* is, in essence, premised on the fact that *prasna* (etymological root: √prach, meaning to inquire, to interrogate) has a deep philosophical concern, as opposed to *riddle* being 'a question or statement intentionally phrased so as

to require ingenuity in ascertaining its answer or meaning' (*The Oxford English Dictionary*). The *riddle*, therefore, is an end in itself while the *prasna* is rather a means to an end, the end being a more solemn metaphysical inquiry. J.A.B. van Buitenen (1975: 29) notes that this kind of *prasna* is a generic character of the *Mahabharata*: 'The epic [*Mahabharata*] is a series of precisely stated problems imprecisely and therefore inconclusively resolved, with every resolution raising a new problem until the very end ...'. In that sense, one can view a *prasna*, and by extension the Yaksha-Yudhisthira dialogue, purely as a poetic device, arranged in patterns across the narrative, doctored to simulate the epic's philosophical quest in general.

Furthermore, given that the *Mahabharata*, for an oral narrative, had understandably undergone many extrapolations and existed in multiple versions, it is indeterminable which element in the *representation* is, in reality, reflective of the *real*, and more interestingly, if it at all reflected anything, then of which historical period⁸⁶. So far, I have pointed to the pitfalls of an overtly historicist reading of the

⁸⁶ The need for standardization of the *Mahabharata* was realized by the Orientalists at the end of 19th century, precisely because 'The Mahabharata began its existence as a simple epic narrative. It became, in course of centuries, the most *monstrous chaos*' (H. Oldenberg, cited in Hill, 2001: xv; italics mine). Moriz Winternitz (1863-1937), an Orientalist and Max Muller's assistant during 1888-92, emphasized the importance of a critical edition at the XIth International Congress of Orientalists at Paris in 1897. He personally retrieved different editions of the *Mahabharata* from across undivided India; and took those with him to the Royal Asiatic Society, UK. In 1866, the Government of Bombay started collecting *Mahabharata* manuscripts from across India. The Government collection, now under the holding of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI), Pune, presently archives some 17,877 manuscripts, although BORI estimates that there are still some 11,633 uncollected manuscripts. In other words, according to BORI's estimates there are some 29,510 manuscripts in total (BORI website). The Critical Edition, published during 1933-66, consulted 1259 manuscripts, of which only 800 were chosen to be collated. I retrieved the figures to attest to the textual pluralities. Lipner (1998: 280, n.39) succinctly points to the central problematic in the process of the 'monstrous chaos' been tamed: 'Can there be a 'critical edition' of the kind of oral transmission that the *itihāsa* represents? Similarly, it is futile to seek out 'the original text' of either epic. Critical editions of oral epics are the constructs of scholars; with variant readings

Mahabharata. My final objection against Sen is based on a cultural-historical ground.

Just before mentioning of Yudhisthira, Sen (2005: 2) writes:

It is interesting that ... the Hindu *shastric* (ritual/canonical) tradition either remained eloquently silent on the issue or explicitly condemned travel. In Bengali the word travel translates into *bhraman*, a derivative of the Sanskrit root word *bhram* meaning to make a mistake or to err. In this sense, *bhraman* can be taken to mean aimless or disoriented wandering, an act which would not normally be valorised in the Hindu tradition, which is heavily biased in favour of sedentariness.

The assumption in the sentence, to begin with, is totally lopsided. While Sen is correct that some (earlier) canons remained silent about or condemned traveling, what she does not take note of is the ambivalence towards traveling in the later *shastric* texts⁸⁷.

The *shastras* can, in fact, be classified into two distinct schools: the *Samuccaya-badi* and the *Vikalpa-badi*. While the *Samuccaya-badi*, exemplified by *Manusmriti*, strictly stressed the order of sequence of the four folds in life, that is the *brahmacarya*, *garhastha*, *banaprastha*, *sanyasa* and necessarily in this order of progression; the *Vikalpa-badi* schools did not care much about the order of progression

(cf *Vasistha Dharmasastra* VII: 3; *Yajnavalka Smriti* III: 56). This implies that

someone who subscribed to the the *Vikalpa-badi* school, at least theoretically speaking, was allowed to renounce the *garhastha* (household), and take to traveling, quasi-religious itinerancy without any injunctive prohibition. This attests to the fact that, at least in certain schools, traveling was tolerated⁸⁸. It is true, though, that some

and addenda as footnotes they give us an idea of the main story-line as it has developed over time in style and content'. For a quick and handy reference on the development of the Critical Edition, see Brockington (1998: 56-81); alternately see Suthankar (1933) for a more detailed and comprehensive discussion on the subject.

⁸⁷ By 'later' I mean the younger ones in terms of composition. Olivelle (1984) points to the paradox in the earlier Dharmasūtras strictly disapproving renunciation while the later ones being comparatively tolerant towards it. For details, see supra n. 20.

⁸⁸ If this, for Sen, does not count as evidence of tolerance towards traveling, then I wonder what would. Sen's (2005: 3) accusation that whenever 'Hindu traditional literature gave

other *Smritis* held that the household (*garhatha*) phase is of chief, if not of sole, importance (*Gautama* III: 1,35, 36; *Baudhayaya* II: 6,11, 27, 29), which complies with Sen's observation that the *Shastras* were 'heavily biased in favour of sedentariness'. But, the *shastric* canon, anyway, is not a monolith. What crystallized as the 'Hindu canon' over a few thousands of years is a diverse, and often contradictory, body of injunctions 'engineered' by different people in different historical times as a reaction to different socio-political stimuli. What needs to be examined, then, is the politics of Sen's elision of that part of the *Shastras* which approvingly tolerated traveling.

Secondly, ascribing the Bangla word *bhraman* (travel) to *bhram* (mistake) is not free of problems. To begin with, I find no evidence whatsoever to suppose that this pair of words, as Sen uncritically insinuates, is actually etymologically cognate, as opposed to being merely homophonic. Take, for example, that the word *bhramar*, which is very much still in use in Bangla and Hindi, means a wasp. Are we, in Sen's footsteps, going to assume that *bhramar* is a *derivative* of the idea of 'mistake'⁸⁹? Now,

endorsement to travel, it was heavily laden with religious connotation' is, in a sense, tautologous. It does not take much more than common sense to understand that it would be anachronistic to seek archival evidences of a-religious leisure traveling in the *Shastras*. This is firstly because the recognition of leisure as 'leisure' is a phenomenon intrinsically tied with the Capitalist-Protestant work ethic. Secondly, the idea of a-religious documentation, as embodied in the Hegelian (2007) vision of objectivist history-writing supremely guided by Reason, would emerge as a corollary of the Enlightenment project. That Sen cannot find *enough* evidence in support of secular traveling is more because of the fact that a 'secular' genre of expression was lacking than any aversion or prohibition to travel(ing). Rather, in a 'pre-modern' oral culture, as Walker (1938[2]: 520) asserts, people 'preserved no record of their wanderings'.

⁸⁹ On the contrary, *bhramar*, at least in context of Bangla and Hindi popular culture, is always invoked as an eternal wanderer symbolizing transient love. I have retrieved the title lines of only a few of the popular numbers where the *bhramar* feature as a wanderer and is closely associated with love/lovability: 'Gunjane Dole je Bhramar' (Bangla), 'Gunguna Rahe Hai Bhramar' (Hindi), 'Gharate Bhramar Elo Gungunie' (Bangla), 'Dil Ka Bhawar Kare Pukar' (Hindi), 'Phuler Kane Bhramar Ane' (Bangla), 'Bhramar Baul Tomar' (Bangla), 'Bhramar Koiyo Giya' (Bangla), 'Aawara Bhawren Jo Hole Hole Gaaye' (Hindi). The last one is also the latest of the examples and from a 1997 Hindi movie, *Sapnaya*. Additionally, these are just a few title lines;

the *Monier-Williams Sanskrit Dictionary* (2008) gives a number of different meanings for *bhram*, of which *only* one is 'mistake'. Some of the rest are: a circle, a potter's wheel, a gimlet, a fountain, a whirling flame, a grindstone, dizziness, wandering or roaming about etc. Needless to mention, none of these (except *mistake*) has any negative or pejorative aspect to it. If there is one thing in common among all the meanings, then it is the undertone of (perpetual) movement or mobility. Leaving all the rest aside, why does Sen have to zero in on 'mistake'? Curiously enough, one of the meanings of *bhram* itself is *already* wandering or roaming. In that case, Sen's thesis that *bhraman* is a *derivative* of the 'mistake' aspect of *bhram* does not make much sense. Based on this flawed logic of *derivation*, Sen's arrival at the conclusion that '*bhraman* can be taken to mean aimless or disoriented wandering', thereby, forecloses the consideration of the cascade of other meanings and allusions the word *bhraman* evokes/evoked. On the contrary, of some twenty five English words for *bhraman*, as featured in the *Spoken Sanskrit Dictionary* (online), one is *excursion*, which is, in essence, directly in opposition with what Sen calls 'aimless or disoriented wandering'.

Language, according to Derrida (1998), tends to marginalize the Other while reducing the ambivalence in reality, a phenomenon he calls 'homo-hegemony'. Homo-hegemony, that is 'the power of naming, of imposing and legitimating appellations (ibid.: 39), functions in the form of the perpetration of the language of the Master in depleting one's relation to the Other. What this universalization of language, or more precisely 'monolingualism', does is to make its practitioners amnesiac of the fact that 'every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the Other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences' (Derrida, 1982: 11). According to a Derride, therefore, it would be redundant to investigate whether or not

there are several other compositions where the *bhramar* features in the lyrics.

two quasi-similar words – take for example, the Greek words: *xenia* (hospitality) and *xenos* (stranger) played on by Derrida (2000: 29) – have 'originary' connections. Instead, the point is to understand the 'chain' of signification, the context, history and contingency that render possible relationality and conceptual overlap between pairs of (different) words. In this sense, trying to determine if *bhraman* is a derivative of *bhram*, that is the attempt to seek 'the prosthesis of origin', actually limits the (plurality in) potential expressibility of the word(s)/language, precisely because of 'the internal originality of the structure, [that] compels a neutralization of time and history' (Derrida, 1993: 239). This reinforces the 'homo-hegemony' of one (arbitrary) logocentric meaning over the semantic variations across culture and history, thereby peripheralizing the Other.

Sen's indifference to cultural pluralities continues beyond her thesis concerning the etymology. Lets see now how Sen, rather forcefully, tries to drive home her blithe claim that 'Hindu tradition' was 'heavily biased in favour of sedentariness'. Immediately after the passage I already quoted, she writes:

In most of the traditional literary productions where we have some sort of description of travel, such as the 'Vanaparva' and the 'Ajynatavasaparva' in the Mahabharata, the idea has mostly remained associated with banishment (Sen, 2005: 2).

What are 'traditional literary productions' anyway? Which tradition is she referring to? Is it the Vedic-Hindu tradition? Is it the *itihasa* tradition? Is it the oral tradition? Is it the epic tradition? Sen's sweeping and overly-generalized claim concerning 'most of the traditional literary productions' apparently rests on (just) a tangential reference (without any textual analysis whatsoever) to *only two parvas* (chapters) of a single epic. How and why do *Vanaparva* and *Ajynatavasaparva* qualify as the only examples of what Sen calls 'traditional literary productions'? Sen does not have answers to these questions, because her 'traditional literary productions' do not exist except in her own imagination.

It is a concept that she contrives and a-historically attributes to that what would make her hypothesis on travel seem believable. Her invocation of *Vanaparva* and *Ajynatavasaparva* in association with the idea of banishment is not wrong, but again, I insist, is entirely lopsided. One can *also* interpret these two *parvas* as a preparatory stage that brought achievement to Pandavas' career. The hardships of thirteen years of exile that started with banishment actually bore fruits in the form of the Pandavas being equipped with the repertoire to retaliate against their rivals and retrieve their kingdom and lost glory. Moreover, in *Vanaparva* itself, there is an episode of Arjuna setting out to acquire from Lord Shiva the *Pashupatastra* (a deadly weapon), which would make him invincible in the forthcoming war. Arjuna, however, makes several detours to eventually reach Shiva. Take for example, the *Swargarohanaparva*, the eighteenth and last book of the *Mahabharata*, in which the Pandavas and Draupadi are featured undertaking extensive travel before ascending to heaven. Far from any association with banishment, these episodes of travels in the *Mahabharata* itself, let alone in other 'literary productions', 'traditional' or otherwise, rather have deep resonances of achievement.

My differences with Sen over the literary interpretation are, however, not based on the lines of truth or falsity. What I am questioning here is the credibility of the conclusiveness in her reading, the basis of her conviction to have the correct or true reading. To put in Spivak's (1996: 9) words, my contention does not concern 'the exposure of error. It is constantly and persistently looking into how truths are produced'. Any reading of a text is, afterall, a subjective reading that is always 'prejudiced' by the reader's individual dispositions, what Gadamer (2013) calls the 'fore-structures' of one's understanding. In other words, there is no 'true meaning' inherent in the text; rather the meaning one derives from the text is what one *wants* to derive from

the text. The point, therefore, is to examine the politics of the prejudicial 'fore-structures' that inform Sen's consistent reductive readings of her sources. After referring to the Yaksha-Yudhisthira dialogue, Sen (2005: 3) proceeds to argue:

On the one hand, in the Hindu shastric tradition travel was never encouraged, if anything then discouraged. On the other hand, that part of the ancient and medieval Indian tradition which can be classified as Hindu did not accord much recognition to travel as an autonomous cultural practice, perhaps under the influence of the shastric genre.

What Sen misses in her argument, and which is really important, is the indeterminant fuzzy zone between traveling being encouraged and discouraged. One has to understand here that until the time when traveling becomes a concern, which is with the rise of Buddhism, the question of either encouraging or discouraging travel does not arise at all. I have already explicitly demonstrated in my first chapter that the ancient 'Indian' legislatures had room for tolerance towards traveling, while in the 'medieval' tradition the epithet of traveling (along with that of 'madness') gained a positive currency within the discourse of the Bhakti movements⁹⁰.

Sen (ibid.: 3), however, does acknowledge that in reality the Hindus did travel far and wide 'through trade, exile and search of fortune', and maintains that pilgrimage was something that had been perennially encouraged. Nonetheless, her claim is:

[A]s far as Brahminical authoritative opinion was concerned, travel meant being exposed to the unwholesome auras of alien people and influences, drinking impure water, eating food from unrighteous lands, walking highways polluted by the passions of men of all castes and classes bearing with them uncertainties, fears and discomforts engendered by homelessness and insecurity.

Right after this, Sen, in a footnote, mentions of her source, which is Benjamin

⁹⁰ See the section under the heading 'Sacralizing The Vagabond...' in my first chapter for a discussion on how the epithet of 'mad traveler' in medieval Indian literature, particularly in context of the Bhakti and the Sufi movements, invokes a towering prophetic figure to be looked up to.

Walker's (1968) famous and oft-cited encyclopedia on Hinduism. Curious about what exactly in the secondary source she draws her reductive understanding from (because she does not use quotation marks), I looked into the encyclopedia myself to cross-check her citation. Sen cites from Walker's entry on 'travel', and to my utter surprise, only a few paragraphs ahead of where Sen cites from, the encyclopedia reads:

In actual fact the social mobility of the Indian was far less restrictive than would appear from the interdiction of the lawgivers ... Says the *Aitareya Brahmana*, 'There is no happiness for him who does not travel. Living with the same people the best of men becomes a sinner. Indra is the friend of travellers. Therefore wander.' The ancient Indians seem to have been great travellers, although they preserved no record of their wanderings, and information is to be gleaned only from outside sources, or by inference (Walker, 1938[2]: 520).

One thing that comes across with explicit clarity out of the encyclopedia entry is the aporia concerning travel in the Indian tradition, which is what I have been stressing throughout. What follows from here is: inasmuch as scriptural prohibition did not imply that traveling was discouraged, scriptural tolerance did not imply that traveling was encouraged. What makes this case interesting is its indeterminacy. In other words, the scriptures were too diverse and heterogeneous to allow one to conclude upon the state of reality.

This makes me wonder if Sen's reading is accusable of misappropriation, if not tampering, of sources. The paranoia about traveling that Sen says to have cited from Walker and goes on to uncritically ascribe to what she categorizes as 'Brahminical authoritative opinion' crystallized *only* in a certain historical conjecture. Walker (ibid.: 520) emphatically mentions that '(t)he tendency to travel received a considerable set back under the Brahminical dispensation, *particularly after the Revival*...[following which] heretical Buddhists continued to travel' (italics mine). So, it is against the backdrop of

(Buddhist) 'heresy' that the fear of (spiritual) 'contamination' from travelling sounds perfectly cogent. It is of utmost importance here to take note of what Sen naively ignores: the temporal rupture in the form of a Hindu Revival, presumably during the Gupta era⁹¹, altering the gaze towards traveling. Immediately after her argument that traveling was discouraged in the 'Hindu shastric tradition', Sen (2005: 3) contends: 'Colonialism marked the point of departure'. This explains why tradition worth a few thousand years before and after the 'Revival', in Sen's account, has been serenely rounded up as 'Brahminical authoritative opinion'; and why, in particular, she fails to take sight of the nuances that were already there in her source.

Obvious from here is that Sen's agenda is to juxtapose the two phenomena: 'Hindu shastric tradition', which is the domain of tradition, and colonialism, which is the domain of modernity. Constructing one as the antithesis of the other is reflective of a 'vulgar' historicist vision⁹². While acknowledging colonialism as a temporal rupture and recognizing its importance as a conceptual apparatus in cultural analysis, scholars have pointed to the fact that colonialism (in India), and by extension, modernity, is not a linear progression, but comprises of complex nuances and overlaps in the transition (Chakrabarty, 2009; Chatterjee, 1997a). However, Sen (2005: 1) maintains that:

It is perhaps not inappropriate to maintain that a traveller has never been a popular

⁹¹ Walker (1938) does not explicitly mention Gupta Era (320-554). However, the Gupta empire is credited for a liberal Hindu revival ever since the rise and spread of Buddhism. For details, see Mookerji (2007).

⁹² I am using the expression 'vulgar' in the same sense it is used in 'vulgar Marxism'. Inasmuch as vulgar Marxists imagine the *base* and the *superstructure* always in dyadic terms Sen sees tradition and modernity as watertight oppositional compartments. The vulgar Marxists believe in the teleology of an incremental progress toward Socialism. Likewise, for Sen, the liberatory aspect of traveling culminates with colonialism. The expression 'vulgar', in my usage, gestures towards the historicist determinism in Sen's hypothesis.

figure in the Hindu canonical tradition. In contrast, from ancient lore, through medieval romances to genres of modern self-expression, a traveller has variously featured in Western imaginative articulation, travel being persistently viewed as exciting and liberating.

Thereby, Sen thinks that colonialism is the watershed, the departure point, that necessarily marks a dualism between traveling hitherto discouraged and henceforth perceived as liberatory. Sen's claim is debatable, and one can cite numerous examples to contradict her⁹³. However, my point is not to counterpoise Sen's argument with examples on the contrary, but rather to problematize the 'fore-structures' that inform her hypothesis, the very basis of her truth claim. Despite the verisimilitude of reality it evokes, the cultural text is, after all, always a mediated re- presentation. Hence, Sen's reliance on the methodology of decoding textualization to get to the core of history is questionable. Notwithstanding the shifts colonialism brought about in worldviews and cultural perceptions, the problem with Sen's hypothesis is that it reduces a very complex phenomenon into a simplistic binary. In order for the colonial modernity to appear liberatory, Sen's 'imaginative articulation' of the 'shastric genre' has to be radically contrastable. This requires Sen to tailor the source teleologically, cookie cut Yudhisthira's utterance, and be selective about Ganguli's translation, among others, to fit to her hypothesis.

When K. M. Ganguli, anecdotally himself a Brahmin, translates the *Mahabharata* during 1883-96, there was a prominent tendency to translate classical

⁹³ Let us consider the cascade of Sanskrit vocabulary for 'vagabond' (as mentioned in first chapter). Why are those there in the lexicon unless people traveled? Think of the characters like Durvasa and Agastya from the 'Hindu canon' itself. Both were highly revered sages who took to extensive traveling. Beyond all, think of Arjuna who, according to Basu (1998: 71), seemed to have 'seen all the mountains, dipped in all rivers, known all pilgrimages in India'. Minor characters like Baka and Hidimba, though portrayed in negative light as monsters, used to be nomadic.

texts assumed to be representing India's 'national' past⁹⁴. Going by Anderson's (2006) hypothesis, this current of literarizing the nation's (mythic) past immediately followed the accessibility of the printing press and was intrinsically tied to an 'emancipatory interest' of envisaging an 'imagined community' fostering the ethos of cultural nationalism. In his preface, Ganguli (1974 [1883]: xi) lays this down clearly:

The object of a translator should ever be to hold the mirror upto his author. That being so, his chief duty is to *represent* so far as practicable the manner in which his author's ideas have been expressed, retaining if possible at the sacrifice of idiom and taste all the peculiarities of his author's imagery and of language as well. *In regard to translations from the Sanskrit, nothing is easier than to dish up Hindu ideas, so as to make them agreeable to English taste* (italics mine).

However, the problem, in case of the *Mahabharata*, is: who is the author Ganguli would 'mirror upto'? First, the *Mahabharata* is not the work of a single author. Second, the *Mahabharata* as an oral narrative that predates its Sanskritized corpus. Third, being Sanskritized does not make it 'Hindu'. It is rather anachronistic to imagine *Mahabharata* as Hindu, for the idea of Hinduism crystallized only in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in tandem with the spread of cultural nationalism (Bandyopadhyay, 2000; Frykenberg, 1993). Therefore, what follows is that Ganguli, understandably complying with the Orientalist investments in translation projects, *only* 'dishes up' from the *Mahabharata* ideas that are akin to Hindu beliefs, and that also cater to the 'English taste'⁹⁵.

⁹⁴ The myth of nineteenth-century 'revival' of the national past was connected to claims over territorialization and communal exclusion. For details, see supra n. 43.

⁹⁵ The Orientalist assumption that 'the key to understanding Indian traditions was to be found in the ancient texts of India' (Gelders & Balagangadhara, 2011: 102), of which Sen is also a victim, fueled massive translation projects and eventually lead to the foundation of 'Hindu' canonicity. However, when I say Orientalist, I am referring to the scholastic endeavors of William Jones and his acolytes in particular a specific intellectual association that had taken off at the Asiatic Society, Calcutta during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; rather than Said's (2006: 2) broad definition of 'Orientalist' as '[a]nyone who teaches, writes

What was at stake in these translation projects undertaken by Ganguli and suchlike has been succinctly brought up by one of Ganguli's cohorts, R.C. Dutt (1848-1909), who had translated both the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Dutt (1899: 185), in an epilogue to his translation of one of the books of the *Mahabharata*, opines:

No work in Europe, not Homer in Greece or Virgil in Italy, not Shakespeare or Milton in English-speaking lands, is the *national* property of the nations to the same extent as the Epics of India are of the Hindus (Dutt's italics).

Underlying Dutt's remarks is a subtle, but grossly de-historicized, syllogistic argument, which is tantamount to saying: Indian epics are of the Hindus; Indian epics are (also) national properties; (but) national properties belong to the nation; therefore, the Hindus are (co-terminous with) the nation. This assertion of exclusive proprietary rights over the (Indian) epics is indexical to laying claim to the territoriality of the nation. As evident, the translation endeavors were meant to reinforce 'the asymmetry and inequality of relations between peoples, races, languages' (Niranjana, 1992: 1); and part of a larger project of Hinduization of the epics, in turn, fueled by the nationalist agenda. Ganguli's translation of *aprabasi* as 'who stirreth not from home', in that case, is a symbolic erasure of the *aporia* centering the 'home' in the Hindu-Sanskritic past. In the context of the idea of the nation-state and that of Hinduism crystallizing parallely, this erasure, now validated by the *Mahabharata*, would make those 'who [did] stirreth ... from home', that is, the Buddhists and the Jains, appear both to the nationalist 'imagination' and the 'English taste' as *outside* of the Indian tradition.

The popular Bangla saying: *Ja nei bharate, ta nei bharate* (That what isn't in the *Mahabharata* isn't there in India), playing on the homophony, wherein one 'bharat(e)' is the acronym for the *Mahabharata*, and another the vernacular for India, is

about, or researches the Orient'. For details on politics of colonialism and the symbolic power of translation, see Gelders & Balagangadhara (2011) and Niranjana (1990).

symbolic of this totalizing metonymy. While, with the aid of the printing press, canonization of epics and mythic literatures went hand in hand with the rise and spread of Hindu nationalism, the cultural practice of projecting the *Mahabharata* as a microcosm of the nation became a problematic site for questions concerning historicity and territoriality. One has to situate these translations, including Ganguli's, in history and context; and read these as texts involving mediation and implicit manipulation by and for certain 'imagined communities'. Attempting to retrieve, recast, and represent a canon in order to meet the requirements of a changing historical and political milieu, the act of translating, in this context, is a 'self-referential, problematical expression of interests – an ideological-interpretative discourse... metahistorical construction, like all constructions, ultimately [an] arbitrary way of carving up what comes to constitute its field' (Jenkins, 1997: 6, 8). Likewise, Sen's reliance on Ganguli's translation (more precisely, on an instance of Yudhisthira's utterance from Ganguli's translation) is a piecemeal tailored for her 'field'. Since the binary between colonialism and 'Hindu scriptural tradition' comes as an *apriori* in her 'field', Sen has a restricted vision of the part of the 'Hindu scriptural tradition' that only discouraged traveling. This part, however, was a reaction to the Buddhist valorization of traveling, of which the *Samannaphala Sutta* is a manifesto.

The Chimeral Face of History: Buddhist Subversion Reconsidered

The readers, by now, may have noticed a defeating silence in my interrogation of the category 'vagabond': while the project so far has unraveled what has been said about the vagabond, hardly has it taken notice of what the vagabonds have to say of themselves. In the following part, I shall delve into examining how 'vagabonds' legitimize vagabondage. I ask the readers, at this point, to remember some of the

snippets presented in my 'Introduction' wherein I problematized how speaking *about* the vagabond ordinarily turns to speaking *for* the vagabond. In other words, representation *of* vagabonds is generally dismissive of the vagabond's agential subjectivity. The politics of representation, which includes historicization, always already comes codified with a revulsion that keeps us from hearing how the vagabond self-rationalizes vagabondage. This inheritance of concealment, as I revealed, is obvious in Sen. Following Barthes, my question to Sen, in this case, would be:

Does this narration of past events, which, in our culture from the time of the Greeks onwards, has generally been subject to the the sanction of historical 'science', bound to the underlying standard of the 'real', and justified by the principles of 'rational' exposition – does this form of narration really differ, in some specific trait, in some indubitably distinctive feature, from imaginary narration, as we find in the epic, the novel and the drama? (Roland Barthes, cited in Chatterjee, 2006: 8)

Taking lesson from Sen's reductionism, what I intend to do in the following part of my project is to retrieve the vagabond's voice that has been carefully censored. I will discuss the *Samannaphala Sutta*, the first text of its kind wherein a vagabond par excellence, that is the Buddha himself, rationalizes and encourages vagabondage. I will use this to illustrate how the rem(a)inder (in the Lacanian sense) of the ethos has been appropriated by certain postcolonial writers, purposefully wanting to project themselves as 'vagabonds', and the politico-cultural ramifications thereof.

The *Samannaphala Sutta* features the Buddha's dialogue with Ajatasatru on the fruits of contemplative life. *Samannaphala Sutta* literally translates as discourse on the results/fruits of (being a Buddhist) *Sramana* (monk or *Bhikshu*; in Pali: *Samanna*). Since the practising Buddhist monk is ideally a renunciant supposed to have his home/household, some editions have translated *Samannaphala Sutta* as discourse on 'the fruits of homeless life', while some others as discourse on 'fruits of

contemplative life⁹⁶. Ajatasatru, the king of Magadha, is restless and on the lookout of a teacher capable of bringing peace and enlightenment to his mind. On the suggestion of his retinue, he visits some of the most illustrious teachers of his time.

But, none precisely answers his question, so he finally visits and asks to the Buddha:

There are, Reverend Sir, a number of common callings and professions such as chariot-driving, soldiering, cooking, weaving, basket-making, accountantship, and others of kindred sort. All who practise such callings and professions, here and now as presently visible fruit of the same, earn their livelihood by them. Following such avocations they procure comfort and cheer for themselves and parents and families and friends. They are able to maintain the practice of giving to ascetics and brahmins, which practice makes for what is elevated, for what leads to the heaven-states, is fruitful in happiness hereafter, conducting to realms of bliss. Now, Reverend Sir, are you able to point to any such here and now, presently visible fruit of the homeless life? (9)

Ajatasatru wants to know: what is the whole point in wandering? What is it that being homeless eventually accomplishes? From a flashback, we learn which teachers Ajatasatru had already visited, what their responses were and why they failed to satisfy Ajatasatru. He had first visited Purana Kassapa who denied the *karmic* consequences usually associated with rewarding the good or punishing the bad, and instead stressed 'the equal indifference of every kind of action' (10). Then, he visited Makkhali Gosala who posited that suffering is pre-destined and unavoidable, no matter what we do. Then he visited Ajita Kesakambali who 'with his annihilationistic doctrine' (11) held, no matter what fruits homeless life bore, everything is annihilated with death. Next, he approached Pakudha Kaccayana who asserted that 'nothing

⁹⁶ The 1917 edition of Bhikkhu Silacara's rendition translates it as 'The Fruit of the Homeless Life' while it has become 'The Fruits of The Contemplative Life' in the 1997 edition of Thanissaro Bhikkhu's rendition. This change, I suspect, is because of the negative connotation the word 'homeless' has acquired over time. All citations from the *Samannaphala Sutta* here are from the 1917 unless otherwise specified. The *Samannaphala Sutta* has been referred to as *SMPS* in abbreviation in some in-text citations.

anywhere existed save the elements earth, water, fire, air, happiness, misery, and life...; that nothing is done by anybody to anybody' (11). Therefore, matter, pleasure, pain, the soul etc., though eternal, are disjointed and non-interactable, and independent of (what we do in) the material world. Next, Ajatasatru visited Nigantha Nataputta who stressed the idea of restraint. Finally, he visited Sanjaya Belatthaputta, who agnostically replied in an 'all-confused' manner: 'Neither do I not think this way, or that way, or any other way' (11).

Evidently, none of the teachers answers Ajatasatru's question to the point. Dissatisfied, Ajatasatru has now come to the Buddha, and expresses the pointlessness of visiting the rest of the teachers by using a teasing simile: what he learnt from them was 'as though one should enquire about mangoes and be told about bread-fruit; or ask about bread-fruit and be told about mangoes' (10). The futility in visiting other teachers and finally finding solace in Buddha's answers metaphorically stand for Buddhist superiority over other allied (*Nastika*) schools as represented by the teachers Ajatasatru had visited. To note additionally, all of the teachers consulted come from the *Nastika* school, and none from the *Vedic* school. Implicit in this classificatory categorization is the (Buddhist) value-system that renders *Nastika* teachers worth consulting, while their *Vedic* counterparts disposable. In other words, the politics of exclusion of teachers affiliated with the *Vedic* school clearly points to the underlying epistemic predisposition of the Buddhist canon, arisen out of the divergence of the two schools the *Vedic* and the *Nastika* in the context of renunciation. This shows that, in the question of strategizing a sectarian identity in its opposition to and the dismissal of the Vedic discourse, the *Samannaphala Sutta* acknowledges some kinship with the rest of the *Nastika* schools, considered here as worth entering into a dialogue with even if they do not necessarily have the 'correct' answer. One has to be cautious not to

unreflectively infer from here, as Sen (2005) does elsewhere, that renunciation or wandering has been prohibited in the Vedic-Hindu discourse. Rather, what has to be implied from here is that *only* the particular strand of Vedic discourse contemporaneous with and contentious to the Buddhist canon in question, what went un(der)represented in *Samannaphala Sutta*, did prefer the household to renunciation.

The protagonists of the text Ajatasatru and the Buddha both have set upon their own journey with separate motivations. The quest for Ajatasatru's journey is the demonstrable consequences of the Buddha's kind of journey, which is to understand in Ajatasatru's terms, the 'value' of wandering. Therefore, the end to the means of Ajatasatru's journey is to comprehend the end to the Buddhist means of wandering. The Buddha reveals before Ajatasatru several 'fruits' of wandering, one by one understandably 'arranged in the ascending order of value' (Preface). First of all, the Buddha contrives of an imagery of an emancipated slave who 'vowing himself to homelessness...[is] satisfied with simple food and shelter, delighting in solitude' (12). This, according to the Buddha, is the first 'fruit' of homeless life: delight from solitude and freedom from the household life that has been called 'cramped and confined ... a den of dust' (14). Next, the Buddha stresses the precepts of restraint of senses and that of practising austerity, which is the guiding force of the homeless Bhikshu in the (morally) right path. The Bhikshu, as laid down by the Buddha:

... is content with the robes required for the covering of his body, with the food required for the satisfaction of his stomach. And whithersoever he goes, he takes with him only such things as are needed. Even as the winged bird, whithersoever it flies, bears with it only its wings, so the Bhikkhu is content with what he receives of needed clothing and food; and journeying, takes with him only needful requisites (17).

The wanderer, in this respect, never consumes beyond what is the barest requisite.

He derives happiness out of simplicity. 'Putting away from him worldly craving' (17),

the wanderer is, thus, free from the anxiety of having to accumulate private possessions for his family or household.

The Buddha, hereafter, augments his argument by pointing to the spiritual (non-material) 'fruits' of the homeless life. In Buddha's discourse, among the the five impediments to well-being, worldly craving has been compared to debt, ill-will and anger compared to disease, sloth and drowsiness to imprisonment, restlessness to slavery, and doubt to a journey in desert (17-19). Freeing himself from these five obstacles, the wanderer cleanses his mind towards attaining a state of tranquility, comparable with the feeling of 'unindebtedness' (*SMPS*: online). Then the Buddha mentions of the four *Jhanic* ecstatic states of being attainable through complete detachment, concentration, active joy, and purified thought (19-21). After mentioning each of the states, he cites each as 'another presently visible fruit of the homeless life yet choicer and more excellent than the last' (19). So, the whole argument is presented in a manner that the latest argument in terms of its value always surpasses the former. Also, embedded in this narrative structure is the presumption that the spiritual 'fruits' of the homeless life, in terms of priority and significance, far exceed its material(ist) counterparts. From here, the Buddha goes onto citing other 'fruits' in escalating order of importance: acquiring insightful knowledge about one's body and consciousness, a series of mystical-supernormal powers, mind-reading ability, knowledge of past lives, consequences of *kamma*, and rebirth, the causes of suffering and how to transcend it. This realization of suffering, in the pyramidal structure of the Buddhist argumentation, is that ultimate bliss, following which the wanderer feels that he has 'done all that was to do' (25); he senses that 'the holy life [is] fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world' (*SMPS*: online).

This, in turn, awakens Ajatasatru's conscience. He confesses to have 'fallen into

evil, being foolish, all astray, all amiss' (26) in imprisoning and eventually killing his 'righteous father, the just king' (26), Bimbisara, while being impulsive under the influence of lust for monarchical power. This gives us cue to why he was so restless, in the first place, to have started his quest for understanding the 'fruits' of contemplative-homeless life. Hereafter, not only does Ajatasatru determine to 'set up straight again, [having] gone astray' (26) but also puts his 'confidence in the Blessed One [Buddha], and in the Truth, and in the Order of Bhikkhus' (26). There is no historical evidence in support of Ajatasatru officially converting to Buddhism⁹⁷. However, the point here is not to authenticate the historicity of the dialogue; but rather to analyze the literary text for better illustrating the *zeitgeist* concerning wandering. One must note that there is an evangelical aspect to the conversation: narrativizing the monarch been won over would earn Buddhism, at that point an organized religion still in its making, the hallmark of royal endorsement, an influential prospect for gaining public patronization⁹⁸. The Buddhist 'campaign', one can tell from here, has been phrased in a rhetoric of austerity epitomized by the figure of the

⁹⁷ Having said that, there is no doubt that he was indeed deeply influenced by the Buddha, if not Buddhism. When the Buddha died, 'Ajatasatru wept like a child, and was among those who requested relics of the Buddha. He deposited them in one large Stupa in Rajagrha. Two months later, when the First Council was convened, Ajatasatru assured the assembled monks of his patronage and assistance to them' (Garg, 1992: 272). DeCaroli (2004: 33) mentions Bimbisara and Ajatasatru as 'among the most renowned of these [Magadhan] earliest patrons of Buddhism', while at the same time he reminds that 'the tales of these kings are more legend than history'.

⁹⁸ DeCaroli (2004: 31-54) discusses in detail how early Buddhism strives for public patronage. For a more specific discussion on women's involvement, see Osto (2008). Speaking of Medieval Buddhism though, Davidson (2002: 78) posits that the 'Buddhist monks first inscribed foreign languages..., acted as scribes for court proceedings, and encouraged both capital expenditures by courts and the value of artistic enterprise. These services allowed the mercantile community to prosper in a way unforeseen without Buddhist monastic assistance and entitled royal patrons to reap the benefits of the first Asian foray into a globalized culture'. This is, however, not true of early Buddhism. I brought this up as a testimony to the nexus between the state and religion, in this case Buddhism.

wanderer. What I insist on, therefore, is that even though some of the preceding Hindu discourses had emphasized the household, it was still likely that the figure of the wanderer, at least in the 'public sphere', was very much acceptable. In other words, had the efficacy of the reception of the figure of the wanderer been questionable, the *Samannaphala Sutta* would not have featured the Buddha setting out to demonstrate the 'fruits' of homeless life⁹⁹.

There are different layers to the idea of journey(ing) in the text: the journeys of Ajatasatru and the Buddha's, that of Ajatasatru's metaphorical and physical, also that of the Buddha's spiritual and material. In *Samannaphala Sutta*, contemplative-homeless life is the principal object of inquiry with two protagonists dealing with it from two different ends. Ajatasatru inquires about contemplative-homeless life while located *outside* of it, whereas the Buddha makes a case for wandering as a representative of the 'homeless' community, while located *inside* of it. Inasmuch as a sociologist or an anthropologist who inquires about a community-out-there she necessarily does not have any 'real' engagement with, Ajatasatru is an outsider to, an observant of the Buddhist wandering community. In this respect, he is a stalker. The Buddha, on the other hand, is the practitioner, the expert who, in a sense, is counselling Ajatasatru. In helping Ajatasatru purge his terrible guilt of patricide, the Buddha, for the first time, points to a *demonstrable* consequence. In fact, the Buddha's repertoires of what he previously demonstrated as 'fruits' of contemplative-homeless life beginning with the thought experiment of an emancipated slave to acquiring supernatural powers were technically not 'demonstrable', which is to say, not empirically

⁹⁹ One has to keep in mind that not all Buddhist monks were necessarily wandering ascetics. Contrary to the popular belief, Schopen (1997: 72-85) argues that far from being entirely aloof from their families some (Indian Buddhist monks) engaged in diverse domestic rituals. This actually strengthens my claim that 'reality' is more complicated than one can infer from textual evidentialism.

verifiable in the here and now. It is the elevation in Ajatasatru's character – from being heinously lustful about power to now remorsefully conscientious – which is literally demonstrable, and indeed a demonstrable 'fruit' entirely attributable to the Buddha. The anagnorisis in Ajatasatru brings a closure to the text, which transfigures to a closure to each of their respective journeys. Ajatasatru, as featured in the beginning of the text, having embarked upon a physical journey, ultimately realizes the metaphysical 'fruit' of journey(ing), which, for the Buddha, would serve as a physical exemplar for the transformative potential of his metaphysical discourses on journey(ing). In other words, the journeys are as though chiasmatically structured, intersecting each other at the axes of the *physical* and the *metaphysical*.

Thus, *Samannaphala Sutta* blurs the distinction between the realm of the physical and that of the metaphysical, the *inside* and the *outside*. Journey(ing), as it appears in the text, is the metaphor of one's 'inner' growth or the progression towards a better *being*. As invoked in the Buddhist literatures, there are three kinds of *dukkha* (suffering): first, (literal) suffering arising out of pathological *dis-ease*; second, suffering from the realization that the everything is ephemeral, in a state of impermanence (*anitya* in Sanskrit; *anicca* in Pali); third, suffering from (having known of) our state of unenlightenment¹⁰⁰. Higher is the *dukkha* in this order of progression more difficult to surmount. For example, one can cure pathological suffering by *external* medicine, but for the third kind of suffering the cure (enlightenment) has to come from *within*. The Buddha's argument is that wandering and practising austerity would prevent one from immersing into the world that is transient in the first place. And more importantly, having attained this state of

¹⁰⁰ For details on the Buddhist concept of *dukkha*, see Harvey (2013: 50-87) and Gethin (1998: 59-64).

placidity, one would open oneself to the world *outside*, thereby increasing the likeliness of surmounting of the third kind of *dukkha*, which is one's rite of passage to enlightenment. This is apparently what the Buddha guides Ajatasatru into. It is not without reason that in *Samannaphala Sutta*, a twenty-six page long text, the motif of vision recurs thirteen times in total till at the very end, with Ajatasatru's climatic realization, 'the stainless, flawless Eye of Truth' (26) ushers in him.

In *Samannaphala Sutta*, the motif of vision acts as a metaphor for one's conscience, better still, consciousness, which is to say, an enhanced and perfected understanding of the Self. Far from Cartesian duality, the Self, in the Buddhist schema, is again transient and is not necessarily in opposition with the Other. The Buddhist Self reconciles the 'gap' in the dichotomy between the Self as imagined as Heideggerian *Dasein* – the resolute way of emerging from the anonymity of the mass of 'they', and, as the changing but distilled core of essentially embodied experiences. The Self is not material, but understandably material-dependent. Again, the Self is not entirely subjective/experiential either, but understandably conditioned upon embodied experiences. Whenever we refer to ourselves by means of token-reflexive pronouns, 'I' in the case of English, the problem is that we tend to assume it yields the same referent both for the narrator and the narratee. But, in reality, the subject is a subject *to*, and *of*, others; in fact, it is often an 'Other' to others, which also affects its sense of its own *being*, its subjectivity. In other words, one's *being* is continually subjected to being circumscribed by Other (non-)beings and discourses of social institutions. The ambivalence here is that the subject is a (physical) body that is separable (except for those pregnant) from other bodies, while at the same time amenable to *affects* arising out of its relationality with Other (non-)bodies. The problem central to this issue has been succinctly laid down by Butler (1993: ix): 'Not only did bodies tend to indicate a

world beyond themselves, but this movement beyond their own boundaries, a movement of boundary itself, appeared to be quite central to what bodies "are". Now that the efficacy of theoretical apparatus to understand the 'body' has been questioned, understanding the *being* associated with the body becomes a murkier terrain. 'For human reality', as Sartre (1956: 568-69) famously formulates, 'to be is to choose oneself; nothing comes to it either from the *outside* or from *within* which it can receive or accept'. Instead, human beings are, in fact, 'non-beings' that lack volition: condemned to be free their *beings* are what Sartre calls *made-to-be*.

Now that we are all 'cyborgs' (Haraway, 1991) and 'quasi-objects' (Latour, 1993), it is possibly better understandable why (in the Buddhist logic) either distilling a transcendental 'essence' for the Self or reducing the Self to objectivist, non-culturally embedded, neuro-biological generalizables based on a bundle of corporal matter(s) is inconceivable. The Buddha, in fact, critiqued both schools *Atthikavada* (Eternalism) and *Natthikavada* (Annihilationism) that acknowledged the Self as an unchanging *being* and that which denied ethico-moral responsibilities of one's own deed simply on the ground that there is no Self that is the subject *of* or *to* the deed. When asked by *paribrajaka* (wandering ascetic) Vacchagotta whether or not there is a Self, the Buddha purposefully remains silent. When Vacchagotta leaves, the Buddha's disciple, Ananda, asks him about his silence. The Buddha replies as follows:

Ananda, if I – being asked by Vacchagotta the wanderer if there is a self – were to answer that there is a self, that would be conforming with those brahmins & contemplatives who are exponents of eternalism [the view that there is an eternal, unchanging soul]. If I – being asked by Vacchagotta the wanderer if there is no self – were to answer that there is no self, that would be conforming with those brahmins & contemplatives who are exponents of annihilationism [the view that death is the annihilation of consciousness]. If I – being asked by Vacchagotta the wanderer if there is a self – were to answer that there is a self, would that be in keeping with the arising of knowledge that all phenomena are not-self (*Samyuttanikaya*: 44.8-11)?

Thus, the Buddha takes on his *purvapaksha* and reconciles the two opposing views¹⁰¹. This echoes in *Samannaphala Sutta* too when Ajatasatru, immediately before he starts to brood upon his patricide, realizes that the body is 'a perishable, erodable, pulverisable, breakable, dismemberable thing! And with this thing also is my consciousness entangled' (*SMPS*, 21). In other words, with the body and the consciousness been rendered inseparable, there is no longer any duality or dichotomy between the two, if at all those are *two* entities to begin with.

Conceived in this way, the capacity of the 'body' extends far beyond what, in Haraway's (1991: 178) words, 'end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin'. It is rather the range of interrelated potentialities arising out of the extensive continuum with Other (non-)bodies. We feel *with* our ears, *with* our skin, *with* our tongue etc., a phenomenon Whitehead (2010) calls the *witness* of the body. Nevertheless, the resonance of *my* feelings does concern that which is *outside* of the *closed* entity which we tend to assume as *my* 'body'. This dissolution of the *inside-outside*, *Self-Other* dichotomies is, in the Buddhist terms, actualized by means of wandering. Let us, in this context, think of the imagery of the *Mobius strip* or the *Klein bottle*, Lacan's (2006) oft-used topological repertoires to demonstrate the inseparability between language, which is the domain of the *Symbolic*, and desire, which is the domain of the *Imaginary*. Likewise, wandering, as the Buddha suggests, makes one transcend one's obsession with *my-ness*: it is through wandering that one's *inside* opens to the *outside*, the *Self* attains its continuum with the *Other*. This melding of the *inside-outside* pushes the boundary of the *Self* to an extent that it renders

¹⁰¹ A *purvapaksha* (purva=one that comes before; paksha=side/group), in the *Nyaya* theory of debating, is the propagator (*Vadi*) of a set of postulates that has to be refuted first by the refutor (*prativadi*) in order for a new theory to be determined (*tattvanirnaya*). For details on the *Nyaya* tradition of debating, see Matilal (1985: 9-22).

irrelevance to 'making question of what things are profitable' (*SMPS*, 18). The idea of profit does not make sense unless we mention profit over what or whom. The profiteer is necessarily in contestation with that upon which the profit is made. In that sense, profit always invokes a sense competition as opposed to cooperation. The discursive foundation of wandering, as the Buddha demonstrates, problematizes the basic premises of how to determine profit(ability), simply because the interstice between the profiteer (the subject) and the object of profit has now been rendered porous. Now that one does not know for sure where the 'I' ends and the 'non-I' begins, how does one calculate profit?

Think of the 'modern' capitalist infrastructure of traveling in contrast: right in the heart of the instrumentalist understanding of 'travel' lays the agenda of profit-maximization. Everything that traveling amounts to, in the context of the tourism industry the travelers, the physical mobility, the resources and the 'enumerated' space within which traveling takes place and so on has to be first and foremost commodifiable in order for optimizing profit-revenue. This presumes that what one 'gains' out of traveling has a precise marketable 'value' exchangeable in lieu of what Marx (1993: 115-238) calls an 'arbitrary symbol': the money. In validating the relative 'value' of an object calibrated only with respect to money we tend to strip the object of its extimacy with the rest of the world, reducing the *object*, in Heidegger's (1968) terms, to a *thing*, stripping it of its continuum with the world *outside*, that is, its *beingwith-ness*, now to be completely usurped by its potential monetizability. The tourism industry perfectly illustrates what the Buddha says to be at stake. 'Touristic' travel is essentially de-personalizing; it operates on a principle of exclusion: evident in the heart of this principle is social distantiation. The tourist travels to the Other precisely as an Other who seeks self-gratification. The tourist is a subject who is perennially harboring a

foundational lack a lack only to be satiated from the *outside*. The principle of profit, in this schema, functions on a fundamental *apriori*: that (gratificatory) resources always flow unidirectionally from what is toured to the tourist. On contrary to the more symbiotic relationship as immanent in the Heideggerian idea of *beingwith-ness* or envisaged by the Buddha in his dissolution of the Self-Other duality, this model, however, presumes that the tourist and the toured are, in fact, disjointed, insular entities always in opposition.

Based on this gratificatory value system, the tourism industry monetizes the de-personalized act of mobility, detached from any relationship between the tourist and the toured. Kavuri-Bauer (2011: 145-69), to mention but one such example, demonstrates how the 'Indian' Mughal monuments, perceived as 'parallactic' objects, yielding different referents and semiotic associations for different travelers in the 'pre-modern', have now been stripped of the 'subliminality' and marketed as 'touristic' sites, in which global organizations like UNESCO have sizeable stakes, within the larger frameworks of globalized capital, heritage commodification, and tourism management. What is of significance in this model of traveling 'is not their [tourist's] motives or attitudes ... but the existence of a coherent industry which strives to recognize, stimulate and serve the travel needs of all of them' (Turner & Ash, 1975: 14). The tourist is the prototype of the consumer who rationalizes the capitalist logic inherent in the discursive practices of tourism (Britton, 1991; MacCannell, 1997; Watson & Kopachevsky, 1994). 'One significant reason for the problematic status of tourism', argue Rojek and Urry (1997: 1) 'is that its meaning stems from its "other", from the other term or terms with which it is contrasted'. In this regard, I ask the readers to invoke from my first chapter the section titled 'The Vagabond as The Penumbra Tourist', where I have argued how the 'vagabond', in the context of the emergence of

tourism in 'modern' India and its liaison with proliferation of colonial disposition of taste, is but socially constructed as an antithetical Other to the 'tourist'. It is rather the austerity of the vagabond's mode of travelling that highlights the self-gratificatory aspect of tourism.

Self-gratification operates on harnessing the *Other*, who/what now becomes the disposable means to self-obsessive pleasure (as opposed to happiness)¹⁰². For the pleasure-seeking tourist, the purchasability of travel(ing) overwhelms the sense of his ethical responsibility towards the *Other*, 'who, by their very existence, make demands that we may be unwilling to meet' (Scruton, 2005: 63). According to Miles (2010: 66), 'Tourism is effectively packaged for exchange and in doing so implies to the consumer that only through consumption can they find happiness to what they aspire'. In other words, the tourist's will to travel comes from his will to consume. Now, contrast this with the kind of traveling the Buddha mentions in the *Samannaphala Sutta*. The vagabond's happiness is not in consuming: his pursuit of traveling has a transcendental aspect connected to the augmentation of the Self while imbricating an intimate relation with the Other. In the next section, I will show how this idea of vagabondage returns as a subversive trope in some post-colonial Indian literature as contrapuntal to the narratives of consumerism and capitalism. But, before I get into that let me make this taxonomy between the tourist and the vagabond, the distinction between the two brands of travelling, clearer. It is with respect to this distinction that I will be able to precisely underline the 'position- taking' of the postcolonial writers I want to bring up next.

Let me begin with a personal anecdote. In July 2013, I visited the Louvre. My

¹⁰² I am, hereby, invoking the Aristotelian distinction between happiness and pleasure. Aristotle posits that happiness, unlike pleasure, does not come from the *outside*. For details, see Aristotle (2014: 175-94). For a more teasingly written account of how the pursuit of happiness has recently changed to a materialist understanding, see Nandy (2011).

Lonely Planet suggested, presumably a bit exaggeratingly, that seeing all the artworks in Louvre might take six months in total. However, the 'ordinary' tourist can afford at the most a day for Louvre, for she, under the constraint of a pre-programmed itinerary or guided tourism, has to tick the Louvre off from her to-do list and proceed to the next must-see destination. For most 'ordinary' tourists, *doing* the Louvre means witnessing barely a handful of 'original' masterpieces, and in so doing, most end up spending a good amount of their time at Louvre just pushing through the crowds to catch a glimpse and then click a picture of that what is already on Google Image. When I entered the salon where the *Mona Lisa* hangs, what immediately drew my attention, more overwhelmingly than the painting itself, was the crowd of about a hundred people gathered in front of the painting. Needless to say, all were clicking pictures of the painting. This made me wonder: what is *it* that so many people are clicking pictures of? What is the impetus that drives so many people to literally strive to capture the most banal of the tourist photograph frames? What in the frame do they intend to *take back* with them?

I use this anecdote as a case to illustrate how 'tourism as a social behavior becomes more and more dislodged from the spontaneity and free choice' (Watson & Kopachevsky, 1994: 675). While 'mass culture reduces the ordinary consumer to the position of an addicted consumer of reproduced objects, packaged events and other manipulated stimulants' (Rojek, 1997: 60), the tourist participates in a pre-scripted performance that increasingly depletes the diversities in practices of traveling. For the tourist, the symbolic evidentialism of what Urry (2002) refers to as 'consuming places', which is reflected in the banal reproducibility of the 'touristy' frame of the *Mona Lisa* (*Been There, done that!*), overrides the experience of traveling and encountering the Other. As MacCannell (1976: 111) points:

Sightseers do not, in any empirical sense, *see* San Francisco. They see Fisherman's Wharf, a cable car, the Golden Gate Bridge, Union Square...As elements in a set called 'San Francisco', each of these items is a symbolic marker. (italics in original)

Borrowing MacCannell's notion of 'symbolic marker', what I insist on is that tourism involves performative practices of spatiality and mobility, which render the 'symbolic markers' constituting the Louvre or San Francisco consumable, only to meet certain instrumentalist ends. The predominant characteristic of 'modern' tourism, therefore, is to market the repeatability of touristic performances and to aid in the process of consumption.

This de-indigenization of travel(ing), whereby the importance of consumability of the 'symbolic markers' exceeds that of interaction with the toured, is precisely what is at stake. The tourist, MacCannell (1976: 10) posits, is 'reproached for being satisfied with *superficial* experiences of other peoples and other places' (italics mine). Say for example, when traveling, the GPS device can find for me obscure addresses that I did not know even existed. The Google glass can literally 'take' me to the nearest restaurant or subway station in places I have never been. With an appropriate smartphone app I can 'read' menus in languages I do not know. Making sense of the cookies algorithmically, my computer knows better than, and ahead of, me where I am likely to travel to next. The very first encounter, then, with the place I am going to travel to more often than not takes place virtually through Google images or weather applications. This is to say, 'modern' tourism inflates the 'value' of the techno-capitalist infrastructure so much that it makes the *Other* seem replaceable among all valid stakeholders of the 'modern' tourism industry. The facilitation of tourism is increasingly directed toward eliminating possibilities of interacting with my Others. This self-centeredness is precisely the target of the Gandhian (2010: 36-38) critique of the railways. 'Railways', Gandhi (ibid.: 36) writes, quite judgmentally and with unreserved conviction, 'accentuate the evil

nature of man'. In the heart of his hyperbolic claim is the apprehension that the railways would foreclose the possibility of human(e) interactions.

The Gandhian denigration, for that matter, was not out of any resentment towards the railways as a piece of technology or machinery, but was directed against the signifying practice of the railway as a symbol¹⁰³. Emblematic of (colonial) modernity, the railways, according to Gandhi, would bring in speed, which would eventually lead to greed. He firmly held: 'Formerly, people went to these places [pilgrimages] with very great difficulty ... Good travels at a snail's pace it can, therefore, have little to do with railways' (ibid.:37). Gandhi fears more about what railways would take away from us than he is happy with the 'progress' it brings. Speed and capitalism are, however, intrinsically related: they are but two sides of the same coin (Glezos, 2013). Speaking of which, Schivelbusch (1987) demonstrates how instrumental rationalization of mobility, with the advent of British railways in the nineteenth century, created a class of passive consumers catering to the needs of capitalism. Likewise, Gandhi's concern was that the elimination of 'difficulty' in navigating our way around the world minimizes our tolerance towards the Other: the less are the travails in traveling the more are we amenable to succumb to a competitive value system, which is incongruous with the principle plural co-existence. This welcoming of difficulty, this will to austerity characterizes the 'archaic' form of traveling, which is to say, vagabondage.

Organized around the central problematic of linear progression, modalities of modernity suffice not only by optimizing the politico-economic conditions, but also

¹⁰³ For details on the nuances of Gandhian take on technology, see *supra* n. 59.

by radically altering our moral conduct¹⁰⁴. Regulatory 'modern' apparatuses of control, in this sense, seek to achieve optimal routinization. Dreading that one's *Self* would be 'lost in the depths of social mass' (Durkheim, 1992: 56), the modern subject tends to drown himself in solitary individualization, which eventually leads to despairing modernist angst¹⁰⁵. The practice of tourism, in this context, functions as an escape from modernist alienation (Cohen & Taylor, 1992; Rojek, 1993). Ferdinand Tönnies (2001) makes a fundamental distinction between *Gemeinschaft*, which is a community-based society and *Gesellschaft*, which is a free-associational contract-based society. The former operates on *Kürwille* (rational will), whereby all transactions are determined by rational self-interest on the basis of efficiency, division of labor, contract, and exchange, and so on. The latter, in contrast, functions on *Wesenwille* (natural will), more along the lines of what Mauss (1990) calls the 'gift economy': familiar structures, filial bonding, kinship, spontaneity in this case outweighs rationality, conditionality etc. I am aware that taxonomy of societies in reality is too nuanced to be cast into these conceptual binaries right away. But, in invoking Tönnies' distinction, what I am insisting on is the temporal rupture in how societal transactions, and by extension, practices of traveling, tend to take place in the 'archaic' and in the 'modern' eras. Posed in

¹⁰⁴ This problematic has been a preoccupation for most of Foucault's career. My usage of 'conduct' has a Foucauldian undertone. In Foucault's (1982b: 789) words: 'Perhaps the equivocal nature of the term "conduct" is one of the best aids for coming to terms with the specificity of power relations. For to "conduct" is at the same time to "lead" others (according to mechanisms of coercion which are, to varying degrees, strict) and a way of behaving within a more or less open field of possibilities. The exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome. Basically power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other than a question of government [governmentality]'.

¹⁰⁵ The irony, however, is that individualization, or *free will*, for that matter, too is a social condition conditioned by state apparatuses, available resources, dispositions and limitations etc. into which we are condemned while under the *illusion* of freedom (Sartre, 1956; 1961; 2007: 17-72).

these terms, the tourist is essentially a goal-oriented modern subject 'traveling in the expectation of pleasure' (Cohen, 1974: 533).

The category of 'tourist', thus, invokes a rationality-maximized, pleasure-seeking individual, endorsing a brand of traveling that reinforces the distinction between the Self and the Other. The performative practice of tourism is as if the 'obligatory passage point' that transforms the traveler to the consumer par excellence¹⁰⁶. According to Prato & Trivero (1985: 26):

The explorer goes in search of unknown territory, the traveller moves within a territory already discovered by history, while the tourist exists *within an area* that has already been surveyed and prepared for him and her by advertising and the travel agent. (italics mine)

What follows is that the tourist exists *within* a 'contrived' space (of her own) where the symbolic performances of tourism unfold, *within* a cocooned tourist bubble that Edensor (1998) calls 'enclavic tourist space', insulated from the Other. The specificity of tourism is not limited to practices of traveling alone, but the tourist, as MacCannell (1976: 1) argues, 'is one of the best models available for modern-man-in-general'. This model is symbolic of the attitudinal *being* of the 'modern man': it is symbolic of his *beingwithness*, the nature of his ethico-moral engagement with the Other, or more precisely, his lack thereof. Speaking of modernity and the emergence of the 'tourist', Google Ngram Viewer (see diagram below) tracks how the 'tourist' increasingly outnumbered the 'traveler' in the (post-)modern era. The following curves represent frequency distribution of the words 'vagabond' and 'homeless' as occurring in Google's digitized archives over time, with the vertical axis standing for relative frequencies (in percent) and the horizontal axis for time. This rambunctious rise of the 'tourist' (over the

¹⁰⁶ For details on the tourist-traveler distinction, see Wang (2000: 3-6), Gilbert (1990), Theobald (1994) and Buzard (1993) among others.

'traveler'), as evident in the diagram, is a fall out of a 'modern' rupture, and reflective of an essentially modernist tendency to emulate the 'tourist', which is to say, the tourist's mode of *being-in-the-world*.

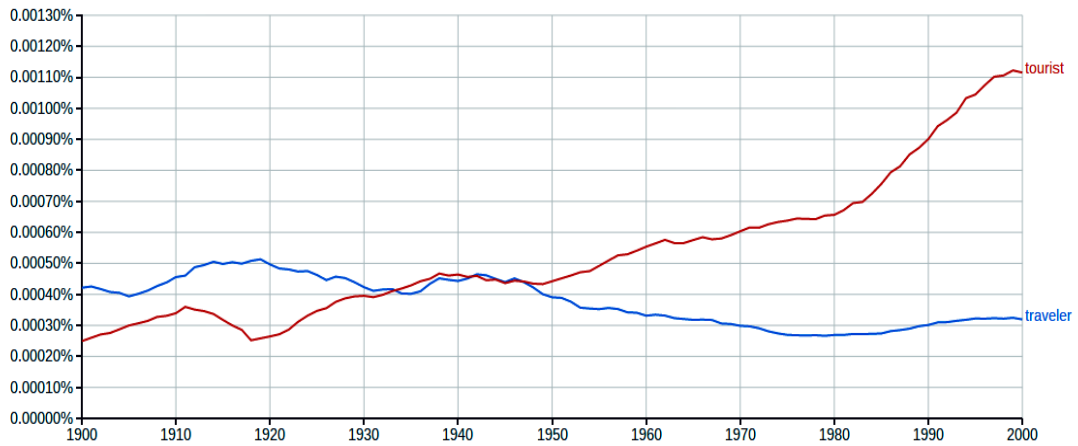


Image retrieved from Google Ngram Viewer

Now, let us juxtapose the figure of the 'tourist' with that of the 'vagabond' as envisaged by the Buddha. Taking cues from Prato & Trivero, what I insist on is that the tourist and the vagabond are distinctly different categories; they represent two fundamentally different paradigms in traveling: while the tourist stays *with-in* the vagabond goes *with-out*¹⁰⁷. Think of the Buddha himself. He goes *out* of his palace, encounters that what is *outside* of his habitat, and decides to renounce everything to become a 'vagabond'. Think of his sojourn in the *Samannaphala Sutta*. He encounters and engages in a dialogue with Ajatasattu who (until he transforms) stood for everything that the Buddha detests. For the vagabond, to travel is to open up to the possibility that she may not return to the point of origin, to the site of her original habitat. While the practice of tourism is 'enclavic', that of vagabondage involves being amenable to rhizomatically connecting with the Other. The tourist, endorsed and normalized by a

¹⁰⁷ 'Without' is a derivative of 'withutan' (Old English), which means 'outside' in archaic English (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

profit-oriented industry, is the desirous surrogate of the 'ideal' traveler. He is a *lacking* subject who embodies a deficit. He is always after something. However, the vagabond, according to the Buddha, is set out to rediscover her *Self* in relation to the *Other*. In other words, tourism is a model for *being* in the competitive economy while vagabondage is a way of *becoming*.

For the vagabond, therefore, wandering is a question of ethics. Vagabondage is not just chaotic or aimless movement. It is the ethico-philosophical turn towards opening-out as an affective subject who sees 'value' in the principles of gratuitousness, non-profit, co-existence, dynamism, non-conformity, non-linearity or *flow*, which is invoked by the idea of 'chaosmosis' (Guattari, 1995; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Braidotti, 2011). It is not without a reason that so many contemporary thinkers have taken up the epithet of the nomadicity as a metaphor when it comes to speaking of rhizomatic style of thinking. Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 380-81), for example, talks of the 'disorganized', perpetually deterritorialized, nomadic subject who is the embodiment of *flow (flux)*. Both Bhabha (1990) and Clifford (1992) invoke the notion of 'flow' in the context of cultural cosmopolitanism. Irigaray (1985: 148) talks about 'an economy of flow' as an emancipatory getaway from (the coherent orderliness of) 'a dominant scopic regime'. Braidotti's (2013: 189) notion of the 'nomadic subject' is based on plenitude as opposed to *lack*. Derrida's (1997; 2005; 2010: 73-83) idea of the 'impossible to come', or that of 'democracy to come' is evocative of an implicit motion. The concept of 'liquid modernity', as explicated by Bauman (2013), also gestures towards a fluidity and incessant mobility. Both Braidotti (2011) and Bauman (1987) envisage the 'critical intellectual' to be nomadic¹⁰⁸. Nomadicity, the way these theorists,

¹⁰⁸ Cresswell (2011) provides a historical overview of how the 'vagabond', in the Western context, has been invoked in three different discourses: the law, picaresque literature, and Critical Theory. Although he does not quite interrogate the figure, his work, toward its end,

among many others, have taken up, stands for non-linearity, a method that substitutes the routinized, progressionist, formalist way of thinking with a more rhizomatic style of intervention into the world. Nomadicity, therefore, is a pluralistic mode of interaction that connects the nomad, or the vagabond, to her 'outside(s)'. The 'value' *of and in* wandering, for the vagabond, is hardly inscribed in its subject alone. The act of wandering is rather the physical embodiment of an expressive signifying practice that is, as the Buddha demonstrates in the *Samannaphalasutta*, ideally responsible, accountable and sustainable in terms of the centrifugal *affects* it generates towards its Other(s), which eventually renders irrelevant to 'making question of what things are profitable' (*SMPS*, 18).

Postcolonial Literature: The Return of The Vagabond

The way the idea of nomadicity-fluidity has come up in Critical Theory clearly alludes to non-conformity, non-linearity, and a non-instrumentalist pursuit of *becoming* actualized by feeling synergy with the 'union with the stream of life', what Husserl (1970) calls the 'lifeworld'. Thinking in these terms, the trajectory of the figure of the 'vagabond' in the context of India and its historical groundedness, that I have covered in my project so far, can be read as a pre-history of the (non-historical) metaphorical trope of mobility as invoked in contemporary theory. Different cultures value different things differently. It is perhaps a truism at this point to reiterate that the figure of the vagabond, as the prototype of a non-conformist, affective subject, has perpetually been tolerated as a part of the 'Indian' cultural repertoire. What I wanted to

contains an exposition of how the 'vagabond' figures in Bauman's works. Drawing on Bauman, Cresswell, so far I could get, sees vagabondage as an embodiment of postmodern subjectivity (while tourism implicitly being that of modernity). I found this distinction provocative. I see the point here, albeit I am myself set out to trace the pre-history of vagabondage.

underline in my project until now is two critical junctures the rise of Buddhism and that of instrumental modernity following which *becoming* a vagabond is perceived to be unbecoming. But in the end, the vagabond seems to have the last laugh: the 'vagabond', which is but a reactionary construct against Buddhist non-conformism, eventually emerges as an inexorable critic of modernity. Let us think of the North American Beat movement in this context. What was it in this 'archaic' practice of nomadicity that ironically a bunch of 'modern' American avant-gardes had to look back into? And more importantly, why would the Beats turn to India for their inspirational stimuli¹⁰⁹?

The 'archaic' practice of nomadicity embodied an allegory of de-routinization. Having undergone periodic suppressions and revivals, the ethos of nomadicity, and that of an affective becoming, I insist, ran deep in the 'Indian' collective psyche. The sudden spark of affinity for collective wandering among the Beats was functionally *valueless* in the eyes of a high modernist society completely taken over by the Fordist assembly line standardization. Therefore, the Beats turned to a culture wherein wandering as an expression of lampooning societal conformism has not only sufficed for ages but also been regarded *invaluable* in some historical milieu. According to de Certeau (1988b: 4), whatever

new understanding of the past holds to be irrelevant shards created by the selection of material, remainders left aside by an explication comes back, despite everything, on the edges of discourse or in its rifts and crannies: 'resistances,' 'survivals,' or delays perturb the pretty order of a line of 'progress' or a system of interpretation.

The point, therefore, is to trace how the trope of nomadicity as developed in the Buddhist discourse takes ride in 'modern' Indian literature. How do the dynamics of

¹⁰⁹ I am thankful to Ihor Junyk for having pointed this to me. All the key Beat figures – Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Kenneth Rexroth, Bob Kaufman – were influenced by Buddhism at some point in their careers. Kerouac is known to have said: 'What really influences my work is the Mahayana Buddhism, the original Buddhism of Gotama [sic.] Sakyamuni, the Buddha himself, of the India...' (cited in Lott, 2004: 175).

reception of India's 'pre-modern' tryst with vagabondage map on to the corpus of 'modern' literary texts? How do the axiomatics of Janus-headed modernity bear upon the oeuvres of 'modern' writers? I will take up three literary practitioners, Rahul Sankrityayan (1883-1963), Premankur Atorthy (1890-1964) and Samaresh Basu (1924-1988), all footloose to varying degrees, in order to map the dynamics of reception: how their oeuvres inherit that what has survived as a residual 'structure of feeling', which is to say, the ethos of vagabondage.

Poststructuralist theorists in particular have rejected the idea of modernity as a linear temporal progression and approached modernities in the plural, stressing multiple, disjunctive temporalities, and multiple vernacular iterations. It is illegitimate to imagine modernity, particularly in the context of the former colonies, as a model received from the Western European frameworks of reference¹¹⁰. Rather, modernity is Janus-faced: a part of it always concerns 're-discovering' traditions. Thinking along the same lines, any narrative per se does not intrinsically make sense in or by itself; rather it makes sense only when read in a meaningful way. In other words, it acquires (new) meaning in the light of what comes prior to or after it. As Jauss (1982: 23) argues,

All literary work even it appears to be new, does not represent itself as something in absolutely new in an informational vacuum, but predisposes its audience to a very specific kind of reception by announcements, overt and covert signals, familiar characteristics, or implicit allusions. It awakens memories of that which was already read, bring the reader to a specific emotional attitude, and with its beginning arouses expectations for the "middle and end," which can then be maintained intact or altered, reoriented, or even fulfilled ironically in the course of the reading according to specific rules of the genre or type of text.

Literature, therefore, is very much an aspect of the larger cultural history of the people at a particular time and place. Literary narratives are geared towards formulating a

¹¹⁰ Chatterjee (1997a) and Chakrabarty (2009), among others, have critiqued the idea of Eurocentric modernity and linear historiography in context of India.

desired sense of identity among societies, peoples, races, cultures etc., and are, therefore, constitutive of our relation with the broader spectrum of the cultural history. The task, then, is to examine how the cultural history of vagabondage, to put in de Certeau's (1988b: 4) phrase 'comes back, despite everything, on the edges of discourse or in its rifts and crannies' in the works of the aforementioned authors.

Towards the closing of my first chapter, I have taken up Sankrityayan briefly to demonstrate how the 1940s in particular, within a broader spectrum of myriad of events unfolding, became an aporetic cornerstone in 'modern' Indian history: it contained in itself the dichotomous possibility of both marginalizing and encouraging vagabondage. Picking up the thread from there, if one has to situate Sankrityayan's *Bhabaghure Shastra* (2009 [1948]) in history and context, one must read it as a text that 'critically or subversively scrutinizes the colonial relationship[,] ... resist[s] colonial perspectives' (Boehmer, 2005: 3) in terms of encouraging what the colonial Vagrancy acts prohibited. Postcolonial texts bear testimony not only to the colonialist wrongdoings, exploitations and injustice, but also the conceptual incongruity between frameworks of knowledge systems. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (2010), for example, attests to how the advent of the British implied an incompatibility between two fundamentally different paradigms of legality: the District Commissioner takes over as an embodiment of law and jurisprudence in matters of disputes earlier indigenously believed to have been settled by masked spirits and gods. Similarly, underpinning the veneer of Sankrityayan's iconoclasm, the semiotics of his gesture points towards the basic incongruity between between the colonial and the indigenous perceptions of the vagabond, which is to say, between different paradigms of value systems deployed to evaluate the *worth* of wandering, and, therefore, by extension, ideas of *value*.

Speaking of Sankrityayan's anti-colonialist perspective, Joshi (2012) observes:

Combining a commitment to the anti-imperial struggle with a socially revolutionary

mission which culminated in the final embrace of Marxism, Sankrityayan's life exemplifies the contradictory pulls and pressures of Buddhist revival in India...In his engagement with Buddhism, Sankrityayan represents a key aspect of modern India's tryst with the Buddha.

In valorizing vagabondage, Sankrityayan sets the cornerstone for reinvoking an 'Indian' Buddhist past. 'Those who're roaming outside of India for the last seven centuries', he (2009: 66) asserts, 'are basically vagabonds from India'¹¹¹. While the historical accuracy of his hyperbolic claim is arguable and the idea of 'India' has yielded diverse iterations during the last seven centuries, what Sankrityayan seem to be hinting toward is that the ethos of wandering had been one of the longstanding cementing vectors that validate the collective identity of the 'imagined community', India(n). In other words, wandering had been very much a part of 'Indian' culture. At the kernel of his hyperbole is the implicit suggestion that vagabondage as an inventory of cultural nationalism has actually sufficed for ages. During the course of his itinerancy, Sankrityayan left no stone unturned: he had been an orthodox Hindu *sadhu*, a right-wing Arya Samaji proselytizer, a Buddhist monk, a Gandhian nationalist, and a Marxist-Socialist, all within different phases of his checkered career. And, having inhabited so many belief systems, Sankrityayan, by all means an 'uncompromising non-conformist' (Machwe 1998: 8), sees in '*ghummakkadi* [vagabondage] as knowledge, procedure and rambling

¹¹¹ Sankrityayan (2009: 65-66) lists some 38 different Romani words with their Hindi translations and points to the homophony between the two sets. He argues that the words are phonetically similar because the Romanis and the Gypsies had originated from India. He further claims that some linguists have also attested to this although he mentions none. Taking an identical approach, Sripantha (1994: 46-57) prepares a more exhaustive list of a few hundred words spanning across five pages in order to validate that the Romanis and the Gypsies did indeed originate from India. Sripantha, however, names a few linguists who have worked on the subject although he does not use 'proper' academic citation (which keeps me from verifying the sources). The efficacy of the methodology deployed here is arguable. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that not only Sankrityayan and Sripantha but also linguists since the eighteenth century have been upto 're-discovering' the 'primordial' connection between 'India' and the ethos of wandering. Be the claim true or false, that so many people until so recently have found this project worth investing in is itself fascinating.

episteme' (Srivastava, 2005: 393) the basis of what Bayly (1998: 44) calls 'earlier [read: pre-modern] inchoate patriotisms'. In the face of the fact that 'India's past is...in the process of being formed and reformed continuously' (Chatterjee, K., 1999: 192), it is as though vagabondage –both physical and figurative – best captures the 'Indian' heterogeneity.

For Sankrityayan, 'It is intensely human to help strangers to consider it one's duty to offer assistance to those whose language we do not understand' (Sankrityayan, 1994: 19; cited in & trans. Srivastava, 2005: 393). He feels: 'It is incumbent upon the vagabond to portray (other) vagabonds in a much likable manner' (36). The vagabond, Sankrityayan stresses, 'never thinks anyone else is on a higher or a lower pedestal than his. His view must reflect egalitarianism; at the heart of his attitude is (the idea of) relationality' (36). This is evidently a shift away from a vertical top-down view of the society, firmly gridded by a classificatory principle based on class and caste, towards a radical horizontal worldview. Taking the readers aghast, in the chapter on death, he then nullifies what seemed to be his humanist stance. He writes:

[I]n the concentric circles that are formed by throwing a stone into water, each preceding circle is in the act of disappearing after causing succeeding ripples...the *ghummakkad* is the disappearing ripple (Sankrityayan, 1994: 77, cited in & trans. Srivastava, 2005: 394).

Sankrityayan suggests the vagabond not to pay heed to parental or spousal emotions. He mockingly analogizes one's succumbing a mother's emotions with returning to mom's womb (18). 'I love my birthplace', confesses Sankrityayan, 'but it's unacceptable if that makes me immobile/rooted' (18). This desire for mobility or rootlessness coupled with a critique of humanism vectors towards a relational field that admittedly imbricates the Self with the Other. Place is one of the key factors that mediates one's relationship with the Other. Being rooted to a place arouses belongingness, whereas the vagabond

aims to move away from possessive individualism. A part of the reason why the vagabond is threatening in the mainstream gaze is because his transient spatial coordinates do not contribute to the demographic mapping of 'what relations of propinquity, what type of storage, circulation, marking, and classification of human elements should be adopted in a given situation in order to achieve a given end' (Foucault, 1986: 23).

Sankrityayan explicitly warns: 'One can't become a vagabond of the first or second order with inherited money...A vagabond doesn't sustain on money' (26). It is rather the generative affect that he is traveling for. '[I]f the vagabond assumes his travel to be aimless', Sankrityayan proclaims. 'then his deeds won't outlive him' (119). He further reminds: 'A vagabond doesn't live like a parasite... Whatever he receives from the world must be returned in multiple folds' (27). This is a humbling testament to the fact that the dialectics of vagabondage involves self-projecting oneself as what Spivak (2003) calls 'planetary subjects'. The discursive trope of symbiotic, reciprocatory, gratuitous relationship comes across in Buddhism inasmuch as in Marx. While arguing for abolishing private ownership, Marx (1959 [I]: 413) calls this relation 'the *unity* of living and active human beings with the natural, inorganic conditions of their exchange of matter with nature'. Alongside its opposition to instrumental rationalization, Sankrityayan's *Ghumakkad Shastra* demonstrates how Buddhist nomadology implicitly becomes a Marxist critique of capitalism. Srivastava (2005: 392) argues that *Ghumakkad Shastra* can be read as

a treatise on the limits of humanist thinking and the unified subject, social responsibility towards strangers, the importance of accepting the opacity of human existence, ways in which one might challenge the narrative of capital without resorting to a romanticised ethic of a pure existence, and the fundamental importance of purposelessness as a mode of being or a mode of politics. *Ghumakkadi* is, then, an attempt to generate meanings that slip through the interstices of the established

narratives of 'usefulness', 'purpose', 'individualism', and 'freedom'.

Pushing this argument further, what I insist on is that the prospect of Sankrityayan's indoctrination into the philosophical discourse of renunciation and nomadology was bolstered by the epistemic legacy of Buddhism. True it is that the vicissitude of the colonial moment made Sankrityayan, as I demonstrated in the first chapter, commits a grievous anomaly: he communalized vagabondage and discounted the Muslim wanderers. However, the *faux pas* illustrates how Sankrityayan's Buddhist inheritance suffers from the incertitude of what Bakhtin (1981) calls 'chronotope', which is responsible for the 'asymmetrical glimpse of a postcolonial writer'¹¹² (Spivak, 1999: 114).

It is not without reason that Sankrityayan compares the pleasure acquired from vagabondage with that derived out of experiencing *rasa* (35). Comprising the core of Indian aesthetics, the theory of *rasa* accounts for how emotive empathies flow from the performer to the spectator(s), from the artist to the connoisseurs of art (Ghosh, 1951: 100-47). In other words, the idea of *rasa* invokes transference, whereby outward-bound affects *flow* from the individual to the collective. The directionality of the *flow* equalizes the individual and the collective: the duo feels one-with-each-other following the cathartic moment of *rasanispatti*. Inden and Marriot (1977) has coined the expression 'dividual', as opposed to in-dividual, to underline the cultural difference in perceptions of identity particularly in the context of the South Asia. Evocative of the Heideggerian notion of 'beingwith-ness', the concept of 'dividuality' repudiates the fundamental dichotomy between the individual and the collective¹¹³. Likewise, the

¹¹² I am referring to Sankrityayan as a 'postcolonial writer' despite a part of his works dating prior to Indian independence. This is because I am using 'postcolonial' as a qualificatory category more to distinguish works that represent postcolonial ethos than those that were composed after an arbitrary date.

¹¹³ The Deleuzian neologism 'dividuality', however, has a different connotation altogether and nothing to do with how I invoke 'dividuality' here. Deleuze (1992) furthers the Foucauldian

transference of *rasa* entangles both that the source and the recipient of *rasa*. In this respect, the analogy of *rasa* quintessentially captures the spirit of vagabondage. Though apparently aimless, wandering renders upon the vagabond the onus to entangle with her many 'outsides', the many *Others*. As Sankrityayan (1994: 86) posits: '[T]o travel the world without a goal,...is no small goal in itself' (cited in & trans. Srivastava, 2005: 394). The perpetual change underway during this Heraclitan negotiation with 'a world in process' (Deleuze, 1997: 86), which has earlier been suggested by Sankrityayan's metaphor of 'the disappearing ripple', is reminiscent of the Buddhist transcendence of the *Self*.

Next, I will take up the first among the four volumes of Premankur Atorthy's part-fictionalized autobiography: *Mahasthavira Jataka* (1988 [1945]). The narrative begins in Atorthy's childhood and ends with him leaving home at the age of fifteen. The first volume is in a way Atorthy's rationale for why he chooses to become a vagabond. 'Mahasthavira' is a compound word formed by joining *maha*, meaning great, with *sthavira*. The *Monier Williams Dictionary* (2008) cites broad, thick, compact, solid, strong, powerful, an older (wo)man, old, ancient, venerable etc. as probable meanings of *sthavira*. In connection to Buddhism, the dictionary further notes, *sthavira* might refer to an elder, or a school (of thought). This association of meanings finds an eloquent expression in *sthavira* conventionally used as an honorific term for a (knowledgeable) *Bhikkhu*¹¹⁴. *Sthavira-vada* also refers to one of the two competing schools within early Buddhism and from which many other schisms would eventually

hypothesis on disciplinary control of body-politic to a more nuanced anatomo-technological means of control, by virtue of which an *embodied* human becomes susceptible to data mining, in other words, becomes reducibly 'dividual' to pieces of technology-readable data.

¹¹⁴ The 'sthavira' part in the name of the Buddha's well-known disciple, Nagita Sthavira, I now suspect, is actually titular.

arise (Skilton, 1997: 39-50). On the other hand, the word *jataka* literally means 'one who is born', although the *Jatakas* or the tales of *Jataka* refers to a body of literature that chronicles the Buddha's earlier births. All throughout, both in prefatory remarks and self-reflexive narratorial references within the text, Atorthy himself abbreviates his work as *Jataka*. Replete with Buddhist allusions, the nomenclature, *Mahasthavira Jataka*, from the very onset, orients our 'horizon of expectations' (Jauss, 1982: 3-45): its association with the *Jatakas* as a canon 'arouses expectations in the audience or reader about the future course of events and actions and how the characters will respond to them' (Abram, 1999: 225).

Kulasuriya (1996: 10) posits that the narratives in the *Jatakas* are recycled from those that already appear 'in the Pañcatantra, Kathāsaritsāgara ... in the Mahābhārata and in the Rāmāyana, ... in Jaina literature'. Along the same lines, Appleton (2010: 1-20, 41-64) demonstrates how the repertoire of the *Jatakas* is a peculiar amalgamation of creative expressions hybridized from several other genres and canons. Jones (1979: 57), furthermore, argues that the *Jatakas*, in fact, lack 'any systematic or comprehensive ethical teaching', and at times seem to be completely incongruous with Buddhist morals. One can, however, read this 'paradox' – this lack of coherence – as a literary trope doctored to the overarching theme of the *Jatakas*, that is, the continuous change accrued by and within the subsequently reborn *Self* during its gradual progression to attaining *buddha-hood*. Speaking of which, *Mahasthavira Jataka* (henceforth *MJ*) yields a striking parallelism. In reappropriating the *Jatakas*, Atorthy is as if repositioning himself, figuratively speaking, into the contours of the *jataka* (the re-born): he is as though chronicling the changes in (him)self, the immanent transitoriness of his *being*, toward accomplishing his final goal of *becoming* a vagabond, which is a pre-condition for *buddha-hood*. As he

admits in the very last sentence of the fourth volume: '[I]n this *Jataka*, which is the chronicle of seeing human beings with open eyes, I have died and been reborn time and again' (1988 [4]: 140)¹¹⁵. And, the amenability, the receptibility intrinsic to this process of *becoming*, from a literary point of view, seems to be in compliance with the generic characteristic of the *Jatakas*, that is, its hybridity.

Written in a first person narrative, interrupted by a momentary flash of third person address, *MJ* is Sthabir's (auto)biography while Sthabir seems to be Atorthy's alter ego. Sthabir is the second among three brothers, Sthir (meaning steady) being the elder and Asthir (meaning unsteady) the younger brother. That Sthabir is literally in between Sthir and Asthir is symbolic of Sthabir's enduring anxiety of having been torn between steadiness and unsteadiness, which is to say, between the domain of normative linearity and that of vagabond-ly non-conformism, till he finally musters the courage to renounce family after a few failed attempts. At the opening of *MJ*, the grown-up narrator, now married with children, therefore presumably middle aged, being upset hearing on radio the news of critical health condition of comatose Tagore, begins to reminisce his childhood on a rainy, sleepless night¹¹⁶. The narrator recounts, in first

¹¹⁵ The 1988 Dey's edition of the *MJ*, the one I am citing here, features all four volumes of Atorthy's autobiography together. However, each volume starts with page 1. I wonder whether this is a deliberate choice to distort the linear progression or I may be simply over-reading it. Anyway, all my citations are from the first volume except for this one (which is from the fourth volume). This is also to alert that there are 4 different pg. 140s in this edition of *MJ*, one for each volume.

¹¹⁶ At this point, we do not know if it is a 'true' autobiography (because it has just started). We do not know whether the narrator and Atorthy is the same person either. It is clear though that the narrator is middle aged when the storyline starts to unfold. However, embedded in here is the clue that Atorthy too, by now, should be in his middle years, for it is inferable from the reference to Tagore's health condition that the period in question is sometime between 1937 and 1941. This is because: 'Tagore's last four years were marked by chronic pain and two long periods of illness. He often lost consciousness during that illness. During late 1937 he once again remained comatose and near death for an extended period. This was followed with a similar spell three years later in late 1940' (Sharma, 2010: 171), following which he died.

person, that he now has no ties whatsoever with those 'that were once his own' (1988: 5). His parents are dead, so is his younger brother; he has not met his elder brother ever since he settling abroad thirty-five years ago; most of his family and relations are dead; he has little connection with the few that are living . The narrative then flashbacks to a distant past: a New Year's eve of 'almost the closing of the nineteenth century' (6). At this point, in a third person narratorial voice, Atorthy introduces six-year old Sthabir, four-year old Asthir, their elder brother, and their father, Mahadev, who are all set out to watch the New Year's Parade at Curzon Park. However, the narrative soon recoils to first person, which, as a narrative device, convolutes the triadic connections among Atorthy, Sthabir, and the narrator.

Whenever the narrator mentions Sthabir's age in the context of an event, strangely enough, it coincides with that of Atorthy's. The brothers are carrying in their pockets oranges that, the narrator says, are left-over from Sthabir's birthday dinner last evening. Atorthy too was born on 1 January 1890¹¹⁷. Also, Atorthy should have been in his fifties while he started writing *MJ*. These are hints enough that Sthabir is Athorthy re-christened. However, my intention is not to engage with a biographical reading of *MJ*. How does it, then, matter if or not Sthabir is Athorthy himself? I am rather interested in the psychology of ciphering identity. Why is it that while writing his autobiographical narrative Atorthy has to fictionalize himself? What is that he in 'being himself' could not have brought across in his autobiography? The sychodynamics of cryptonym, I insist, are symbolically charged and auxiliary to the narratology.

¹¹⁷ I have retrieved this data from resources available on the internet, which unanimously agree on 1 January as Atorthy's birthday. Sthabir's birthday, however, is on 31 December. I would rather imagine that Atorthy was born sometime between midnight past 31 December and before 1 January dawn, which, in the Indian perception of time, would still be counted as 31 December. That been said, whether it is 31 December or 1 January, it is still not enough deviance that my original claim falls flat.

Rahul Sankrityayan also rejected both his given and family names (Kedarnath Pandey) very early in his career. Samaresh Basu, whom I shall take up next, begins to write under his pseudonym 'Kalkut' somewhat during his mid-career, more precisely, with the publication of *Amrita Kumbher Sandhane* (1954), the first novel of the series of his subsequent works 'where the author is an *unattached observer* of an annual fair, a religious community, or an occupational group' (Chakrabarti & Chakrabarti, 2013: 87; italics mine). Why do these 'narratives of unattachedness' always call for the subject to be, figuratively speaking, reborn? Why are their given names, unanimously for all three, incompatible with their ruminations on vagabondage?

What Agamben (2009: 70) says of 'signature' is largely true of (proper) names: it 'puts an insignificant or nondescript object in effective relation to an event ... or to subjects'. The signifying practice of (proper) naming adheres to a principle of separation, a dischord, between the individual and the collective, the *self* and the *Other*. The act of naming renders an in-dividual a sense of subjecthood insulated from that what is *outside* of to whom the name apparently 'belongs' (Derrida, 1995). The (proper) name, Lacan (2006: 445-88) posits, is the symbolic domain of patrimony, law, injunction, repression etc. that reinforces the subject's relation to its Other, its outside(s). Failure to 'belong to' this signifying chain of nomination, that which Lacan calls the 'Name-of-the-Father', renders the subject 'psychotic'. In a sense, the vagabond is also a deviant, because 'exile is already in itself a form of *dissidence*, since it involves uprooting oneself from a family, a country or a language' (Kristeva, 1986: 298). Perpetually deterritorialized, the vagabond refuses to *belong to* anywhere. He remains unattached, yet not indifferent in a state of what Bhattacharya (1992), after the theory of Jaina *Anekantavada*, calls 'non-committed acceptance'. He is like the eternal 'foreigner' who chooses to 'live with others, to live *as others*' (Kristeva, 1991: 2). And, the

semantically particularizing aspect in being named obscures the *self's* trajectory toward the *Other*. By rejecting his (proper) name, the vagabond steps beyond the frontier of what the name ostensibly signifies: the self and its immanent mine-ness¹¹⁸. In other words, rejection of name is symbolic of the vagabond's refusal to belongingness.

Renouncing family, property, and other inheritance, that which are *naturalized* as one's own, is necessary but still insufficient to earn his rite of passage to 'live with and as others'. One, to be a vagabond, must renounce his name, the last trace of possession, which is, in fact, a long-standing legacy set forth by the Buddha himself¹¹⁹. On the same score, the problematic of pseudonym in Sankrityayan, Atorthy, and Kalkut all brilliantly illustrate cases 'when it is necessary to sur-name [surnommer], re-naming there where, precisely, the name comes to be found lacking' (Derrida, 1995: xiv). Let us now come back to *MJ*. Atorthy's magnum opus develops like a bildungsroman featuring a plethora of kaleidoscopic events, some significant while others plainly anecdotal, anachronically spiralling across different phases of Sthabir's life. Subverting the structural unity – that of action, time and place – of classical narrative, the plot detours hither and thither while the readers have to cope

¹¹⁸ This phenomenon is illustrated by the character prot from the film *K-PAX* (2001). prot claims himself to be an extraterrestrial from the planet K-PAX, 1,000 light years away in the Lyra constellation. He claims to have light-traveled to Earth to see things here. He is, however, taken for a psychotic and admitted into the Psychiatric Institute of Manhattan. prot mentions that in K-PAX there are no families, no laws and children are not raised by their biological parents. In other words, there is no sense of belongingness or possessiveness in K-PAX. In this context, he refuses to be known by Prot (capitalized), which is the custom among his Earth Others. Instead, he emphatically insists to be known by prot (uncapitalized). In absence of the feeling of mine-ness, it seems that prot did not require himself to be identified by a *proper* name.

¹¹⁹ The Buddha renounced his given name, Gautama, when he left home. Interestingly enough, Sankrityayan in taking the pseudonym Rahul, Rahul being the Buddha's son, is making a direct reference to the Buddha himself.

not only with the temporal displacement but also the shift in the narratorial voice. Having begun in *medias res* and then without any linear narrative progression, *MJ* can be read as Atorthy's manifesto for vagabondage: the narrative architecture is as if a pledge for the efficacy of Sthabir's, if not Atorthy's, growing up into a vagabond, which is to say, a non-linear, pluralistic future. In that sense, the form of *MJ* perfectly complements its content.

Two distinct motifs recur across the text: first, fighting, physical violence, most of which Sthabir himself is a victim of, and an immanent sense of masculinity Sthabir perceives therein; second, loss, grief, weeping, both from being beaten and consecutively having to part with dear ones. Right at the onset, the New Year's Parade at Curzon Park comprises of a mock fighting between the British and 'native' soldiers. At the parade ground, Sthabir witnesses the helpless crowd randomly beaten by a few mounted police. When a constable knocks down an innocent man among the crowd, Sthabir's father, Mahadev takes it upon himself to retaliate against the constable whose 'jaws dropped at the sight of Mahadev's 46" chest, 19" biceps' (17). While Mahadev, 'infamous for his ill temper and impudence' (24), was as terrorizing as Sthabir's teachers at school, Sthabir gets beaten severely for trivial issues regularly at school and home alike. Meanwhile, the (secondary) school unfolds before Sthabir as a site where serious gang fights often break out between student factions; and incidents of vindictive students bringing in goons to beat the brutal teachers are not totally uncommon. These violent abuses must have forestalled Sthabir's autonomy and dignity during his crucial developmental phase so much that the repression sublimated, as evident in his eloquent portrayal of Mahadev's attributes, in the form of an underlying desire for 'manliness'. The braggingly presented Sthir's fictitious tale of beating an English soldier commands awe in Sthabir. So does the prospect of Sthir's

admittance into Boro Karim's *gang*¹²⁰. On learning that Sthir's classmate, Bajrabatul, is facilitating the admittance, Sthabir exclaims: 'The name Bajrabatul itself invokes virility' (10). Too young to realize that it was actually Tagore's obituary speech, for the most of which he was anyway dozing, Sthabir was once overwhelmed by Shibnath Shastri's 'manly gesture' when he found an entire audience weeping before Shastri. It appeared to Sthabir that Shastri was valiantly 'making the audience feel guilty, and about to climb down the pedestal to clout everyone' (22).

Another time, forced to return home bruised after one of his attempts to flee from home goes awfully wrong, Sthabir fabricates an account to convince his parents that he fought with some 'white' boys attempting to steal his friend's pet rabbit. Used to being beaten by Mahadev for similar 'offences', Sthabir was, and for the first time, appreciated by his father for showing the courage to take the 'white' boys to task. The racial angle of the 'story' notwithstanding, I shall focus on Sthabir's covetousness for masculinity. Nandy (1983) demonstrates how Hindu 'revivalists' during the nationalist struggle in India took recourse to a rhetoric of masculinity to engender a brand of anti-British sentiment, organized around the problematic of an 'imagined' invigoration of 'Indian' lassitude to match up to the 'virility' of the colonizer. Connected along the theme of masculinity, important also to note in this context is Nandy's (1980: 70-98) Oedipal interpretation of Gandhi's murder by Godse. Godse, though admittedly respected Gandhi, felt obliged to get rid of the Father of the Nation (Gandhi) for the sake of his *mother-land*, for he held the latter responsible for 'emasculatation of Hinduism'¹²¹. The

¹²⁰ It is not mentioned anywhere in the text who this Boro Karim was. However, it mentions Boro Karim's *akra* (Bangla). The Bangla word *akra* is conventionally used in context of association of minoritarian quasi-religious groups or wrestlers or gymnasts. The latter seems more contextual here, which is why I have translated it to *gang*, although with no allusion to criminality.

¹²¹ During his trial for Gandhi's assassination, Godse tried to defend himself by saying: 'I

nationalist ethos of masculinity, Nandy (1983) posits, embodied the 'loss and recovery of self'. For the colonial (male) subject, of which Mahadev was presumably a representative, the 'emasculatation anxiety' faced in the 'outer' domain, however, would be negotiated in the 'inner' domain (Chatterjee, 1997b). As a corollary to this, Sthabir's fear of demasculinization, on the contrary, comes from the 'inner' domain.

Taking cues from Nandy, what I see in Sthabir's sublime desire for masculinity is a metaphor for him seeking his 'free' *self*, otherwise demasculinized by an arrogantly domineering father figure. For Sthabir, the self is at stake unless he renounces family. Sthabir's resolution to estrange himself from the 'inner' domain, which is to say, the family and the familiarized, is hinted in his conversation with his girlfriend, Latu. Sthabir narrates his meeting with Latu who has come to know of the most recent of his failed escapades to run away from home.

Latu pushed me and asked, 'Why did you go, tell me – what's your pain?' I can't say what was so moving in Latu's words, (but) I felt I have been engulfed by some deep sorrow. Why else did a child like me would want to leave home for forest instead of playing around? In a grave voice, I answered, 'You won't understand Latu. Nobody will understand my sorrow. No one loves me, who shall I stay back or?' (128)

Layered with the problematic of a crippled self, Sthabir repeatedly faces the despair of having to lose dear ones. This starts with Dukhia, their domestic help, with whom both both Sthabir and Asthir were very intimate. Sthabir's mother fired Dukhia overnight, because he was ageing and not of much help, learning of which Sthabir ponders: 'I couldn't understand the significance of the crime in one's inability to work

firmly believe that the teachings of absolute ahimsa advocated by Gandhiji would ultimately result in the *emasculatation of the Hindu Community* and thus make the community incapable of resisting the aggression or inroads of other communities, especially the Muslims...[Calling] Rama, Krishna, and Arjuna guilty of violence is to betray a total ignorance of the springs of human action...each of the heroes in his time resisted aggression on our country, protected the people against atrocities and outrages by alien fanatics, and *won back the motherland* from the invader' (Godse, cited in Mehta, 1993: 174-175, italics mine).

hard when old. Not that I have understood it now' (30). This is followed by having to part with his closest friend in elementary school, Nanda, then Alok, another of his bosom friends. Ironically, he meets widowed Nanda later in his life while wandering in Madhya Pradesh, and also Alok in her deathbed at a hospital where Sthabir's dad was once admitted. Next to follow is another close friend, Sujata. By the time she dies of pneumonia, she and her entire family had already become very intimate to both brothers.

Sometime later, their neighbor, Pagla Sanyasi, though not as tragic as the earlier ones, died of age. Liberal-minded Sanyasi was not only close to the brothers but also responsible for grooming their taste in literature and cultural matters. The final blow, however, comes from Sanyasi's solitary daughter-in-law, whom they affectionately called Gosthodidi. Having spoilt his younger son, who has had addiction problems, widower Sanyasi married him off as a teenager to 'some pretty girl' hoping it would 'reform his character' (111). The couple soon disappeared, returning after a few years only to disappear again. The son alone returned home later as a widower when Sanyasi remarried him off to Gosthodidi. However, he disappeared thereafter, this time leaving Gosthodidi behind. Speaking of which, Atorthy insists:

In ancient times, people used to be vagabonds. Human beings still did not learn to settle by the time other living beings, like the animals, the birds and the insects, had already learnt to build houses for themselves. Need and danger have lead humans to build houses, nevertheless the spirit of vagabondage lay latent in many a minds. Conducive situations nourish it. This is why, since the beginning of human history, we have instances of wives running away, maids running away, children running away. There's nothing surprising in it, no variety either (111).

Gosthodidi was the apple of the brothers' eyes, and the duo assumed they were her dearest. But, they abruptly lost touch of her when she moved to another place without informing the brothers. Sthabir spent ten consecutive days looking for her in different

neighborhoods, but in vain.

On finding his son missing, Pagla Sanyasi, never lost his composure: 'nor did he make any inquiry neither did he express any anxiety' (112). Sanyasi's indifference, in a sense, resonates with Athorthy's tolerance. One would intuitively expect Athorthy to demonize Sanyasi's son for leaving Gosthodidi behind (which aggravated her misfortunes once Sanyasi died). Instead, Athorthy normalizes vagabondage as instinctual to human nature. Two tropes, invoked in *MJ*, primarily as a rationale for Sthabir becoming a vagabond, however, have unmistakably strong resonance with the Buddhist discourse on vagabondage. One, yearning for a 'free' self (*atta*); two, transcending unhappiness (*dukkha*) arising out of worldly attachments that are impermanent (*anitta*). Unlike Sankrityayan, Athorthy, raised in a reasonably well-off 'modern' Brahmo family, had little connection with Buddhism as far as biographical evidence is concerned. It is perhaps futile to attempt to locate the 'origin' of Athorthy's Buddhist reception; more important is to register his voice of dissent as a testament to the rhizomatic 'trace' of an antiquary ethos centering vagabondage, of which Buddhism was a benchmark. If vagabondage is a historically conditioned phenomenon, which I argue it is, then it must have (re)surfaced in diverse forms at different times and places. This is why Sankrityayan's didactic treatise with a vigorous dosage of nationalism and Athorthy's intensely personal autobiography, though very different brands of cultural and generic manifestations, are reflective of an inheritance of a 'trace' that the Buddha too (among others) had been a 'trace' of. If Sankrityayan and Athorthy had marked the transition of Indian literature into 'modernity', then Kalkut was the torchbearer of high modernity. I shall, next, examine how Kalkut's works intersect the axis of the non-conformist outward-bound itinerancy.

Born in 1924, as Samaresh Basu, in a middle class family in East Bengal, now

Bangladesh Kalkut spent his teens in Naihati, a suburb twenty-five miles off Kolkata before taking up a job (1943-49) at the Ordnance Factory, Ichhapur, located at the northern outskirts of Kolkata. It is during this phase that Basu stays in the slum, first comes in contact with the laboring class, and becomes a member of the Communist Party¹²². He was jailed in 1949 when the Communist Party was banned. The irony, however, is that he would soon be disillusioned with the Party for the 'repressive bureaucratic structure of the party and the philistine attitude of its cultural commissars' (Basu, 2003: 5). When released in 1950, he was offered his erstwhile job on the condition that he would abstain from politics. He never joined politics thereafter, but he never took up the job either. In 1954 Desh-Anandabazar (publication house) commissioned him to cover Kumbh Mela, which was episodically published as *Amrita Kumbher Sandhane* in the reputed Bangla magazine, *Desh*, under his pen-name, Kalkut, for the first time. I shall refrain myself from further going into Basu's biographical details, precisely because, as I mentioned earlier, his pseudonym bespeaks his disapproval, at least in the phase of his career I am concerned about, of being known by his biographical baggage. In other words, what I suggest is that it is not necessarily important to know Basu's biography in order to know Kalkut, for Kalkut, the name and narratorial voice attached therein, is more a representative of a worldview than any individual literateur.

Rather, Kalkut and Basu are perhaps different *beings*. Becoming Kalkut signifies a complete makeover in Basu's career, his moving away from individuality. The worldview Kalkut endorses centrally draws on the philosophy of de-particularizing oneself. In his *Nirjan Saikate* (2007: 12), Kalkut writes:

¹²² For details on his association with the Party, see his autobiographical narrative Basu (1986).

I'm one among the many who travel in the villages and cities of Bangladesh¹²³. The home or the family, whatever you call, is deeply embedded in him. People call him gentry...I'm one of those whose dreams as a student have been shattered by the hardships of reality, whose sweat has trickled down his body to quench the thirst of the tough urban roads, whose disillusioned eyes have seen mirages at the gates of locked-out offices and factories, whose upraised spine during the teens has mellowed when in the youth, with who have premature wrinkles covering his face. Facing the lack of synergy between his childhood dreams and the reality during his youth, he set out begging with all futilities.

As suggested in the expression 'one among many', Kalkut is drawing on the postulates of vagabondage. Images of locked-out urban workspaces and urban roads invariably invoke the idea of 'modern' utility-maximized cityscape the colonially (re)structured metropolis that reduces traveling-without-rationality to vagrancy. Not only is the vagabond critical of the conformism and rationalistic materialism that modernity endorses but also seeks 'a *return* to possibilities of happiness' (Freud, 2005: 34; italics mine). The 'disillusioned' traveler, in Kalkut's evocative symbolism, is the vagabond whose recourse to happiness is in hitting the road, for this regressive self-exteriorization gives him a better leverage for critiquing modernity.

Geographically proximate to all of Bhatpara, Pandua-Tribeni-Kalna-Halisahar and Ghoshpara respectively the hubs of Hindu orthodoxy, the Sakta, Baishnava, Sahajiya communities, and the Kartabhaja cults Naihati, where Kalkut was raised, impacted his oeuvre (Chakrabarty, S., 1994). While the Saktas, Baishnavas, Sahajiyas, and Kartabhajas are all minoritarian quasi-religious cults that, in one way or another, flouted orthodox Hinduism, the critical topography of the locale helped Kalkut broaden his horizon, open up with ease to his many *outsides*. That Basu becomes Kalkut, meaning deadly poison, on the verge of writing *Amrita Kumbher*

¹²³ Annotation is mine. By 'Bangladesh' he refers to undivided Bengal, more precisely, the Bangla speaking region of modern Bangladesh and West Bengal (India) put together.

Sandhane (In Search of the Golden Nectar) is evidently symbolic. As if stepping out toward the *outside* for Kalkut is what nectar is to poison: what Kalkut seems to be pointing to is that the 'toxicity' of sedentariness is curable by reaching out to the nectarous *Other*. The series of auto ethnographic novels *Kothay Pabo Tare* (1968), *Amabasyai Chander Uday* (1974), *Mukta Benir Ujane* (1980), *Chal Mon Rupnagare* (1981), *Kothay Se Jon Ache* (1982) that follow *Amrita Kumbher Sandhane* is replete with 'subaltern' characters: Monohara, a prostitute-turned-puritan Vaishnava, Pabitri-ma, a Sakta-tantric, Khyapababa who shelters orphan girls apparently without any reason, *Bauls* and *Gazis*, practitioners of obscure religious cults and sexual rituals, and so on. In integrating the 'outsider', Kalkut is, in a way, creating 'a new harmony out of the dissensions that ravage modern India' (Dey, 1988: 52).

Dipesh Chakrabarty (1992) argues that the 'modern' habitation signifies a symbolic enclosure based on the dichotomy between the *inside* and the *outside*. The *outside*, in this schema, is the emblematic site of putridity that threatens us with malevolence. The *outside* represents that which is disposable, for 'the 'dirt' [from the household] can only go to a place that is designated as the 'outside' (Chakrabarty, 1992: 542). Thinking in these terms, Kalkut's works are indeed subversive because they touch upon layers of 'outsiderism'. Not only do his works in particular those during the Kalkut phase bring peripheral characters into the literary corpus but they also present Kalkut's auto-ethnographic escapades in course of opening out to the *outside*. Significant in this context is to note that Kalkut's travels primarily chart three terrains, that of rivers, roads, fairs (*mela*), all of which embody mobility, non-linearity, and unsteadiness. Kalkut never visits 'touristic' sites and monuments, which are enduring and kind of permanent. Instead, his travels uphold the symbolic aspect of meeting people on the road, which is the domain of transience. In that sense, there is no 'value' in Kalkut's

traveling except for the wealth of experience he gathers by dint of fleetingly immersing himself in the vast mosaic of cults and belief systems. With an aural *flaneur-esque* vision, he is, as Chakrabarti & Chakrabarti (2013: 87) call, the 'unattached observer'. He is 'one among many', yet segregable from the crowd; he 'is at home not in his class but only in the crowd' (Benjamin, 1999: 895).

On his way back from Allahabad, after covering the Kumbh Mela, Basu writes in a letter to his then-wife Gauri, dated 30 January 1954:

I'm thinking of starting (for home) tomorrow...I don't have a single penny left with me. I don't know what to survive with on my way back. I guess I won't be even able to buy a few guavas for the children (in Chowdhury, S.,1994: 27).

This is Basu's testimony to that he indeed inhabited the kind of 'alternate lifeworld' that Kalkut's narratorial voice represented. This is, however, not to say that vagabonds, of which I still do have a working definition, (ought to) travel penniless. Rather, what I am pointing to is that it is precisely the brand of 'precarious' traveling that does not comply with the narratives of capital, and therefore, the state never consents to. Kalkut, in a sense, does what the famine paintings did to the contemporary Indian art scene: he strikes the core of literary elitism, and in doing so critiques the classist and individualistic underpinnings of 'modern' traveling. In the beginning of his *Samba* (1982), Kalkut narrates his conversation with Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay¹²⁴ while both were co-traveling. Presented as an eye-opener for Kalkut, the conversation in dialects of regional orature brings forth the philosophy of vagabondage that Kalkut idealized.

Bandyopadhyay asked Kalkut about what he lived on while on the road.

¹²⁴ Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay (1898-1971) was a leading Bengali novelist. As a pioneering advocate of literary realism, Bandyopadhyay depicted with ethnographic details the vivid realism of the subaltern life. In terms of literary style, Bandyopadhyay may be considered to be Kalkut's precursor.

Kalkut replied that he was sometimes fed by strangers, at times he would buy savouries from local shops, and if lucky, even some desert when there was a sweet-seller around. Hearing this, Bandyopadhyay upbraids Kalkut for not self-preparing his meals, and together they arrange to cook from scratch on a campfire. On the verge of the meal being served, Bandyopadhyay interrupts:

- Now, who do you see around you?
- Where? There's is none.
- You dumbass! Can't you see at least four-five starved village dogs around you? I haven't counted the crows and the mynas yet.
- Oh! You're right, it didn't occur to me at all.
- How'd you make it as a writer if these small details escape your mind? Now help yourself and share (the food) among them...(Basu, 1982: 5).

On the one hand, this conversation can be read as repudiating the grand narratives of capital and humanism, that what fosters the self-gratificatory aspect of tourism. On the other hand, it critiques the mainstream gaze that perceives the vagabond as 'parasitic'. Above all, this agenda of connecting with the *Other*, including the non-human(s), is a self-humbling testament to what Flaubert (1980: 181) hints toward in proclaiming: 'Travel makes one modest. You see what a tiny place you occupy in the world'. Is this, then, Kalkut's a way of alluding to the Buddhist discourse on vagabondage? Is his worldview a spin-off from 'pre-modern' India's tryst with itinerancy? Or, curiously even, is he an offshoot of the Beats, particularly in the context of Ginsberg's visit to India during 1962-63, when Ginsberg had been friends with friends of Kalkut¹²⁵? Possibly all are true. However, what can be said without an iota of doubt is that Kalkut, as representative of a worldview, re-invokes a familiar refrain of gratuitous relationality, in other words, called vagabondage.

¹²⁵ For details on Ginsberg's connection with the Bengali literary-intellectual circuit, see Ginsberg (1970).

Conclusion

In 1934, having traveled by sea from Marseilles to Santos, Levi-Strauss (2012: 86) wrote: 'Travel is usually thought of as displacement in space...[But] A journey occurs simultaneously in space, in time and in the social hierarchy'. Levi-Strauss meant the physical journey, but at times the journey of certain concepts, in other words, the intellectual itinerary of certain historical ideas, is no less complicated. The principal quest of my project has unwittingly been structured by what Levi-Strauss says of the 'journey'. In this project, I have studied the intellectual history of the idea of vagabond(age), its trajectory across time, space and hierarchies, and the transience that its journey elicits. My project tries to investigate what goes into the making of the concept and the stakes, contradictions and contingency involved therein, rather than arrive at some historical truth on the concept. It is the contradiction in the perception of, rather than the compulsion to define, the 'vagabond' that has comprised the central problematic of this research.

This project is a testimony to the extent of bewilderment I felt in the contradiction in, say for example, the super hit number from the Bollywood film *Parichay* (1972), 'Musafir hoon mein yaron/ na ghar hai na thikana...' (I'm a footloose, my friends/ I don't have a place or an address...) emerging as an anthem for subsequent generation of footloose in India where, like many other places, *not* having a place or an address is considered an offence by the vagrancy acts. The 'vagabond' as a category in relation to issues of globalization has been studied by Bauman (1998) along the vital zone of *differentiation*. I have not taken this route, for the epistemic overlaps within the category, I argue, render the methodological apparatus of *differentiation* ineffective. I have, rather, studied the genealogy of how vagabondage has functioned

as a historical referent for both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ variety of itinerancy. The ‘vagabond’, it seems to me, characterizes a *floating signifier* that is difficult, if not impossible, to conceptually purify.

Let us juxtapose two excerpts from two different media stories. On 3 April 2000, *Outlook* published Radha Prasad Gupta’s obituary. Gupta, among other things, was ‘a bibliophile, a writer..., a gastronome, a cineaste, a collector of paintings’, and has turned into a cult figure who is often portrayed in the lore as one of the legendary Calcuttans. Just below the title of the article in bold and bigger font, but on the top of the main article, a couple of lines of introductory remarks on Gupta mention:

‘Calcutta fondly saw him as an eccentric character and ‘a bit of a vagabond’.

Bibliophile, collector and man of letters, Radha Prasad Gupta was a polymath and more’. The editor(s) apparently deemed the expression ‘a bit of a vagabond’, put within single quotes, best qualifies Gupta. Lest the reader sense a criminal connotation in the expression, it has later been clarified in the main body of the article:

Supremely, and in the traditions of his city, he was also a talker, with an exquisite, magpie gift for anecdotes and *recherché* facts and, eagle-like, for triumphant assertion. For several years after university, Gupta did nothing very much by way of a living. He was, in the words of a friend, "a bit of a vagabond", though in a Bohemian and completely uncriminal sense.

In the critical choice of the expression in the introductory two-liner, the concern clearly was to refer to the recurring phases of ‘idleness’ (also joblessness) in Gupta’s chequered career, which he used to his advantage as a polymath in pursuing his multi-directional intellectual quests to such a level of excellence that he would eventually rub shoulders with cultural icons like Satyajit Ray and suchlike, while repudiating the craven conformity he saw the mainstream society was after.

Now, let us fast forward to 2014. In August 2014, some 800 men, alleged to be ‘vagabonds’, were rounded up from the southern Indian city of Bangalore. On 5 August 2014, *The Times of India* published a report drawing attention to the draconian treatment of those whom the police officials suspected to be ‘vagabonds’, needless to say, without any evidence:

Explaining the operation, a police officer said they rounded up ‘vagabonds’ based on suspicious behaviour like loitering in public places aimlessly, and staring at women... This drive has upset civil and human rights activists, who are wondering how police could round up youths at random, based on the mere suspicion that they are capable of committing a crime that may never take place. Asked what the criterion was, police officers from the field quipped: "They are vagabonds. We know it when we look at them."

What these two examples show, in effect, is the bivalent potency of the conceptual apparatus of the word ‘vagabond’. In the first piece, the ‘vagabond’ is evocative of an ‘insecurity’ arisen out a deliberate rejection of an assured middle-class/mainstream career, which only a niche intellectual icon like Gupta could afford, while in the latter the ‘vagabond’ functions as a ghetto into which the ‘police state’ tends to put all ‘unwanted’ men in the city. The examples are illustrative of a dichotomy that holds aloft the romanticized ‘vagabond’ in Gupta on the one hand, while incarcerates the seemingly suspicious men on the streets as ‘vagabonds’ on the other. In other words, ‘vagabond’ becomes the referent for two distinct categories that cannot be more different. Whether of the ‘good’ vagabond or the bad, what I want to highlight is that the chain of signification the concept refers to is always already elusive.

However, with much profundity, Bauman (1998) has conceptually purified the ‘vagabond’. In his essay ‘Tourists and Vagabonds’, he makes a critical distinction between ‘vagabonds’, comprised of economic, environmental and political refugees, migrant laborers, diasporic emigrants etc. and ‘tourists’ who are, in sum, the global

elite. Bauman's conviction in favor of this conceptual binarization is not free of problems. He uses the paradigm of voluntary *versus* involuntary travel as a theoretical apparatus to account for the distinction he makes. Bauman (1998: 86, 87) posits:

Those 'high up' are satisfied that they travel through life by their heart's desire and pick and choose their destinations according to the joys they offer. Those 'low down' happen time and again thrown out from the site they would rather stay in... If they do not move, it is often the site that is pulled from under their feet, so it feels like being on the move anyway. If they take to the roads, then their destination, more often than not, is of somebody else's choice; it is seldom enjoyable, its enjoyability is not what it has chosen for. They might occupy a highly unprepossessing site which they would gladly leave behind – but they have nowhere else to go, since nowhere else they are likely to be welcomed and allowed to put up a tent.

The crux of Bauman's argumentation clearly lies on issues of *choice*. In the light of the association between poverty and itinerancy, Bauman's hypothesis may account for most of those who show *vagabond-ly* behavior. Nonetheless, it is culpable of some degree of generalization. I am with him so far as in agreeing that impoverished people do not have much choice but to keep moving, and the *globalized* world where 'tourism is the only acceptable, human form of restlessness' (94) outrightly renders them as vagabonds.

That said, what I am opposed to is Bauman's restricted view of the 'vagabond', to be more precise, the 'order of things' of that upon which Bauman's classificatory categories function in the first place. In other words, I doubt the efficacy of the paradigm of voluntary versus involuntary travel that Bauman uses in making the 'vagabond' seem squarely oppositional with the 'tourist'. He writes:

Not all wanderers, however, are on the move because they prefer being on the move to staying put and because they want to go where they are going. Many would perhaps go elsewhere or refuse to embark on a life of wandering altogether – were they asked, but they had not been asked in the first place. If they are on the move, it is because 'staying at home' in a world made to the measure of the tourist feels like

humiliation and a drudgery and in the long run does not seem a feasible proposition anyway... The tourists stay on the move at their heart's desire. They abandon a site when new untried opportunities beckon elsewhere. The vagabonds know that they won't stay in a place for long, however strongly they wish to, since nowhere they stop are they likely to be welcome. The tourists move because they find the world within their (global) reach irresistibly *attractive* – the vagabonds move because they find the world within their (local) reach unbearably *inhospitable*. The tourists travel because *they want to*, the vagabonds because *they have no other bearable choice*. The vagabonds are, one may say, involuntary tourists; but the notion of 'involuntary tourist' is a contradiction in terms. However much the tourist's strategy may be a necessity in a world marked by shifting walls and mobile roads, freedom of choice is the tourist's flesh and blood (92-93; italics Bauman's).

I have one central disagreement with Bauman's proposition here. He reduces the phenomenon of vagabondage to *involuntary* travel, for his notion of 'vagabond' *solely* comprises of impoverished, unwilling travelers. If the 'vagabond' de facto means *involuntary* traveler, where in Bauman's schema are we going to place those itinerants who self-assert, and quite eloquently so, to be 'vagabonds'?

Evidently, the problem with Bauman's categorization is that his use of the term 'vagabond' is an *exonym*, as opposed to *endonym*. In other words, the ones he refers to as 'vagabonds' are determined from the *outside*. Far from conceiving an autonomous definition, Bauman posits: 'Vagabonds are travelers refused the right to turn into tourists' (93). There is an air of inevitability in the definition in the sense that it comes with a supposed axiom: the vagabonds desire to be tourists. Vagabonds, Bauman clarifies, 'have no other images of the good life – *no alternative utopia, no political agenda* of their own. The sole thing they want is to be allowed to be tourists' (94; italics mine). This master-narrative comes with a delimiting corollary that perceives vagabondage necessarily as a socio-economic *condition* of *being* always forced to arrive at, which when ceases, Bauman implies, the 'vagabond' is restored to 'tourist'. Therefore, in Bauman's formulation, the condition precedes the *being*. It is

this element of *secondariness* in his categorization, the (de)prioritization of subjectivity that I have objections to. On the contrary, my sincere aim in this project has been to work toward an organic conceptualization of vagabondage. The methodological impasse immanent in Bauman's argument, I insist, forecloses the possibility that some – for whom 'the origin (or home) is from the beginning a displacement...[therefore, vagabondage] an essentially irreversible trajectory' (Phillips, 1999: 65) -- might voluntarily embrace vagabondage as an ethical discourse: not as a *condition of being* they are thrown into, but a *way of becoming* from which other conditions of possibility emanate.

Indeed, the vagabonds – of the kind I am concerned with – have 'alternate utopia', and subversive 'political agenda'. Think of Kalkut and Atorthy; both call themselves *bhabaghure*. Sankrityayan goes a step further in proclaiming one *should be a ghumakkar*. Their will-to-travel is propelled by a desire to reject the society as it is. They do not want to be tourists in the first place; therefore the question of *refusal* of right does not arise at all. Their travels explicitly critique modernity vis-à-vis capitalism, including the comeditization of traveling, in sum, what tourism (industry) is subservient to. They are, above all 'voluntary vagabonds', and by no means reconcilable with the figures Bauman refers to as 'vagabonds'. More to it, in certain discrete instances, 'vagabond' might act as an honorific term. This explains why Gupta's obituary referring him to as a 'vagabond' does not really interfere with, and might even be said to elevate his status as one of Calcutta's foremost intellectual icons. What I have demonstrated in this project is that vagabondage, more tellingly in the context of South Asia, functions as an amorphous, yet critical identitarian zone that some are keen on affiliating to, despite all statist inhibitions.

‘[I]n the society of travelers, in the travelling society’, I do agree with Bauman, ‘tourism and vagrancy are two faces of the same coin. The vagabond...is the *alter ego* of the tourist’ (96). In my first study, I have myself discussed the politics of the social constructivism involved in conceptually engineering the ‘vagabond’ in contrast with the ‘tourist’ as a heuristic subject in the context of nineteenth century India. But, there are more to it. This is the critical juncture in history from where nuances in the South Asian context start setting in. The more the colonial administration together with the local bourgeoisie relegated the ‘vagabond’, the more the ‘vagabond’ was idealized in certain camps. This is, however, not without reason. In the course of this project, I have attempted to unearth the manifest presence of a profusion of symbolism that constitutes ‘vagabondage’ as a phenomenon in South Asia. The epochal recursivity in the discursive trope of wandering having been (re)appropriated as a language of resistance -- by the Buddhists-Jains against the hegemony of Vedic practices in the Ancient, by the Bhaktas-Sufis against statist authoritarianism in the Medieval, and finally as a nationalist self-assertion against the colonial imposition of the category ‘vagabond’ -- serves as the deepest bequest for the post-colonial writers like Kalkut, Atorthy and Sankrityayan. In other words, vagabondage in South Asia is explicably linked with a vintage legacy of political dissidence and struggle to achieve an alternate utopia, which Bauman says the vagabonds lack.

This genealogy explains why the famine refugees, I discuss in my second study, do not remain in the city merely as unwelcome demographics, but eventually become for the avant-garde painters (cf. Chittaprosad, Abedin) the *(roh)stoff*, powerful enough to change the existing co-ordinates of the language of painting. This is precisely why the Beats considered their practice of nomadicity as a portentous gift

from India, to be precise, from the Buddhists. In the light of this trajectory, I accuse Bauman to have taken ‘the political’ out of vagabondage. He de-subjectivizes the vagabonds, and make them appear as imploring pathetic figures who are perpetual recipients of pity and contempt. ‘Both the tourist and the vagabond’, Bauman further proclaims, ‘have been made into consumers, but the vagabond is a *flawed* consumer’ (96). On the contrary, what I wanted to demonstrate is that the vagabond rejects the ‘vicious circle’ of production-consumption. Motivated by a desire for spiritual growth and *gratuitory* worldview, she is the very agent of change, the hardcore political dissident who resists authoritarianism, consumerism, and capitalism. She is, therefore, everything but a consumer. My disagreement with Bauman arises clearly because our respective referents for the concept ‘vagabond’ are different. Bauman’s ‘vagabond’ is an ‘involuntary traveler’, a diasporic subject who travels under compulsion, while in the case of mine, her desire for spiritual growth overrides her urge to travel. My intention here is not to render Bauman’s hypothesis ‘falsifiable’, rather to push his limits of conceptual understanding of ‘vagabond’, and in so doing, illustrate the ethos of political resistance that the idea of vagabondage invokes in South Asia.

However, to be fair to Bauman, I do not blame him alone for having missed out these nuances. His proposition is only reflective of a larger legacy of dualist antagonism pervasive in the Western thought that Derrida (1993) among others was so critical of. Expanding on this insight, one must realize that Bauman’s works (1987, 1998, 2005) are replete with binarized metaphors – legislators/interpreters, pilgrims/wanderers, vagabonds/tourists and so on – which we should be careful not to take much too literally. To me, the vital significance of these metaphors lies in the fact that they animate the ‘epistemic rupture’ between the Modern and the Postmodern, which has been a central concern in his works in general. Bauman’s

idiom of voluntary versus involuntary travel can, in a sense, be read as a metaphor of the apparent contrastability between modernism and postmodernism. Bauman's understanding of the 'vagabond' is clearly orchestrated in conformance to the historical contingency of the (post)modern West, the modular template of which, I have demonstrated, might not necessarily apply to that in the context of South Asia.

The conceptual rubric of modernity, within which Bauman's metaphors function, is much too neat. This is evident in Bauman's (1989: 113) insistent assertion that:

Modernity, as we remember, is an age of artificial order and of grand societal designs, the era of planners, visionaries, and – more generally – "gardeners" who treat society as a virgin plot of land to be expertly designed and then cultivated and doctored to keep the designed form.

With the emergence of the notion of modernities and modernisms in the plural, a singular definition of these terms has been put into question. As an alternative, ideas of modernity and modernism, in the context of the non-West, are often approached in a global and comparative fashion stressing multiple, disjunctive temporalities, and multiple vernacular iterations (Chatterjee, 1997a; Chakrabarty, 2009). In the light of this, imaging anti-colonial modernity to be as neat and ordered as Bauman conceives, would be tantamount to imposing an illegitimate, overtly restrictive model derived from western European frameworks of experience – what Chatterjee (1993) calls a 'derivative discourse' – onto areas of the world where they are incompatible. Given that modernities in the West and the non-West do not stem from coeval histories, it can be said that the vagabonds – mine and Bauman's – are but products of different (post)modernities.

What characterizes the peculiarity in South Asian modernity is its bifurcating trajectory, its ambiguity, its *Janus-headed-ness*. If one important strand of modernity

in the larger context of the miasma of colonialism, drawing on the Enlightenment discourse of instrumental rationalism, had given the Orient ‘shape, identity, definition...[in] its ‘natural’ role as an appendage to Europe’ (Said, 2006: 89), another, motivated by the notion of an ‘Indic’ revivalism, contrived the discourse of cultural indigenism. While Simonti Sen’s view that travel(ing) is ‘progressive’ Europe’s magnificent gift to the Indians represents the former strand, Rahul Sankrityayan’s requiem for vagabondage typifies the latter. These two strands uneasily co-exist and mirror each other. This is, however, not to see modernity in terms of yet another binary, but to make sense of the heterogeneity of iterations between the two ends of the spectrum. The nature of colonial modernity, precisely because of this contradiction, is neither completely ‘derivative’, nor entirely ‘innovative’; but inextricably amalgamated. The neatness, the novelty, the modularity in the design(at)ed form of modernity – invoked by Bauman’s allegory of the ‘gardener’ and ‘society as a virgin plot of land’ – gives way to hybridized forms in the context of colonialism. Vagabondage in South Asia is a classic illustration of one such hybrid categories.

The more the vagabond got criminalized in conformance to the interests of the Raj, ‘endowed with a moral obligation to ‘order’ (the colony)...into a homogenous and less variegated wilderness’ (Biswas, 2006: 225), its imperialist, utility-maximized profiteering goals, the more the indigenists valorized the figure. The vagabond, on the one hand, was being relegated to the status of irrational, unproductive ‘native’ itinerant to be disciplined and normalized within the discursive rhetoric of ‘progress’ and ‘modernization’, on the other hand, she was increasingly becoming the very emblem of resistance against Western values. The dichotomy in itinerancy at a perceptual level during the colonial encounter elevated the vagabond to what Barthes

(1987) calls a 'mythic' figure, drawing exotic awe and contempt in equal measure. The point in my research has been to dissect the myth, dismantle the cloud of romanticized eulogies and disdainful obloquy, while underlining the 'parallactic' perception of the vagabond in the context of 'modern' South Asia. In this matter, as in most others, the principal difficulty is the impulse, very rarely examined, to suppose that the categories, in this case the 'vagabond', generated from the experiences of Western societies are *universalizable*. The problem therefore is the (in)translatability of 'specific life-worlds into universal sociological categories' (Chakrabarty, 2009: 78). The immense problems that Western societies -- France, to take one prominent example -- have in dealing with or even understanding the gypsies, precisely because 'a *universal rule of judgment between heterogeneous genres* is lacking in general' (Lyotard, 1988: xi), is illustrative of the nature of the problem.

In my examination of the 'vagabond', and more generally of the trope of itinerancy, I have attempted to study the alternation, opposition and conceptual incongruity between two sets of value systems: the Western and the non-Western and that prevalent in the 'pre-modern' and the modern'. I have demonstrated how and when the figure of the 'vagabond' crystallized as the radical *Other* of the bourgeoisie 'tourist' in the nineteenth century Indian context, while pointing to the political implications of generically distinguishing 'vagabondage' from other 'pre-modern' indigenous forms of traveling practices. It is glaring in this context to note that although Indians had reportedly been traveling to Europe since the seventeenth century and narrativizing their travel accounts at least since the mid-eighteenth century, the emergence of the 'travelogue' as a genre by the European standards is intrinsically linked with the exposure to colonial 'modernity' and the high noon of Indian nationalism, accompanied by the parallel emergence of other 'modern' genres of literary prose, namely the novel, the

autobiography, the diary and so forth (Mukhopadhyay, 2002). Within the broader spectrum of this Enlightenment discourse, the 'modern' traveler – a heuristic subject after the 18th C Grand Tourist – sought accreditation for his colonial inheritance of taste and aesthetic connoisseurship and made other indigenous traveling practices look 'abnormal'. My research argues that it is precisely this 'mimicked' brand of traveling against which the nineteenth century discriminatory concept of the 'vagabond' would be counter-constructed.

This construction is clearly a testimony to the 'epistemic violence' perpetrated by the dominant discourse of the colonizer. Born out of the colonial intent of aestheticizing instrumentality, this brand of the vagabond illustrates what Bauman (1998: 96) means by 'tourism and vagrancy are two faces of the same coin'. From this liminality, however, emerges another brand of vagabond – the ones I am more concerned with – who characterizes the indigenist rebuttal of the colonial construction, and 'assumes a statusless status...which gives him the right to criticize all structure bound personae' (Turner, 1969: 116). The latter reveals the social norms as stultifying, exposes the dominant artifice of power, embodies the ephemeral subversivity immanent in Debord's (1955, 1956) concept of 'dérive', and above all, questions the central values of the social system that render her liminal. In sum, vagabondage in South Asia is reflective of what Geeta Kapur (1990) calls 'tradition-in-use': the cultural recovery of a set of 'traditional' values and customs, re-historicized as a floating signifier to meet the contemporary demands of the avant-garde.

The symbolic significance of the revolutionary manifesto of this brand of vagabond, eloquent in Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the 'nomad', does not seem to impress Bauman much. For, Bauman (1998: 87) feels:

The fashionable term ‘nomads’, applied indiscriminately to all contemporaries of the postmodern era, is grossly misleading, as it glosses over the profound differences which separate the two types of experience [vagrancy and tourism] and render all similarity between them formal and superficial.

Instead, he poses the difference *only* as a function of one’s access to resources to travel, or lack thereof. However, I see the difference as a function of their political intent. I, rather, rely on the political apathy of the ‘tourist’ versus the political resistance of the ‘vagabond’ as a paradigm for differentiation. (In the Introduction, I have discussed why it is important not only to consider the differences but also the identities-in-differences). So far, I have pointed to the inadequacy, if not inefficacy, of Bauman’s model of voluntary versus involuntary travel (at least in the context of South Asia) by citing instances of *voluntary* vagabonds. Another subsidiary, but related concern I have with Bauman’s hypothesis is whether even tourism is voluntary.

On this note, let me pay Bauman back in his own coin. ‘[T]he free individual’, writes Bauman (1988: 7), ‘far from being a universal condition of humankind, is a historical and social creation... a novelty closely connected with the advent of modernity and capitalism’. The tourist is no exception to this. Mukhopadhyay (2004: 81), for that matter, contends: ‘[T]he Romantic preoccupation with travel as an end in itself, “tourism”, was unknown until well into the eighteenth century’. The emergence of conducted tourism is intrinsically linked to the rise of the ‘industrial worker’ as a class. In all likelihood, the ‘tourist’ is but a product of, to put in Foucault’s (1972) words, a certain ‘episteme’: certain ideological demands of the age. Take for example, the way the train, as de Certeau (1988a) puts it, functions as an allegory of the advanced capitalist modernity. Within the enclosure of what de Certeau (1988a) calls the ‘rationalized cell’, the ‘classes’ in ‘a box of space’ reinforce social hierarchies. In

my third study, I have discussed how 'modern' tourism endorses travel(ing) as a ritual performance that, under capitalism, is a sort of ideological diktat that must be obeyed. As a traveler, I have faced that certain laws prohibit hitchhiking; certain airports endorse certain brands of coffee; certain immigration officers deny entry if I do not have hotel reservations in or return travel tickets from certain visiting destinations; while buying coffee, for instance, a certain chain makes me buy into what Zizek (2010, online) calls 'a coffee ethics': an endorsement to the charity program that the chain endorses. These are not left to my choices. As a tourist, I am allowed to choose as long as I, in Bauman's (1998: 96) words, 'lubricate the wheels of the consumer society'. I am allowed to choose from within the options capitalism has at its disposal for me. To me, the phrase 'voluntary travel' is, therefore, a misnomer, precisely because travel(ing), even for those who have resources for it, is only *conditionally* voluntary.

In the face of Bauman's stark antagonism between the 'voluntary tourist' and the 'involuntary vagabond', my research examines when, why and how certain traveling-without-rationality in South Asia was reduced to vagabondage in an epistemological paradigm set forth by the 'modern' West. Again, what I refer to as 'West' is a shorthand for an imaginative articulation of a category that is never homogeneous (Raychaudhuri, 1988). The parallel in the nineteenth century 'symptomatology' of vagrancy being scientized both in the French-German psychiatric system, as Hacking (1998) demonstrates in his study of 'mad travelers' afflicted by fugue, on the one hand, and the (British-)Indian discourses of medico-criminology as reflected in the *Criminal Tribes Act* (1871) on the other hand, opens up a relatively under-studied dynamics of discourse reception between India and its many 'West's'. This, alongside similar tendencies that peripatetic communities like the Gypsy or the Roma are generally

susceptible to in several other Western societies like France, the Czech Republic, or Poland, calls for shifting away, or at least broadening, of focus of studies on (Indian) intellectual history beyond the context of colonization and the locale of England alone. This outlines the contour of an important research approach that I see emerging from my project.

However, during the course of unsettling the perceived notion of the 'vagabond', what this research has equipped me with is the leverage to tackle the problem of the conceptual itinerary of the 'vagabond' in South Asian languages and cultures, and their equivalencies (or lack thereof) in English, particularly in the face of the fact that modern literary South Asian languages, like Bengali, to name but one, have been heavily influenced by English concepts while at the same time cloaking these concepts in loan-words taken from Sanskrit, which leads to interferences in the utilization of 'foreign' texts/vocabulary that may have the same or similar terms, but with totally different content/context. Additionally, this research points to the fact that the formation of the ghetto comprising of the 'imagined community' called vagabond is a bi-way process in the sense that the 'vagabond' functions both as an *endonym* and an *exonym*. This again inaugurates a number of subsidiary research questions: Is there any 'we feeling' among the vagabonds? Does it involve any, to borrow Turner's (1969) phrase, 'liminal ritual' that integrates one into the 'imagined community', otherwise unessentializably heterogeneous? What these questions call for is an ethnographic study of the community. The contingency of the present research did not allow me to undertake ethnographic study, but that is a direction I intend to extrapolate this research to.

An ethnographic study on the 'vagabonds' would complement the research in the sense that it will point to the (in)congruity and the stakes in imagining the vagabond

from two contentious, and often competing, strands: one from the *inside* and another from the *outside*. As another offshoot of this project, I want to further examine the visual culture of tourism paraphernalia during the first half of the 20th C: sales, advertisement, commissioning of posters-postcards etc., and situate them in history and context. This will point to how different stakeholders in the tourism industry (including that under the aegis of the Raj) bred the idea of the ‘tourist’, and in so doing, conform to my argument here that the bourgeois endorsement of certain ways of traveling made other indigenous genres of traveling look ‘abnormal’. Moreover, I can see the possibility of developing another stand-alone research project, based entirely on the linguistic register, emerging out of my passing reference (see: footnote 111) to the Orientalist scholarship on the Romani community. A significant number of Orientalist scholars have provocatively claimed that the (European) Romani community had originated from India, the premise of their claim being (phonetic) similarity between Romani and Indian languages. Examining the credibility of such claims, the viability of the methodological apparatuses deployed therein, and above all, how the thematic trope of vagabond(age) in such claims functions as a leverage for mounting nationalist ethos, in other words, how vagabond(age) in the Orientalist scholarship is characteristic of a mythic Indian(ness), together demand attention as a separate research project.

As of the present research, I have examined how the historical seismic breaks – from the Orientalist to the post-Orientalist, from the colonial to the post-colonial – that has affected economies, national and regional historiographies, protocols for aesthetic strategies of representations, account for the cultural differences in vagabond(age) being perceived differently in different historical or geo-political contexts. The scope of this research is two-fold: firstly, by questioning the basis of

social distantiation (of vagabonds), it envisages an inclusive and just society; and secondly, from an epistemological vantage-point it shows the viability of transdisciplinary-comparative methodology by comparing a theme (vagabondage) across genres; thus gesturing towards a shift from the uni-disciplinary domain to a (pluri-disciplinary) thematic approach. This research touches upon a number of issues which concern a range of socio-political and cultural shifts in South Asia, emerging out of its encounter with colonialism and modernization, and shall help better understand how modernization processes occur in general. This research reveals how statist interventions deem certain alternate life-worlds abnormal, which is likely to favor broadly implementable cross-disciplinary research initiatives, say for example, one on mental health of homeless people.

What my research insists is that the vagabond(age), as an epistemological and ontological category, is a product of specific western value systems, western frames of references, which is further to say, it is a distinct 'cultural' category of the 'modern' West that is not necessarily *universalizable*. That said, the project has also sought to understand how the category emanates from the West and journeys, to put in Levi-Strauss' (2012: 78) phrase, 'simultaneously in space, in time and in the social hierarchy' toward the non-West. As my research shows, the question concerning how to trace the history of reception of the concept 'vagabond', and for that matter any such traveling concept, without dispelling the 'cultural differences' that (re-)shape it, calls for re-conceptualizing spaces, identities, diasporas etc. beyond reinforcing the spatial regime of the West/non-West binary. Interestingly, however, pointing to the cultural diversities concerning the 'vagabond' being depleted by social changes 'engineered' by Western frameworks of 'modernity', this research helps understand processes of modernity/modernization pertaining to South Asia, and more generally speaking,

South Asia itself, both as an 'imaginary' idea and a polity, in *relation to*, and not necessarily in *contrast to* its equally 'imaginary' counterpart: the West.

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