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7. Between Aspiration and Imagination: Exploring Native Cosmopolitanism in Adib Khan's *Spiral Road* and Mohammed Hanif's *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*

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> *WHAT KIND OF IDEA ARE YOU? Are you the kind that compromises, does deals, accommodates itself to society, aims to find a niche, to survive; or are you the cussed, bloody-minded, ramrod-backed type of damnfool notion that would rather break than sway with the breeze? - The kind that will almost certainly, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, be smashed to bits; but, the hundredth time, will change the world.*
>
> Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses,* 335

City and Native Cosmopolitans

The notion of a postcolonial urban outcast is both complex and intriguing. It is a complex position because the individual envisions freedom of movement and expression of opinions in spite of the limitations that the city imposes in time and space. It is indeed a struggle on the part of the individual to continue being among their compatriots, family, and friends; while becoming equally conscious about experiencing a sense of internal exile. These individuals, trapped in the continuing dilemmas of being torn between city and citizenship, churn out as the native cosmopolitans. The position of such individuals as native cosmopolitans (DiBattista 149) is also intriguing since there is a willingness to continue in spite of the growing sense of exile within the mind. There is also, a lingering hope to live within the layered ambivalence of the city, even though they display an aesthetic resistance through a kind of self-distancing. Thus, the native cosmopolitans become urban outcasts in either ways—within their own self and also get formed by others. On one hand, they materialize their identity as urban outcasts by living with a sense of exile without isolating themselves completely from the city. Whereas on the other hand, they also endure being critiqued by their own people and suffocate within their familiar surroundings. In this paper, we observe the emergence of individuals as native cosmopolitans in the South Asian cities of Dhaka and Karachi through Adib Khan's *Spiral Road* (2007) and Mohammed Hanif's *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011). We argue that there are, in these novels, individuals

who are cosmopolitans in their own ways despite being rooted in their respective cities and cultures. We challenge the dichotomy in the understanding of the cosmopolitan as opposed to the native and attempt to emphasize the possibility of a concurrent existence of these aspects in such individuals. In Adib Khan's *Spiral Road*, there is Masud Alam a librarian who stays in Melbourne but has his roots in Dhaka. He emerges as a native cosmopolitan by participating in the homecoming as a way of relating to his roots and emphasizes the need to reconnect to the city of Dhaka. On the other hand Melbourne promotes his understanding of the world and also enables Masud to realize a deeper connection to Dhaka. In the other selected text, *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*, we find Alice Bhatti's identity as a native cosmopolitan evolving from within the taboos and constrictions of Karachi to a space of imagination where she realizes freedom and liberation. Even though she is a junior nurse who has never been out of her city, Alice aspires to expand her horizons as a native cosmopolitan through her generous service to those in need. At the same time, she also grows into an outcast in her own city through her conscious disregard for the categorical stereotypes of class, gender, and religion, which are stringently observed. Individuals like Masud and Alice play pivotal roles in the postcolonial South Asian literary imagination by anticipating cosmopolitanism as a way of living within individual, conceptual, and cultural differences.

In the two narratives, the postcolonial South Asian cities of Dhaka and Karachi open the ground of complex interrelations between the native's imagination of a cosmopolitan identity and local affiliations. Within the rubric of contemporary cosmopolitan dialogues, the postcolonial cities embody the tension within the nodes of global ways that penetrate individual identities and the spaces of negotiable ruptures in their cosmopolitan imaginations. According to NeeraChandoke,"The postcolonial city maps out for us the historically constructed social relations of power and domination"(2871). While the postcolonial city inherits the vivacity of a colonial influence and appears as a ground open to the experiences of a historically fraught cultural condition, there is an inherent anxiety in the act of balancing the local roots with the global routes. The urban space opens as a dialogic nexus of cosmopolitan aspirations through emerging identities of individuals negotiating their sense of belonging to native spaces with a conscious inclusion of the world. The postcolonial urban space facilitates the appearance of such identities through individuals who mobilize their position meandering across its multiple layers thereby recreating a legitimate claim as native cosmopolitans. While these native cosmopolitans participate in the processes of the hegemonic urban discourses of city and citizenship; they also simultaneously reconfigure their identities as the outcasts within their own circles. These urban outcasts forge new possibilities of cosmopolitan solidarity within the deeply contested and increasingly complex network of relationships of the postcolonial city and the world beyond.

Therefore, the postcolonial city entails a space of political geography that echoes an underlying philosophy of global citizenship where individuals inculcate an understanding of difference and a free outlook towards cultural diversity (Binnie et al. 5). The urban space not only facilitates critical responses of the individuals to a postcolonial modernity but also opens further possibilities of sustaining these emerging discussions about the postcolonial city and its individuals. At this point, it is interesting to note that postcolonial politics is not merely a reminder of aspects beyond colonialism but more unambiguously a negotiation with "the new world order" (Jacobs 25). In *The Postcolonial City and Its Subjects: London, Nairobi, Bombay* (2011), Rashmi Varma describes the postcolonial city as a "conjunctural space that produces a critical combination of historical events, material bodies, structural forces and representational economies which propels new constellations of domination and resistance, centers and peripheries, and the formation of new political subjects" (1). Varma's analysis of the postcolonial city, apart from emphasizing the socio-historical transformations and "global capitalist developments"(15), also teases out the complexity in identifying an individual as a cosmopolitan.

The identity of a cosmopolitan in the postcolonial city is often understood as limited to the elite, educated Western traveler, transnational migrant, refugee or asylum seeker (Binnie et al. 2). Scholars such as Arjun Appadurai have understood cosmopolitanism not as an "elite

luxury" but as the "urge to expand one's current horizons of self and cultural identity and a wish to connect with a wider world in the name of values which, in principle, could belong to anyone and apply in any circumstance"(32). He argues that although the idea of a cosmopolitan is often shrouded with notions of being significantly well traveled, elite, and opposed to indigenous acquaintances and priorities, any individual could belong to this worldview. Interpreting a cosmopolitan in a postcolonial city also implies ruling out the stereotypes associated with the individual possessing a "cultivated knowledge of the world"(32). Thus an attempt to understand a cosmopolitan in the postcolonial city comes with the challenge of negotiating the provincial rootedness with a sense of crossing over categorical boundaries. It also expresses the difficulties of understanding the emerging individuals who attempt to maintain equilibrium between their aspirations of looking beyond the boundaries and the urge to remain an integral part of their cities.

The South Asian megacities embody the tension between the desire to "metamorphose into a world or global city"(King 2) and the complacency of going back to the roots that were once challenged and subjugated by the colonial rule. Cosmopolitanism in such cities maneuvers through the interconnected nodes that simultaneously connote a spatial limitedness in its personal geography and a permeable construct that allows diversity to survive and proliferate. The postcolonial city surfaces as a dialogical ground which supports the variety of discordant voices

in the city to aspire and engage in their journeys to unravel the world. It addresses the complexities of an imagined cosmopolitan identity and the ambiguities connected to the emergence of the individuals who are natives as well as cosmopolitans. As Ulrich Beck notes, cosmopolitanism has underlying presuppositions of "individualization"(37). This individualization operates as a counterforce in some cities like Karachi and Dhaka, especially within the monologues of religion, caste, and gender. We examine these emerging identities in the postcolonial cities of Dhaka and Karachi through MariaDiBattista'sconcept of native cosmopolitanism.

DiBattista, in her *Novel Characters: A Geneology* (2010), while analyzing contemporary novelists like V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, and J.M. Coetzee contemplates the emergence of individuals who allow themselves to bear multiple identities, recognizing both the world and the home. They mobilize their individual subject positions by negotiating their identities in and out of the porous boundaries of the nation and beyond. DiBattista argues for the importance of physical location and the sense of belonging to a place as a crucial ingredient for the formation of a native cosmopolitan. She points out that native cosmopolitanism emerges as an attitude with which many of the fictional characters in contemporary novels struggle to find their place in a new world, negotiating their identities with rootedness in local traditions and the yearning to embrace global citizenship. Native cosmopolitanism is understood as the way of life in which an

individual is at “home in his world, even as he is fascinated and estranged by it”(DiBattista 200). The unease that comes with the realization “that one is more connected to, yet less at home in the global cities” that one inhabits marks the birth of native cosmopolitanism.At this point, it should be noted that although the city as a locale might be complementary to a cosmopolitan realization, it is the individual who plays a pivotal role by developing “an orientation toward self, others, and world”(Hansen et al. 587). The native cosmopolitan is an individual who has an “aesthetic openness” and “a personal ability to make one's way into other cultures, through listening, looking, intuiting, and reflecting”(Hannerz 239). Cosmopolitanism in this light emerges from the intersecting grounds of the native’s imaginative association with the city and the aspiration to see beyond its boundaries.

Apart from opening up a suitable framework to locate the native within the cosmopolitan discourse, DiBattista’s concept of native cosmopolitanism also highlights the anxiety and curiosity of an urban native who negotiates with the different and complex aspect of identity politics while aspiring to sustain interactions with the imagination of a global world (169). With native cosmopolitanism, DiBattista underscores the significance of the native as an integral part of the cosmopolitan world that is neither contingent on any “innate” sense of belonging to a place nor is bounded by cultural or ideological orientation. Instead she articulates the necessity of identifying the native as a “marker of origin” instead of limiting him/her to spatial locations or

ideology that attempts to homogenize the "often ethnically and culturally mixed nature of "local" characters"(164). Native cosmopolitanism, in this sense, also points out the subtle gaps in the stereotypes associated with the understanding of the native and underscores the necessity of looking into the individual narratives, as DiBattista does in *Novel Characters*:

> Such returns of the native, in their very ambiguity, are exemplary of the uncertain and confused status of the native as an integral character. They alert us to the ways in which the word native, used as a noun, is too burdened by history and its pitiless ironies to support by itself the complicated, often ethnically various and culturally mixed nature of "local" characters. The word native is more trustworthy when used as an adjective, a marker of origin, than as a noun denoting a kind of being innate to a certain region or culture. (164)

Exploring the conceptual notions of native cosmopolitanism therefore opens a dialogical lens to observe characters like Masud Alam in *Spiral Road*. Khan interweaves the cosmopolitan

with the native in Masud, a librarian who is living in Melbourne for the last thirty years. Masud's "going away" from Dhaka, Bangladesh to Melbourne, Australia, and "coming back" from where his journey began, is the "spiral road." The shuttling between two places signifies the oscillating temperament of an individual (Masud) whose growth as a native cosmopolitan is an unsteady and complicated process. The city contributes to Masud's emergence both as a native cosmopolitan and as an outcast. Although he began his journey as a freedom fighter in the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, his foray to becoming a native cosmopolitan begins when he overcomes his radical commitment towards defending boundaries. Masud identifies borders as mere geographical necessities that exists because of political reasons and realizes that these dividing lines cannot be the limitations that prevent dialogues across people and cultures. While Masud looks forward to exploring different places of the world, it is in Dhaka that he realizes the necessity of identifying home as an integral part of his identity as a native cosmopolitan. In Khan's Dhaka, Masud's flexibility in understanding his loved ones as well as adapting to diverse cultures makes him a global character. His sense of belonging to the world grows with the importance of understanding locales as an obligatory aspect in the cosmopolitan worldview and makes him evolve as a native cosmopolitan.

In the other text, *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*, Alice is responsive to the impediments the city thrusts on her. As an individual, she not only tackles her abject victimization within the space

and place of the city Karachi, but also points to the difficulty that DiBattista articulates of "becoming a fully-fledged character in a metropolitan environment in which demographic labels abound and a single trait stands for entire personalities"(169). Alice negotiates her identity among the several interpretations she carries on her body as a Christian woman of Choohra class in Karachi. For her, it is an intertwined association with her caste, gender, and religion with the locale that facilitates her emancipation from the limitations of being a native. To understand Alice as a native cosmopolitan one must be sensitive to the contentions she has to experience at multiple layers. In spite of a stressful and rather difficult life that she leads in Karachi, Alice is able to face all humiliations due to her moral strength and conviction that she would reach out to all through her service. Her growth as a native cosmopolitan is an intimate revelation of the bigger possibility that she realizes amidst the chaos of her life in Karachi.

Thus, the cities of Dhaka and Karachi in Khan and Hanif's texts challenge Masud and Alice to grow and sustain as native cosmopolitans within their cities. These individuals recognize their cities as intrinsic to their identities and consciously engage themselves in dialogue with the places they experience, thereby making the urban space emerge as a conspicuous challenge in their lives. These individuals tease out the chaos within the ambiance of the city, making it almost a responsive "other," contesting and determining its character in their lives. In doing so, they strive to expand their identities through the cities they inhabit and people with whom they

interact on a daily basis. They possess a sense of rootedness to their cities, opening up new perspectives to communicate with the world comprising peoples and cultures unknown to them. The ambivalence in their subject positions as native cosmopolitans arises due to the fact that they are neither accepted as natives nor are they expected to become cosmopolitans. Their relation with the city fluctuates between their adherence to the cultural codes of the city and their hesitation to conform to the limitedness inherent within these cultural systems. The uncertainties of becoming a native cosmopolitan culminate into a forlorn alienation within their minds. It surfaces as a challenge restricting their freedom to inculcate a sense of belonging to the city and its spaces. Thus, in the process of aspiring to become native cosmopolitans, they also situate themselves as outcasts in their own cities and among their own people. Their individualism also inspires the understanding of cosmopolitanism not merely as a prerogative of the city, but that of an individual, and more so of native/s who begin at home and expand their visions to the world.

The Outcasts

Khan and Hanif's narratives complicate Masud and Alice's position as outcasts within their own cities of Dhaka and Karachi. Although the concept of an outcast highlights issues regarding marginality and a quest for social recognition, for Masud and Alice it also incites a poignant debate on the freedom and choice of defining an individual's identity. Historically, outcasts have been identified with the "liminality" of their subject position, suffering an in-

betweeness of the self and the other (Thomassen 7). In Khan's Dhaka, the idea of an outcast is further complicated through the ways in which the outcast is cast into the imagination of friends, family, neighbors, acquaintances, and colleagues. Masud's flexibility in inhabiting multiple homes both in the foreign and the native land teases out the dilemma of the native versus cosmopolitan debate. His native cosmopolitanism is the reception of the other as a part of his own identity. Although this dual aspect is the bone of contention for some, including members of his family in Dhaka, Masud clarifies his position of accepting home as a "place in the mind" when his brother Zia questions him about his future plans of coming back to his home in Dhaka:

> 'I don't suppose you've any intention of coming back home permanently.' He makes no effort to conceal his displeasure at this foregone conclusion.
> 'Home?'It's not a physical location any more. More like several places in the mind. I like the flexibility of such an arrangement.' I manage to nettle Zia. He doesn't like abstractions, especially when he wants to argue a case. (Khan 38)

Masud refuses to attribute any spatial preference to the idea of home. He possesses a sense of belonging to the world. He is open to the idea of experiencing home in different parts of the globe. This notion is however contested, both within and beyond the city of Dhaka, where Masud notices that the people there have a profound attachment to the religion and political issues such as their country's government (40). The attachment of people with the native land is such that they show a considerable disregard of the world around. While he critiques the preoccupation and indifference for places and events beyond territorial boundaries, there also surfaces in Masuda sense of alienation in facing Dhaka as the city where he has grown up. Masud expresses his concern for "these people" of his city who "would not care" to understand anything beyond their day-to-day problems of life and living in the city of Dhaka: "These people would not care to know about New York or the twin towers. Afghanistan and Iraq are distant, mythical lands crawling with mechanical monsters and white sahibs. Here instead are flood-ravaged lives and peasants seeking nothing more than meager meals, shelter and something to wear"(Khan 8). While Masud recognizes the importance of being involved with the affairs of material life in one's place of living, he also considers the necessity of being aware of the world beyond. Masud evolves as a native cosmopolitan through his sympathetic understanding of locales, cultures, and people both within and beyond spatial boundaries.

Masud echoes Martha Nussbaum's idea of refining openness about the different people, cultures, and nations in the world in order to emerge as a "good citizen" of the world.[1]Masud expresses his bewilderment with the intense regionalism and local political ethos of Dhaka (8). While DiBattista argues that the native is related both to the sense of rootedness with the locale and the urge to engage in dialogue with the global audience, in Khan's Dhaka, Masud points out the difficulties in experiencing the ambiguity as a part of his identity. The stereotypes that people associate with identity—passport, birthplace, religion—(15) and the constructions of the impermeable boundaries within these aspects also impinge the closed associations of such structures on an individual's identity. Thus, Masud's bafflement with the idea of the native in Dhaka, and the cosmopolitan desire despite the impenetrability of one domain into the other, is what DiBattista underlines as native cosmopolitanism: "Native cosmopolitans are neither mythical nor symbolic creatures; yet they, too, possess or hope to develop the ability to live in two worlds: the native and the global, the homeland (real or imaginary) and the place where they happen, through accident or by design, to abide. Note: though they can live in two worlds, they cannot do so at once"(162).

As a native cosmopolitan, Masud cultivates a critical understanding of the world both through his umbilical connection to Dhaka and the other world that he shares with Amelia in Melbourne. Although Masud identifies with the complexity in human adherence to one's roots,

he is also open to the sense of plurality that allows moving to and from across the imagined margins of emotional and geographical boundaries. Thus, cosmopolitanism evolves as innately personal. It develops as an individual's worldview that simultaneously recognizes and transcends the local, to a realization of humanity through the acceptance of family, nation, and the flux within the multiple experiential spaces of evolving identities:

> Who am I now? Born in a Muslim family, a Bangali, freedom fighter. A suspected terrorist sympathizer? An Australian, a librarian…a scarred person. An emotional nomad…Maybe I should have changed my name to John Something and converted to Christianity. Solid citizen. Right religion. Probably of a conservative mould. There are plenty of advantages when you are one of the herd. For one thing, the ground beneath your feet remains stable. (Khan 245)

Masud survives with a "double consciousness"(Chakrabarty 36), where on one hand he is a compelling native whose identity is largely shaped by his connection to Dhaka, and on the

other hand, he is an outcast who is simultaneously alienated from the city, his family, and the people living there. Khan points out the irony in understanding identity as clubbed together in different aspects and the difficulty in dissociating these facets from each other. In a way, it might just be impossible to dis-entangle them, but the sheer helplessness connected with such associations and outright labeling is what troubles Masud most in the narrative. He meanders through various associations with the other voices in the narrative that propel him to confront his own self once again in his native land, reflecting on the concepts, places, and faces he has always known. The recurring question—"Do you feel like an alien in your birthplace?"(Khan 3) that has occurred to him since the time he boarded his flight to Bangladesh makes Masud realize the burden of being attached to "imagined homelands." His alienation in the process of becoming an "outcast" within his own city is perpetrated by his family and recollections of his days as a freedom fighter, entrapped in the disillusionment of insecure boundaries.

In the narrative *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*, Alice transforms from a marginalized nurse to an outcast within the city of Karachi. Her sense of alienation might be explained as a willing detachment even from the closer precincts of her domestic circle, which she had chosen for herself imagining Teddy as her companion. The husband almost functions as one of the agents of the city of Karachi, meting out retribution to individuals such as Alice who violate the cultural codes of its space. Teddy's indifference to Alice personifies the insensitivity the city embodies

through its daily encounters with her. In the narrative, Karachi does not tolerate individuals like Alice who dare to challenge the stereotypes, which the city sustains and encourages within its physical space. However, looking from Alice's perspective, both the city and her husband Teddy steadily contribute to her cumulative emancipation from a native nurse to a native cosmopolitan and to an outcast. This gradual transition showcases Alice's existence in the city as a dynamic experience quite contrary to the placid compromises of her senior nurse, Hina Alvi.

In the narrative, Alice delineates her individuality through the choice of her dress. Although other women in Karachi dress themselves in a *hijab* and most of the time choose to remain covered "in swathes of loose, man-repelling fabric"(Hanif 144), Alice explores her physicality by dressing up in shirts. Alice's aspiration to express her identity as a free individual, through the metaphor of her dress, points out both the limitation and the challenge of becoming an "outcast" in her own city. Alice confronts Karachi as a native cosmopolitan, opening her generous nature to people with whom she is not even acquainted. As a result, she is both violated and challenged by the city that is skeptical of her growth. However, it is the same city that contributes to her imaginative transformation from a human to a saint. Alice exemplifies, what Varma points out in her essay "UnCvil Lines: Engendering Citizenship in the Postcolonial City" as one of the "often unwelcome figures on the horizon of postcolonial cities" (Varma 34). This

space that Alice carves out for herself within her liminal position makes her an outcast in the city, nevertheless leaving her newfound identity as a "lady".

Hanif discloses the discontent within the urban space of the city where Alice suffocates while trying to survive even transient exchanges while passing through the streets and bazaars. Alice struggles to negotiate both her physical and emotional presence at the bazaar with which she is acquainted partly as a native of the city and partly as an individual who desires to deal beyond the surface realities of her religion and profession. Her insistence on a cosmopolitan existence defies the spatial limitations and constricting spaces imposed by the Karachi bazaar: "It seems to her that the unspoken language that is used by men and women on the street to communicate doesn't exist in this bazaar"(Hanif 321). The bazaar posits itself as an unreceptive spirit of the city that resists the desire of individuals such as Alice to expand their sense of identity by allowing the other to be a part of them. Her sense of belonging to the city fails to limit her within the cultural construct, and instead she justifies her sense of freedom as an individual by infusing a kind of liberated consciousness in her mind from the topographical restriction of space and place.

Alice's native cosmopolitanism emerges both as a challenge and as an alternate perspective to the notion of cosmopolitanism as the enlightened ideology of a sanitized worldview as proposed by Tagore in his vision of a "creative unity."[2] Thus, through Alice,

cosmopolitanism emerges as a choice that individuals might practice in the everydayness of their lived spaces and appears even though these spaces might be hostile to their ideas. Therefore, one might legitimately question the impossibility of such a wish, especially as it appears in Hanif's Karachi through Alice. Alice expresses her tenacity to carry on the dream of living a free life until her last breath, despite the "lewd gestures," "whispered suggestions," "uninvited hands on her bottom"(14), and persuasions to "suck cocks in VIP rooms"(88) that she has experienced in different phases of her life. Instead of succumbing to the several humiliations, Alice chooses to deliver her ideals through her conviction of the universality of human suffering across the overlapping terrains of life and death:

> During her house job she worked in Accidents and Emergencies for six months and there was not a single day –not a single day –when she didn't see a woman shot or hacked, strangled or suffocated, poisoned or burnt, hanged or buried alive…And what she learned was that nobody was surprised; there were no police detectives sitting around matching clues, no parliamentary subcommittees discussing ways of saving this endangered species. (Hanif 143)

Her transcendence from being limited to an image of a marginalized individual within the structure of cultural stereotyping, to a benevolent nurse, reaffirms her ingenuity as a native cosmopolitan. She aspires for a higher, spiritual realization of life through service to humanity by helping hapless women and babies in the hospital. Also, by her inimitable approach of integrating "Musla prayers"(71) and "Lord Yassoo's"(292) blessing for "strangers" is how Alice questions and contradicts her imagined identity in her quest to be a free individual who endures her own choices.

The way Alice evolves as a native cosmopolitan in her own city and within her own people might very well border on the idea of her being an individual who is liberal and unencumbered. Perceiving Alice as a native cosmopolitan insists on a keen understanding of her circumstances and the way she enters "into a brave new world" (DiBattista 169). Unlike Masud in *Spiral Road*, Alice's journey as a native cosmopolitan begins with her urge to expand her "concentric circles"(Nussbaum 158) from her identity as a Choohra Christian woman, to the mother of an adopted baby, and ultimately into a "lady" for every individual who needed her service. The coming back to her "roots" within her own city is, for Alice, achieved through a new revelation of her own self as a benevolent human being who is an "in-house messiah"(271), available for everyone irrespective of class, religion, and social position. This transition from being "a lone soldier of Yasso"(254), who is a defiant individual fiercely safeguarding her cross,

to a sympathetic individual who discovers herself by reciting "Musla prayers"to heal others, is a way by which she experiences a sense of belonging to spaces beyond her limited access and acquaintances. However, in the process, she emerges not only as an outcast to the city and to her own husband Teddy, but she also experiences the multiple transitions from an acute realization of the vulnerability of physical existence to a spiritual deliverance as "our Lady." Unlike Masud, whose identity as a native cosmopolitan is expressed through an overlapping journey across spaces, memories, and realizations, for Alice, it is a travel across her imaginations and aspirations of overcoming the stereotypes imposed by the city.

Politics of Being and Becoming

In *Spiral Road*, Khan alludes to the traveler's imagery through Masud. Like a wandering migrant who is exposed to new experiences of the unknown world, Masud opens himself to the anxieties of discovering new meanings of home/s. On one hand, Masud's cosmopolitan self seeks a fulfilling relationship with Amelia without the impositions of caste, religion, and nationalities, whereas on the other hand, his mother, his uncle Rafiq, and his nephew Omar (among others) want him to be married and settled in Dhaka forever. Masud articulates the complexity a native cosmopolitan experiences in his/her city. He feels a perpetual tension in making choices, as those decisions are either dubbed befitting of a native or of an individual who does not conform to the ways of the city. Masud's predicament hints at the ambivalence within

the conceptual paradigm of native cosmopolitanism. While native cosmopolitanism facilitates a kind of liberal individualism that balances the priorities of home with aspirations to engage beyond, there is also a lagging insecurity of experiencing failure in the process of sustaining oneself as a native cosmopolitan. While DiBattista argues that a native cosmopolitan is "consolidated in an all-embracing, warm circle of life"(166), Masud evolves as a native cosmopolitan by realizing the sense of alienation in becoming an outcast within his own Dhaka and among his own relatives and family. He unravels the dichotomies inherent in the philosophy of the concept and also sustains the struggle of negotiating between his cosmopolitan yearnings and expectations from his family in Dhaka. Ideally, Masud practices the notion his father had envisioned for his children: "They have to broaden their minds and accommodate ideas from other cultures. They must know about people from different races', Abba argued. 'I want my children to be fluent in the language of the world. I want them to be at home wherever they are'"(Khan 56).

Masud's going back to his past, and understanding his native realities, is deeply connected to his father's Alzheimer's disease. The disease, which brings sudden bouts of unfinished narratives back to the old man's mind, is like the repressed reality that Masud consciously pre tends as lost into oblivion from the moments of his own life. He recognizes the need to connect with the shortcomings of the city, not only as a native inhabitant who survives

by ignoring its inadquacies, but as a family member who in spite of being chided is never thrown away from home. Like his apprehension for Abba's condition, his concern for Dhaka also brings in a familial sympathy that extends to the city he has been a part of. The native in him reconciles with the imposed dilemma of not being able to do justice to both the roles he executes: as a native and as a cosmopolitan.

Although Masud does not share a similar mindset with his father, these individual differences does not restrain him from realizing the sorrow that the old man carries in his heart for his lost love Sumita and for his daughter, Rani. After his return to Dhaka, Masud realizes the need to observe sympathetically the city and the native surroundings. He envisions an obligation to include the city and its people in his mind in a similar way in which he aspires to connect to his Abba's diaries. Masud attempts to broaden his consciousness even to people, places and familiar relations, which do not conform to his ideas. The way Masud empathizes with Abba's disturbed memories of the past is similar to his poignant connection to his fractured memories of the city. The city by opening polyphony of experiences for Masud, invites him into deeper introspection of his transition into becoming a native cosmopolitan. His philosophy of dealing with his father's disturbed past symbolically represents his relationship with Dhaka:

> I ignore the barb. 'We stand on the same level. I can look him in the eyes. If we could communicate now, I'd talk to him about flaws, treachery and lies. Hurt and healing. Fallibilities in a genuine relationship. I feel for him more now than I did before.
>
> 'Why is that?'
>
> 'May be because closeness is about shared imperfections. One may admire saints, but I doubt if you can have intimate relationships with them.'(Khan 310)

Masud wishes to expose himself to the "alien" even in his most acquainted space of his own city Dhaka and he realizes the essence of being a cosmopolitan. His travel from being to becoming also has its own consequences. Masud's cosmopolitanism and the city of Dhaka are complementary to each other. The city of Dhaka in Khan's *Spiral Road* becomes the nexus of

Masud's tallying of the past with the present and invokes the dilemma in the spatial recognition of home, native, and the sense of belongingness to the locale. Dhaka carries within itself the memory of Masud's life, the enigma of forgetfulness of the world. Masud, on the other hand, carries the fluidity of intercultural understanding, a quest to sympathetically get back to his roots. Dhaka and Masud are complete together, each fitting the unfinished parts of their imagined existence through a connection with the other. The city, apart from broadening his consciousness, also makes him feel the invincible limitations as an "outcast" that Masud experiences as a native cosmopolitan in Dhaka.

While Masud's limitation as a native cosmopolitan factors in the anxiety of balancing places and relationship, Alice and her father Joseph Bhatti in Hanif's Karachi inspire a cosmopolitan urge, despite the conflicting categories of caste, religion, and gender that are thrown upon them. Alice and Joseph both inhabit the lived space of Karachi, negotiating their identities through multiple interactions but also standing as individuals in the cultural nexus of dominating regional, caste, and religious ideologies. Their voice meets with other contradictory voices that evaluate their positions as outcasts. While Masud faces religion as a dictatorial monologue of politics, further deepening his sense of alienation with his native land, Alice finds alienation in her domestic life. In both these cases, the individual in Masud and Alice are not

imagined as outcasts only by others who observe them, but because of their own sensitivity, imagine themselves as the counterpoints in the dialogue of place, space, and time.

Hanif meticulously points out the obscurity of being alienated like an outcast in subtle bonds of human relationships like marriage. Even though Alice decides to marry a man of her choice, she is unable to do away entirely with the complexities that arise out of an inter-communal wedlock, especially when she is levied a subsidiary position in a relationship and is expected to play her role accordingly. Her dilemma in conversing about babies with her husband Teddy brings out the anxiety and repression in their domesticity. The fear of being forbidden to make a choice and discuss names of her own children point to the extreme marginalization that Alice faces in her own home:

> She has never talked babies with Teddy and now she knows why. It would have involved a discussion about names, how the child would be brought up, in what religion. Would it be circumcised or baptised or first circumcised then baptised? Would it be easier if it were a girl? […]
>
> And it would seem like a concession. Shouldn't a baby be a blessing and not some kind of half-baked deal? What kind of life begins with a compromise?

Like her own. (Hanif 264)

Alice's hesitation to strike an open conversation with her husband on the prospect of starting a family indicates the lack of communication in their relationship. While she accepts Teddy as her spouse, there is a persistent uncertainty that she experiences in the relationship. With Teddy, she perceives a similar kind of dilemma as she experiences in the streets and bazaars of Karachi, in the hospital where she works, and also in the locality she has lived her life. Like the voidness of "unspoken language" in the Karachi bazaar, Alice feels a sense of "nothingness" as an active collaborator in the marital alliance. Her relationship with Teddy gets reflected in her connection with the city where she wanders as an outcast. She stumbles on her way to become a native cosmopolitan despite the challenges of being imagined as an outcast even in her own city and within the intimate bonds that she hopes to develop with her husband.

For Alice, her growth as a native cosmopolitan emerges from an innate understanding of and sympathy to human life and values. Her prayers signify her desire to reach beyond the domains of stereotypical categorization like gender (being a woman), caste (a Choohra), and religion (a Christian). Her image as an individual immersed in prayer with hands "folded in front of her chest"(272), assuming the status of shared benevolence towards humanity, resists the

imagination of people like Teddy who wish to chain down her spirit to her body. Through her prayers, she experiences an emancipated sense of life and the freedom to express her concern for people whom she does not know. Her decision to adopt "Little Yassoo"(292) without asking permission from her husband underlines her wish to challenge her own limitations within the city and in her marriage. While she resolves to accept the orphan boy as her child, she also expresses her disapproval in conforming to the image that the city of Karachi and her husband have ordained for her. Instead she inspires in herself a broader association with herself and the city through her efforts to heal people who are sick through her prayers. She becomes "Our Lady" for those people for whom she has prayed and served. The transition from being Alice Bhatti to a higher, emancipated, spiritual "Our Lady of Alice Bhatti"(337) constitutes a counterpoint in her discourse with the city of Karachi where her identity was deemed to be as insignificant as "loose change"(142) of currency notes. This difficult process of becoming a native cosmopolitan by imagining a broader sense of connection with others and praying for the well-being of people who have never been important to her makes Alice a "lady." Her spirituality emerges as a defiant yet forgiving code that point to the spaces of contestations that echo "goodness" and services to humanity at large without being concentrated within Congregations and social systems.

Like Masud, Alice declares herself a native cosmopolitan by practicing benevolence and individuality through her body, service, and life. It might be noteworthy to observe that while

Alice evolves as a native cosmopolitan primarily through her service and fulfills her quest for self-recognition in the city of Karachi, Alice's accomplishment as a native cosmopolitan also hints at the possible way of legitimizing the outcast's position within the city. Her evolution as an individual from the margins of the city as a Choohra Christian nurse to a "lady" anticipates what Varma terms as the "unhomely women"(27). Being an outcast in her own way, Alice juxtaposes "domesticity's discontents" with the "crisis" of being a native cosmopolitan in Karachi (Varma 27). Her native cosmopolitanism attempts to open the subtle differences between the native cosmopolitan and the outcast, the home and the city, and the imagination of becoming a native with cosmopolitan aspirations.

Between Roots and Routes

Khan's *Spiral Road* and Hanif's *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* discuss the complex binaries of local/global and roots/routes. Khan allows the "spiral road" to open up for Masud and his journey between two cities and two locales. The spiral road is a metaphor connecting the straying dots of his life and represents the cyclic process of Masud's going away from Dhaka and coming back to it after thirty years. While his journey begins as a 1971 Liberation War freedom fighter desperately defending physical boundaries between nations, the Masud who comes back from Melbourne is aware of the permeable spaces within these boundaries. Although Masud returns to

the city where he began his journey as a passionate native, he unearths the secrets of a wider sense of belonging to "several places in the mind" (Khan 38). The spiral road therefore is not only a metaphor of a journey that an individual makes to become a native cosmopolitan; it also indicates the intersecting spaces of home and the world, the native and the cosmopolitan. In Khan's narrative, Masud experiences the spiral road by coming closer to his city and his family after living a couple of decades outside Dhaka.

The cosmopolitan and the native intersect within the individual and Masud realizes the significance of considering both of these concepts for a life beyond the binaries of "us and them." However, Khan does not ignore the difficulty Masud faces owing to his position as a native cosmopolitan and points out the contesting space of human predicament fraught with multiple voices and numerous possibilities. He proclaims the complexity associated with holding on to both ideologies simultaneously and through the domains of his family, community, city, religion, and country. Masud legitimately questions the predicament of living in a 'third space,' a neutral zone, as a sandwich between human beings categorizing their minds in mutually exclusive groupings. For Masud, the cosmopolitan worldview and his love for Dhaka is mutually inclusive: an individual belongs to his locale and to the world through a sense of underlying interconnectedness between them. "Spiral road" represents the inevitability of coming back to the roots of native culture and connecting back to the world. An individual like Masud cannot

help but walk on the spiral road. Masud realizes the flexibility of multiple homes, of connecting in depth to several people with different ideals and backgrounds after he comes back to Bangladesh:

> The indigenous man of the subcontinent and the migrant will never reconcile their differences and live as an entity. With each passing year, it becomes increasingly difficult to decide where I'd rather be. There will always be an awareness of the pieces that are missing. Now I'm unable to silence the voice of lament that whispers about denial and loss. But regret has given way to resigned acceptance. (Khan 38)

In *Spiral Road,* Khan reiterates the necessity of forging relations of the mind, not by overlooking but by simply recognizing the barriers. Masud's journey as a native cosmopolitan begins with his acceptance of the other both in his family and in the world. The ineffectuality of human ego and the tenacity displayed in keeping boundaries intact or fighting for people based

only on common interest is the monologue of selfish human interest that Masud is actively voicing against. The narrative therefore does not come to a closure with Omar's death or Masud's inability to fly back to Australia. Rather, it signals a new beginning for Masud—he begins to imagine the world through his home and his city. The narrative remains open-ended with Masud trying to communicate with Amelia from the Dhaka airport and assimilating himself to his "home" in the space that is the nodal point of accommodating both the native and the cosmopolitan self concurrently.

While In *Spiral Road* Khan reiterates the necessity of forging relations of the mind, not by overlooking but by simply recognizing the barriers, Hanif in *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* exposes the intricacies of gender, caste, and religion that play a decisive role in the cosmopolitan imagination of a city like Karachi. The narrative begins with Joseph Bhatti's fear of discrimination that his daughter Alice might face as a junior nurse: "'These Muslas will make you clean their shit and then complain that you stink', he had said. 'And our own brothers at the Sacred? They will educate you and ask you why you stink'"(Hanif 1). Alice's progression from her father's apprehensions of discrimination and from being "a lone soldier of Yassoo"(254) to "an in-house messiah at the Sacred"(271) is the emergence from the specificities of body and materialism to becoming a native cosmopolitan.

And then the sweeper sees that Sister Alice Bhatti is kneeling on the floor surrounded by bloodied cotton and piles of gauze. Her hands are folded in front of her chest and she is praying. The sweeper thinks he has no option but to go down on his knees and join her in prayer. He is not sure what exactly has happened; Hina Alvi declared a baby dead when the baby is all here crying his lungs out. The sweeper will tell everyone that he felt the presence of the Holy Spirit. (272)

Alice's divinity as interpreted by the sweeper and perhaps many others like him, is symbolic of accepting a broader aspect of life through service to humanity. Although she is executed brutally by her husband, Alice continues to live in the domains of imagination and aspirations of her father and other people for whom she was "our Lady." Although Alice's death represents to a certain extent the psychological gagging of human aspiration, it also points to the gap between imagining a cosmopolitan existence and the desire to experience it.

With Masud and Alice, native cosmopolitanism in the South Asian literary world finds an expression and an indulgence from the reader who is eager to tease out the new directions of understanding individuals and their sense of identities in the world. Khan and Hanif both emphasize their respective locales, the cities of Karachi and Dhaka, to grow in the imagination of individuals like Masud and Alice. There is an umbilical connection that these characters have with the city despite contesting its spatial connotation with their understanding of the world

through the contours of their homes as outcasts. These South Asian cities—with their typical cultural constitution and the intricate fabrication of regionalism, caste, family, religion, and politics— bring both Alice and Masud into a complex puzzle of interacting ideologies and reflexive identities. Although there is a constant tension in the rediscovery of Masud and Alice and their relations with the cities of Dhaka and Karachi, their native cosmopolitanism points to a creative liberation from the impermeability of boundaries. Emerging as native cosmopolitans, these individuals represent the new hope for character. In spite of being imagined as outcasts in their own cities and by people in their own circles, these individuals initiate the cosmopolitan call, connecting South Asian literature to the world.

Notes

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[1]. In her book *Cultivating Humanity* (1998), Nussbaum points to the Stoic principle of the "good citizen" as a "citizen of the world" and argues that an individual's place of birth and community is an accidental fact (59). In Spiral Road, Masud emerges, as a conscious human being who respects differences, yet understands, as Nussbaum emphasizes, the need to stand for humanity in general.

[2]2. In *Creative Unity* (1922) Tagore's worldview corresponds to an idealized vision governed by knowledge and higher human values (30). In Hanif's *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*, Alice does not envision a cosmopolitan existence through a sublime understanding of the world as Tagore has visualized. Nonetheless, she becomes a cosmopolitan, despite being grounded in her local problems, through her service towards the unknown, helpless, and sick.