

ANTHROPOLOGIES OF DIFFERENCE. THE MAKING OF NEW ENCOUNTERS

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“Now that I possess the secret, I could tell it in a hundred different ways. I don’t know how to tell you this, but the secret is beautiful, and science, our science, seems mere frivolity to me now.

After a pause, he added:

And anyway, the secret is not important as the paths that led me to it. Each person has to walk those paths himself... What the men of the prairie taught me is good anywhere and for any circumstances.”

Jorge Luis Borges (The Ethnographer)

Perhaps unwittingly, Borges’ enigmatic prose suggests a kernel of anthropological wisdom that addresses a juncture at which social anthropology and anthropological fieldwork sits today. The passage above is from a story about a young ethnographer who goes out to live with and learn the secrets of ancient American tribes. Upon his return, replying to the queries of his professor, he phrases thus his inability to represent his experience through the language that his discipline has taught him. Perhaps, this is an articulation about the encounters that anthropology makes potentially possible and about how, embedded in these encounters lie the crux of the discipline.

The idea of an anthropological encounter is going to be the focal point of the arguments I will propose in this essay.¹ It is an encounter complicated by a contemporary politics of location that is embedded in social anthropology and anthropological fieldwork. When social anthropology and its practitioners attempt to re-inscribe a disciplinary cartography that had its apparent genesis in a historical condition (colonialism/imperialism), there is a distinct discord between the desired contours of a new world and its initial mapping. Such re-inscriptions have been a critical concern in anthropological debates and this essay builds upon those debates, but through the parameters of specific perspective.

In the broadest sense, the issues that I place below are about a change of direction in classical anthropological travel and fieldwork. These are issues about research conducted from the erstwhile ‘other cultures’, by the classical ‘others’ in locations hitherto reserved for scholars from the West or the centers. They are anthropological journeys that invoke a criticality of ‘place’ and ‘location’ in the production of anthropological knowledge, not only in terms of the location of research agendas and their field-sites, but also their agents of production. I address these issues here from the vantage point of my doctoral fieldwork conducted during 1997- 1998, as a student from the Department of Sociology, University of Delhi in a location outside India —Beirut. The focus remains on the story of a visit that traverses a discursive path somewhat separate from the usual anthropological trajectories that fieldwork in my context could have implied. The aspiration is to decipher newness, not quite in the ‘invention of a counter myth of radical purity’, (Bhabha 1994: 19) but more as an answer to his statement, “Can the aim of freedom of knowledge be the simple inversion of the relation of oppressor and oppressed, center and periphery, negative image and positive image? Is our only way out of such dualism the espousal of an implacable oppositionality or the invention of an originary counter myth of radical purity.” (Bhabha 1994: 19).

Like the statement above, the arguments I pose here bear a close resemblance to those debated in the discursive world of post-colonial criticism.² In the following discussion, keeping in mind those debates, I will cull out the specific contours that apply to my narrative. In the first instance, I must emphasize that I do not intend this essay as another polemical argument from the peripheries against imperialism/colonialism, but rather as an attempt to move beyond the impasse created by such oppositional polemics.

Points of departure

How does fieldwork initiated from India but conducted ‘abroad’, engage with the contemporary discourses on anthropological theory and practice? Conducting fieldwork in Beirut from Delhi could signal an intervention that mediates in a variety of classificatory schemes of anthropologists and anthropological fieldwork viz., Western/Eastern; dominant/subaltern; center/periphery; North/South, South/South and others. These dualisms, well-established by now, have been the result of a retrospective gloss that has tinted the relationship between fieldworker and field on the one hand and on the other, between the subjective positioning of the anthropological voice and its place of articulation. For most, these relationships are necessary corollaries to the intricate affinity between socio-cultural anthropology and colonialism/imperialism. However, there is enough reason to consider these binarisms/dualisms reductive at best and misleadingly Manichean at worst.³ At the same time, this is not to say that, by debunking these binarisms the implications of power and hegemony that are embedded in these relationships can be simultaneously brushed aside. The import of power and inequitable relationships within the discipline has a long historicity spread over several trajectories⁴ The question that continually seeks answers is that —given the way in which hegemony figures in contemporary anthropological practice, what kind of inventive responses can suitably approach the current situation?

Accordingly, my field experiences in Beirut, I reckon, are not best referenced to the limiting world of binarisms but better placed in the discursive and practical sphere that Arturo Escobar and Eduardo Restrepo develop around the concepts of ‘dominant anthropologies’ and ‘other anthropologies/anthropology otherwise’. By ‘dominant anthropologies’, they indicate, “the discursive formations and institutional practices that have been associated with the normalization of anthropology under academic modalities chiefly in the United States, Britain and France” (Restrepo and Escobar 2005: 83). They add that,

“Dominant anthropologies’ [...] assumes a single epistemic space within which Anthropology functions as a real, albeit changing and contested practices. ‘Other anthropologies /anthropology otherwise,’ on the contrary, suggests that the space in which anthropology is practiced is fractured — perhaps even more so today than in the past, and despite increasing normalizing tendencies world wide-making it into a plural space. [...] we see the project of ‘world anthropologies’ as an intervention geared at loosening the disciplinary constraints that subalternized modalities of anthropological practice and imagination have to face in the name of unmarked, normalized and normalizing models of anthropology.” (Restrepo and Escobar 2005: 81-82).

My discussion is best enunciated, first, from this ‘plural’ fractured space (where plural does not have to indicate a repetitive and plainly futile call for ‘nativist’ indigenous anthropology) and second, it is an articulation of certain practices from this plural positioning that can indeed contribute to the making of world anthropologies. It will be my attempt to display, through a description of specific fieldwork contexts, some ways in which ‘world anthropologies’ can be imagined and practiced. It is a perspective that does not lose sight of those genealogical facts which have created structures of contestation, yet it attempts to find a way in which to keep pace with changing anthropological boundaries and frontiers and more importantly, with a growing profile of anthropological concerns. The implication here is an unraveling of dominant relationships between inequitable partners, i.e. the researchers/the researched and amongst researchers themselves so as to be able to mold them over *lateral connectivities*.

Lateral connectivity as a way of interfacing in a world anthropology system has been a recent concern of, among others, the cyber group called WorldAnthroNet.⁵ Their suggestion is a pragmatic application of network theory—the opening page of ‘worldanthronet’ states,

“Conceived as a process, we hope that the network will constitute a dialogic space for discussing ‘anthropology’ in its relation to a multiplicity of world-making processes and events. We hope that the network will contribute to the development of a plural landscape of world anthropologies that is both less shaped by metropolitan hegemonies and more open to the heteroglossic potential of globalization processes. We define this as *en/redar-se*. Modified from the Spanish ‘to self-entangle’, we suggest that this practice should constitute the underpinning philosophy/activity of the network: the constant planetary interlocking of locally significant notions aimed at producing shared, yet differentiated, anthropological practices.”

Network theory makes this a potential practice in anthropology. Developed from a base in biological theory, the section that appears especially potent for my argument is about social ‘meshworks’.⁶ Meshworks imply a structural connectivity network based on the non-hierarchical positioning of heterogeneous elements, emerging separately, practiced through difference and brought together by compatibilities and complementarities.⁷ Applied to interfaces in virtual cyber worlds to anti-globalization social movements, this is a construct that is neither tested for immaculate success nor explored in its theoretical fullness, especially in contexts that I argue about here. Even so, a glimmer of world anthropologies seems to lie at this door to meshworks. Using Escobar’s (2000) summarization and translating for my own use, the following tropes appear as good foundations—meshworks are self-organizing; grow unplanned and unpredicted; they are constituted by diverse elements; uniformity and homogeneity is not the criteria for inclusion and lastly, they survive on a degree of connectivity that enables self-sustenance.

The idea of a meshwork finds expression in a new anthropological circumstance where the periphery and the center have been jostled out of their historical ruts. The new journeys that I propose below through a discussion of some from India, illuminate these movements, i.e., they underline circumstances in which anthropological encounters come to be placed outside the binarisms of west vs. the rest, center vs. periphery, colonial vs. post-colonial. Because of their potential of anthropological heterogeneity, these are encounters that are meant to constitute the meshwork above. *But at the same time*, although I would endorse the ‘meshworks’ way of practicing anthropology to establish a new world of research connections, I am not sure if the new grids of interconnectivity will cease to carry traces if not a loud echo of an established pattern of *opposition*. Opposition alone may not reformulate anthropological positionings. In fact, I am persuaded by Kyong-Won Lee’s reading of Gayatri Spivak’s idea of ‘reverse ethnocentrism’ (Lee 1997: 105-106) to second a cautionary plea, so that the new kind of ‘meshwork’ connectivities do not become, (quoting Lee on Spivak),

“Tantamount to an aggressive but reactionary self-expressionism that, by revolving around the discursive orders of colonialism, tends to replicate, if unknowingly, the very Eurocentric terms and pre-suppositions constructed by projects of colonialism. [...] she (Spivak) sees beneath such nativist position an example of what Said calls ‘possessive exclusivism’, namely, ‘the sense of being an excluding insider’ by virtue either of experience (for instance, only women can write about women) or of method (only feminists can talk about women’s literature). This parochial specialization is for Spivak ‘an epistemological/ontological confusion’ [...] that falls into the pitfall of reverse ethnocentrism, a confusion that restricts the possibility of constructing an alternative discourse without reproducing or being assimilated into the Eurocentric mode of thought. Spivak contends that such an alternative postcolonial discourse is made possible only when the critic places himself or herself in an ambivalent position beyond the self/other dichotomy and constantly unlearns the norms and implications within and under which he or she is working.”

Reading the above for the argument here, a positioning beyond dualisms could articulate the questions: Are we always to be a prefix i.e. the post to an eternal suffix, i.e. the *colonial*? In effect, can there be another device that can meaningfully be used, through which the relationship of the metaphoric pair colonial/postcolonial assumes a new constitution, such that the epistemology of anthropological research becomes re-invigorated? Can this new formulation be in terms of difference, or rather a world of differences —where we re-enter the entanglements, the muddle of an infinite humanity-in-diversity, where we leave behind some labels that have created separations and oppositions rather than co-operations, or at least meaningful engagement? Across the threshold of anthropological frontiers, through a resolute heterogenizing of persistent fieldwork traditions there could be a new conceptualization that can aspire to dissolve those hierarchies that seemingly weaken the discipline. This attempt at a new conceptualization has to take a step back and away from the self /other dyad, to propose a formative layer of relationships that can make ‘meshworks’ a real potential.

The first step is to associate an epistemological orientation to the new formulation, an originary template with which pursue the discipline and here I place the undeniable core of anthropology, that is, the study of diverse human sociality.⁸ This is a conscious step that sheds the anchoring of a discipline’s birth in western colonialism and does away with this root metaphor and its manifestation in subsequent anthropological research. I am persuaded to argue that in the ‘new’ (changing) world of post-colonialism’s and transnationalisms, fluid socio-cultural landscapes and slippery ‘objects’, dispersed field sites and multi-sited ethnographies, the root metaphor needs to be re-articulated, or re-born, in terms of difference, and not only as a reversal. The meaning of this particular kind of difference will find its form through the following discussion —not as a resolved analytic but rather as a proposition, perhaps even a wishful speculation.

The moment of difference could begin with a transgression, a breaking away from limits that have been set in the anthropological encounter. The transgressive moment will come about when, in the contemporary present of an alleged new world, dominant anthropologies need not be the defining myth of origin that secure a relationship of power and inequity amongst the various loci of anthropological knowledge production. The obvious hegemonic enterprise of the colonial encounter and the knowledge produced thereby; the subsequent postcolonial criticism that reclaimed the native/peripheral voice and so on are all well acknowledged discourses, critiques and revisions in the story that the history of anthropology has so far narrated. If the generic world of dominant anthropology and its revisions can be re-directed as anthropology through individual encounters, then its reproduction can be achieved not through the labels that constrain each (center/periphery, self/other etc.), but rather each encounter is sculpted through its own trajectory of mutual discovery. In another way, the anthropological encounters of today, whether they be between centers and peripheries, or intra-center and intra-periphery, initiated from and to any which direction, their modality has to be accessed through a belief in idiosyncrasies not contrarities, through dialogue not insularity, through complementarity rather than incompatibilities and most of all, through intentional equitability rather than hierarchy. It is in this mediating juncture that I suggest the heuristic device of *difference*.⁹

Difference

The theoretical model that I am proposing here is inspired by a Deleuzian¹⁰ set of concepts, namely, difference and repetition. To reiterate once again, this is not intended as a therapeutic, which by mere conception, will resolve the problem. Nor do I propose ‘difference’ as an absolute value that stands by itself. It is a provisional notion that draws meaning, first, through moments of contingency and second, by reference to a series of principles, a few base ones amongst which are mentioned below.

The first principle is the *original quest* —the anthropological encounter (bereft of its colonial anchorage). The paradigm with which we recognize it so far is the colonial/post colonial one, where post-coloniality posits a counter to coloniality. A similar point can be made about other dualisms, such as

metropolitan vs. periphery, north vs. south and so on. If I were to evaluate the journey out of India as a reversal, as a counter movement that goes against the grain, then this movement continues to be trapped within the same paradigmatic model of origin, even if it is in terms of opposition. If a counter position or opposition is a defining relationship between the terms of the dyad, there is a certain immovable fixity to this. In that case, if this dyad is seen as general/universal one, every counter moment, every new instance of opposition remains, in the ultimate analysis, what Deleuze would call replaceable, substitutable instances of particulars. Each bears a similar relation to the core essence of the general—so, even the countering mode remains limited to the inter-changeable, substitutable instances of the particular. Deleuze, thus, states:

“[...] generality expresses a point of view according to which one term may be exchanged or substituted for another. The exchange or substitution of particulars defines our conduct in relation to generality. That is why the empiricists are not wrong to present general ideas as particular ideas in themselves, so long as they add the belief that each of these can be replaced by any other particular idea which resembles it in relation to a given word.” (Deleuze 1995: 1).

Applying Deleuze’s idea to the innumerable ‘particular’ post-colonial counter statements made within anthropology, the basic principle of oppositionality, in the ultimate analysis, reduces them to substitutable instances where each bears a similar relationship to the given generality of inequity.¹¹ The question that now presents itself is: How can this relationship between the particular and the general be fundamentally transformed?

The answer lies in a second principle that dispenses with the idea of reversal, of opposition in the general dyadic model of relationships in anthropology. Instead, another kind of generality is retained as the unique essence or concept of anthropology—and that is the study of diverse human sociality through the anthropological encounter. If this concept is assumed to be the general model (the originary paradigm) we can think of initiating particular instances, not in substitutable terms (of opposition) but rather, in the mode of a Deleuzian *repetition*. As he states,

“To repeat is to behave in a certain manner, but in relation to something unique or singular which has no equal or equivalent. And perhaps this repetition at the level of external conduct echoes for its own part, a more secret vibration which animates it, a more profound, internal repetition within the singular. This is the apparent paradox of festivals: they repeat an ‘unrepeatable’. They do not add a second and a third time to the first but carry the first time to the nth power. [...] as Péguy says, it is not Federation Day which commemorates or represents the fall of the Bastille, but the fall of the Bastille which celebrates and repeats in advance all the Federation days; or Monet’s first water lily which repeats all the others.” (Deleuze 1995: 1).

Through the fieldwork episodes I describe below, I will try and draw attention to how each encounter refers to the ‘concept’ of anthropology—its internal, profound vibration, each as an instance of repetition and not of substitution. Each episode carries forward the essence of the anthropological quest—the discovery of heterogeneity, of multiplicity—in human sociality. It allows for a possibility of infinite repetitions, i.e. the nth moments. Because there always remains a possibility of a new instance, there is also an implication of a recurring unknown. In this way, at least conceptually, there can be a transgression that breaks the limits set by the conduct of opposition.

The last principle that remains in this model is the idea of difference. Here again, I have drawn upon Deleuze’s idea of specific difference. First, by calling for anthropologies of difference, I am proposing that ‘maximal difference’ be established between the existing paradigm of anthropology and a contrary model, where the new contrary model is conceptualized with a changeover in the essence itself. If the

colonial paradigm was established on an essence or a concept of power and hierarchy, I am suggesting that the new model establish a maximal difference from the colonial model, with a relation of contrariety to the latter. Thus, “[...] contrariety in the genus is the perfect and maximal difference, and contrariety in the genus is the specific difference. Above and below that, difference tends to become simple otherness and almost to escape the identity of the concept.” (Deleuze 1995: 30).

We do not need to lose sight of the route by which the new model has been initiated —the line of reasoning to the new model or paradigm *is* the dominant model. At the same time, a breakaway can be established in terms of a difference from the concept itself, perhaps even a transgression, which allows for the release of a new series of repetitions which is unlike the series of substitutions that the colonial model forces us to. It is a movement from one kind of genus and its incumbent series of limited species to another kind of genus, which helps formulate another series of infinite species. In other words, we need not always be the other in a dyadic model, but become the agents themselves of carrying forward the essence of anthropology.

No doubt the abstract formulations of the above can provoke the reaction that nowhere in the above is there any place for the existing imbalances of power. In fact, by merely proposing a new formulation, nothing more than a denial or a silencing will be achieved. In effect, the ignorant dismissal of history can only be utopian. In response, it would be necessary to reiterate that the elaboration of the above contours of ‘difference’ is in fact proposed because of a cognizance of tropes of power, discursive or practical, transparent or opaque that continue to remain embedded. The separating away of a ‘genre’ of encounters ‘different’ from others in anthropology and in the mode described above is an effort to carve out a space because most other available spaces are tainted by power equations —ontologically, epistemologically and even materially. Some of these well mapped spaces have resulted either in reactive revisionisms, however subversive or in ‘other’ metanarratives of power (of nationalisms, local hegemonies); some more well traveled paths remain in the pursuit of endless hybrid or multiple positionings of the neo colonial world (whether effected by Eurocentric assimilation or by native appropriation). My proposition is that we start, at least in the sense of an anthropological encounter, by dismantling some of the codes that we operate under and lay out a disciplinary template which is neither a denial of history nor locked in a dyadic freeze, but rather create a movement aside and outside. The descriptions below may help in illustrating this kind of difference.

Institutional moorings

The fieldwork episodes that form the ‘evidence’ in the arguments here cannot be mentioned without a brief reference to the local context in which they emerge. Although anthropological fieldwork by itself has been a reasonable concern in India, as evident in the titles edited by A. Beteille & T.N. Madan (1975), M.N. Srinivas, A.M. Shah, and E.A. Ramaswamy (1979) and more recently by Meenakshi Thapan (1998), the palette of issues raised have paid scant attention to the implications of empirically studying societies outside one’s local universe. Nonetheless, the unquestioned credo was that anthropology in India is definitively about fieldwork, and second, the point of celebration is that India is no longer a field site for foreign researchers alone, Indian scholars have themselves been able to garner a vast body of empirical work on India.

One of the pressing concerns that issues such as the above become part of is the question of ‘Indian’ indigenous anthropology —should there be any? The local opinions reify the debates of the past two and half decades, which from different moments and places —including the peripheries—, have critiqued the possibility of configuring indigenous or national anthropologies. In India, there is sufficient agreement on the matter that there is no coherent ‘Indian’ anthropology as such.¹² In fact, to my mind the quest for it in the first place, is futile. While individual orientations and specific scholars have made their independent mark on the production of anthropological knowledge from the country, an attempt to constitute a national indigenous anthropology ends up as a rather vexing dilemma, not to mention a rather undesirable unknown.

Threading together the various nuances of this dilemma is the tenuous issue of knowledge production from the peripheries, as is in India. For instance, what does it mean to have gone from Delhi to Beirut in order to conduct anthropological fieldwork and then write a dissertation that will be submitted to a sociology department in an Indian University? The question is not merely about combining empirical data with theoretical sophistication. What is the theoretical framework that one should adopt in order to interpret, analyze and frame one's empirical 'data'. If my specific research agenda is best informed by contemporary theoretical reflections that have not emerged from a category of the indigenous (but alas, from theorizations emerging from the centers), should that be a predicament about my 'responsibility' as a student of social science in India? At the same time, I would have cherished the training, or even a meaningful point of entry to intellectual traditions that had been alive in the Indian subcontinent —ones that I could engage with not just as 'history for historians', as Dipesh Chakrabarty (2001:6-7) points out, but as ongoing theoretical concerns. Leaving such hopeful intentions to another time and opportunity, I have to return to one issue that I can meaningfully address, that of fieldwork abroad from India.

It is an issue shot through with additional complications. First, the category of the 'Indian fieldworker abroad' is not a very unproblematic definition. Second, how is one's own society defined? Does 'membership' to a national territory automatically imply 'knowledge' and 'intuition' about one's own culture? Does being Indian mean a special relationship to all matters Indian? As Indian anthropologists trained within, if we are to explore issue located outside our boundaries, do we carry anything specifically Indian that forms and illuminates our examinations or our analysis? Is there a local disciplinary orientation at all that can direct our movements in a given Indian way? To my reasoning, there is a practical impossibility and an epistemological conundrum in trying to essentialize any culture to its carrier, Indian or otherwise, especially in pursuit of contemporary anthropological research. Of course, there will be histories/genealogies, positions/ontologies that will mark the orientation of research and the subsequent production of knowledge, but a homogenizing label is neither possible nor desirable.¹³

Furthermore, one could argue that in a country as large and diverse as India, someone belonging to the northern states conducting fieldwork in southern India could face an array of 'cultural' novelties perhaps akin to those faced by Indian anthropologists abroad. The question is undoubtedly not so much about cultural distinction and affinity, or about geographical proximity and distance; but more about boundaries and frontiers that are created by the anthropological imagination. These few points obviously do not cover the complicated tangle of issues that constitute the debate on indigenous anthropology.¹⁴ However, these are the issues that influence formulations about 'Indian' anthropology and what fieldwork 'abroad' from India could imply. A summing up note to points such as these is best made with a statement made by M. N. Srinivas (1979:3), [...] [there are] very few field studies of other societies by Indian sociologists, and little appreciation of the problem of doing fieldwork outside India. This is unfortunate. *There can be no science of society in India without bringing to bear a comparative perspective, and this is possible only if Indian sociologists study non-Indian societies also.*" (My emphasis)

This view of what the science of society should accomplish in India clearly calls for a 'comparative' perspective and this is where the question of fieldwork on 'other cultures' becomes a necessity, if not a requirement. The gravity that comparison has in the anthropological world of peripheral locations relates to a crucial end, that of indigenous anthropology or that which Srinivas calls the 'science of society in India'. The true hallmark of competent anthropology as well as a valid claim to authoritative knowledge, allegedly, can come only when study of one's own is discovered through the route of the other. Once again, the might of 'classical' anthropology appears to have its crux in comparison. For instance, Louis Dumont is led to state his "[...] conviction that caste has something to teach us (Europeans) about ourselves [...] For instance, the India of caste and *varna*, teaches us hierarchy, and this is no little lesson." (Quoted in Madan 1982: 8).

Given this, (without committing to any graspable meaning of the 'other' and what constitutes comparison), can there be an internal evaluation of how the science of society in India has progressed? The answer, most likely, would be about the lack. At the same time, there cannot be a glossing over of the

enormous diversity and variety that the Indian context provides which in itself allows for a good approximation of the ‘other’ or of ‘comparison’, however that may be defined. But at the same time, however rich the internal diversity, the imagined community of ‘Indians’ does dull the possibility of a ‘real’ encounter with the ‘other’. The standards of analytical reference are liable to keep returning to what has been called “gatekeeping concepts” by Arjun Appadurai (1986) and described as,

“[...] a few simple theoretical handles (that) become metonyms and surrogates for the civilization or society as a whole: hierarchy in India, honor and shame in the circum-Mediterranean, filial piety in China are all examples of what one might call gatekeeping concepts in anthropological theory, concepts that is, that seem to limit anthropological theorizing about the place in question and that define the quintessential and dominant questions of interest in the region.” (Appadurai 1986: 357).

If I were to make the same point from the periphery, I would say that gatekeeping concepts are also largely responsible for setting the frame to the kind of issues and field sites that local anthropologists choose to apply their professional skills to. I am by no means suggesting that in India issues outside of caste, hierarchy, or small community studies of tribes or villages do not exist. Nor am I saying that the original theoretical metonyms for India i.e. her anthropological gatekeepers, have not been questioned and reworked. My understanding is that the possible existence of that frame has made the practice of fieldwork in India limit itself to its boundaries. It has constructed a paradigm by which studies of locales outside India, *based on direct fieldwork*, remain an irregularity and a sadly under-examined aspect of the discipline. Without doubt, there are several practical and technical factors (funding, local expertise, resources, job markets etc.) that have hampered a meaningful pursuit of ‘other cultures’ from India.¹⁵ But that does not entirely cover for the apparent lack of any interest in that direction, particularly when this lack may threaten to weaken the escalation of social anthropology in the peripheries.

Having said the above, however, I would have to come back to the driving force of my argument. In contemporary circumstances of how global cartographies have fragmented and fractured, at times to disperse and at other times, to accumulate around hegemonic parameters in ways that have moved far beyond the limitations of any dyad - the anthropological consciousness whether in India or anywhere else, needs to necessarily adapt meaningfully to changing cartographies in inventive and if, necessary transgressive ways. This is to say that it should not be so that ‘Indian’ anthropology and anthropologists negotiate the world and position themselves as erstwhile ‘peripherals’, but rather as another position amongst others. Once again, such a statement will immediately call on the fevered accusation about how it reveals complete ignorance, or denies the inalterability of power relations and inequities with utopian fantasies. By proposing a place for myself (and others like me in the ‘peripheries’) by which I can attempt to negotiate anthropological epistemologies outside of given dyads and other centered tropes, it would be ridiculous to suggest that I cease to be an ‘Indian’. Nor can I miraculously rise above the power imbalances that operate on me and those hegemonies that I myself participate and perpetuate in (by even speaking the English language, for instance, or using non-indigenous theory, or most probably be in a position of power vs. other regional Indian anthropologists). The point is how am I to be an Indian anthropologist —my answer lies in my strategy of difference which does not deny my participation nor does it deny my detachment from the ‘center’, it does not conceal my hybrid post-colonial condition as against some pure reclaimable pre-colonial form; rather it gives me a position from which to negotiate my ontological reality with epistemological innovation. The field experiences I describe below lead me to the pursuit of what I have called difference, a difference that can be framed in order to make for ‘other anthropologies/anthropology otherwise’. These experiences, to my mind, find a place in the cartography of anthropological knowledge production not only because they provide a counterpoint to the classical metropolitan paradigm of field sites, but also, in my argument, they make possible episodes of ‘anthropological encounters’ that anchor down the discipline to its necessary purport.

Dwelling within these experiences is what T.N. Madan calls the “form of consciousness which arises from the encounter of cultures in the mind of the anthropologist” (Madan 1982:5). They are

facets of discovery and inventiveness in the fieldwork experience that are entirely linked to the shifting of the classical fieldwork situation, but at the same time grasp an interior meaning of what the anthropological encounter is. They are facets that take us closer to what the anthropological encounter could be when it is bereft of the originary hierarchy, and as I expect to illustrate, when it focuses on the essentials of difference as well as the idiosyncrasies of diverse societies, research objects, their field sites and modalities of analysis. This is the essential displacement and decentralization of the anthropological consciousness, the *cogito* (Scott 1989), away from and beyond centered power, whether these centers are located amongst superior locations out west or amongst us, around the peripheries.

Crossing boundaries

My choice of Beirut as a field site ‘places’ me squarely in an ‘in-between’ space that is neither inside nor outside in the west vs. rest pair. At the outset, when I was beginning to think of my doctoral proposal and field site, the idea of ‘encountering’ an ‘other’ culture in person, much in the style of the classical ethnographies I had read was seductive. As I began my tentative steps towards such an enterprise, I learnt that it was not enough for me to produce an inspired proposal on any which location corresponding to a research agenda. My field location had to be designated so by a series of what can be best called “visa and clearance procedures” after Ferguson and Gupta (1997a: 11). They have pointed out that research permission, interests of funding agencies, intellectual debates and sub-fields within the discipline, undoubtedly echoing the limits already inherent in the discipline, create a predetermined array of field sites. My own predicament, unlike the Anglo-American vantage point was to target, not an array, but perhaps the only field site that could materialize from my own nexus of training, possible funding, research permission etc.

Interestingly, as I began corresponding with a few anthropologists at American University of Beirut, one suggestion that came my way was that my research proposal should involve a study of kinship amongst a given community, because my proposed area of investigation, i.e. post-war recovery could be too complicated to handle and should be left to local students! I am not very sure whether it was my ‘Indian origin’ that prompted a presumed affinity to kinship studies. In any case, with the fortunate coming together of funding, affiliation and access, Beirut indeed, was to be my field. The overall theme that I wanted to explore was, how does a city and its fragmented spaces and peoples, when emerging from a prolonged crisis, develop strategies of recuperation and recovery? At the end of a year’s fieldwork, I was able to sustain the core research agenda through articulations collected over multiple sites —neighborhoods and their residents—, state agencies and technical documents of reconstruction, material sites of architecture and archaeology, pasts and futures, spaces and times. It was an anthropological encounter that measured the leap between borders both social and sociological. The point that I will emphasize here is that this journey refracted my ontological ‘Indian’ subjectivity i.e. in terms of my cultural knowledge of a fraught multi-community society through the similar texture of another fragile society. My contexts were new, post-war reconstruction and recovery were not part of my ‘Indian’ experience, yet, as I encountered the palette of experiences, events and their narratives, my experience of alterity became a double sided mirror of dissimilarity and sameness.

The act of my going over to the cultural domain of Beirut did not establish an inherent ‘otherness’ or alterity. Moving from life in one urban context to another does have its set of changes. Beirut and Delhi are different in a host of ways, and therefore, as with any traveler or anthropologist, there is a newness to a number of little and big instances, yet there is a sense of sameness in the experience of contemporaneity. Interspersed in this ‘sameness’ is what I could call episodes that cull out a distinctive encounter, a form of consciousness, in which a particular sense of the self as well as that of an alterity comes into sharp focus. The first instance is my initial positioning in Beirut, which was my place among Lebanese students and other European scholars of social science in the institute that I was affiliated with. Alongside them, I seemed to form a third category, my presence was the ‘other’, non-western

'voice' in social science research. To the local scholars, I was bit of a puzzle. They thought it quite unlikely that I had no western institutional affiliation and also that I was capable of fluent spoken and written English —the reason for which obviously was the notion that good research and good English was the forte of Western institutions whereas India was presumably not a part of that. On one occasion, I was introduced as an English speaking and therefore, a thoroughly colonized Indian —undoubtedly accurate but ironic!

My positioning outside the circle of academia was a wholly different story. The general Lebanese regarded Indians as a part of the South Asian 'bank' of cheap industrial labour and domestic help that had found their way into Lebanon through the Gulf. A sense of wary curiosity came forth from several of my informants, unless my meeting was preceded by a recommendation from a known quarter. It was important for me to "go native" in a way quite different from what the native used to imply in anthropology. I was clearly matter out of place: here I was a native woman wearing the white man's shoes, walking the same roads that some of my 'first world' male colleagues would have, were they in Beirut. Clearly, an orientation has been reversed, but I was neither the (local) insider nor the (western) outsider, but rather, an in-between.

Eventually, I also had the opportunity of sharing some of my work with a few 'locally' placed academics and one particular instance seems significant where it was said, "your position as a non-Lebanese —non western observer, is crucial to the text. Your analysis avoids the superiority, false humility, or 'orientalist' point of view of westerners; in the same time it bypasses the self-righteous and unbalanced attitude of the insiders". Even beyond the 'insider-outsider' contest, I find it re-assuring that the language that mattered here was the text I had formulated through ideas that were born at home and then nurtured and given substance in the 'other culture'. They were contoured around my queries and my ethnographic discoveries. They constituted a social imaginary that appeared to touch a common ground of human interest. While my Indian-ness was not entirely forgotten, my agency here was the ability to communicate through a problem that was local but at the same time universal, a communication that set me up as a student of social science rather than anything else —perhaps this was a special feature of in-between-ness.

In my interaction with "informants", an example that catches the tone is one where a symbolic relationship was construed between my anthropologist self and that of the 'other,' which became an elaboration of what Marc Augé (1998: xvi) would call "double relativity" or "others also define what is for them 'the other'". It was an occasion about creating sense and meaning between 'others' where a bridge could be temporarily constructed in order to establish a linking over a social difference, a link that made *tolerance possible between differences*. This was an interview with a Christian resident of Hamra (one of the neighborhoods I worked in) whose sons had been kidnapped during the war by unknown Muslim militants. He had consciously made a decision not to join the many Christians who had fled to safer areas. For him, a secular existence had always been the creed and practice of the genuine residents of Hamra, i.e. the 'authentic' Muslims and Christians, inter-confessional hostilities were surely being imposed from outside. Even a suggestion of doubt on my part seemed to indicate to him a measure of my non-authenticity and my ignorance as a foreigner, an uncertain Muslim (as I had announced myself as a non practicing Muslim) from a different culture. In what seemed like a gesture to establish a ground from which to move from, he pulled out a copy of the Koran and started to recite the first verse, looking up to see if I could follow and recognize. It was one of the few I knew and I was able to recite along with him. From that moment on, some validity of my position, perhaps as a 'genuine Muslim', although distant, but belonging to a familiar category of those with good faith, rather than those very close but with bad faith and suspect, seemed to be established.

The differences between 'me' and 'them' turned up a new side —they were about discovering the *different manifestations of sameness*. Human pain, suffering, destruction, the desire to move on from a malignant past, the hope for a future are part of what I would include in what Clifford Geertz (1983: 36-

53) has called the ‘moral imagination’ which tricks the anthropological social imaginary into a paradox. This profound double world of anthropology brings together distance and affinity in a situation where,

“The differences do go far deeper than an easy men-are-men humanism permits itself to see, and the similarities *are* far too substantial for an easy other-beasts, other-mores relativism to dissolve. [...] anthropologists [...] [are] still possessed of the primitive belief that there is such a thing as life itself; and anthropologists such as myself, who thinks that society comes to be more than behavior – pursue their vocations haunted by a riddle quite as unresolvable as it is fundamental: namely, that the significant works of the human imagination [...] speak with equal power to the consoling piety that we are all like one another and to the worrying suspicion that we are not.” (Geertz 1983: 41-42).

This then was one kind of difference in sameness that fieldwork abroad was to mean for me. This was the core of the anthropological encounter. The Indian social imaginary finds nothing strange in sectarian differences. Mass violence, devastating social damage is also disturbingly familiar. Yet, encountering these facets in Beirut was a novel sensation. It was a separate and distinct event, separate even within the novelty of daily life in the field. In a sense, for me this essential episodic fragment of newness —was one of *difference* that my personal biography was to encounter in my anthropological journey. Once again, these fragments brought me closer, with unprecedented sharpness, through the route of another, to my ‘inside’ social conditions from which I was personally removed. But the critical note was that this sameness/difference in effect opened a window to understanding that locations, when not mired in the anthropological imperial cartography, can only be about heterogeneous differences rather than about hierarchies that slotted the observer in relation to the observed.

Subsequent to my fieldwork in Beirut, I have had the opportunity to be involved in fieldwork in Delhi, India where I live and work. My research plan was about exploring experiences of recovery amongst some members of the Sikh community, those who had survived one of the worst events of communal violence in India about 20 years ago. During the course of compiling the ethnography and writing about it, I was stuck by the affinities between Beirut and Delhi, contexts so different, but sharing situations that ‘spoke’ to each other. This was in no way about the commonality of the peripheries, nor is about a direct comparison; rather it was about the possibility of ‘reliability’, perhaps an epistemological reliability. To my mind, this was the potential that lay in stepping outside the grid of anthropological limitations and culling out new arenas of conceptualizations. In another way, the ability to find a resonance between Beirut and Delhi *did not*, in fact, suggest to me the possibility of clustering the alleged ‘non-west’ under given parameters while rejecting the ‘west’, but it did indicate that this was a way in which the morass of fetishized diversity or of absolute relativism could be given meaningful shape. In fact it could imply the coming together of the diverse, and relationships amongst the diverse which could lead to new epistemological spaces.

The cases I describe below are not of the same kind as my own experiences, yet the significance of these negotiations echo a similar tenor of relationships present in my fieldwork.¹⁶ These are experiences made significant by the amplification of the theme of difference where the classical (western) self - (peripheral) other relationship is turned on its head.

Roma Chatterji’s (RC) experience is related to a project initially conceived as a study of ageing and ‘social death’ in a western society, expressly motivated by the understanding that anthropologists do not study the West, particularly those nebulous areas that remain hidden in advanced capitalist societies. The fieldwork component was to be undertaken by Indian researchers placed within Dutch field-sites. RC focused on a home/ research institute for the aged. The process of formulating the project was not entirely smooth —partly accentuated by the discomfort expressed by Dutch scholars when faced with the prospect of having researchers from a developing country work on issues and field sites in their own ‘society’. Later into the project, when the project members made formal presentations, the same sense

of unease continued amongst academics, with queries and apprehensions that appeared to underline the sudden awareness of having become the objects of study rather than their authors, in a way a bewildered sense of being exposed, evaluated and eventually, threatened. Clearly, such a changeover in the delegation of anthropological authority could not be a painless process which by itself, marks a factor in this argument —one kind of resistance that any conception of world anthropologies will encounter are anthropologists themselves, especially those on either slot of the center or the periphery. I was struck by a special experience she underwent, with a partly paralyzed lady resident who had been admitted into the somatic section. For me, that illustrates the powerful content of a field relationship that eventually sustains the core of the anthropological encounter, regardless of anthropological boundaries.

This particular lady resident could not speak but would break into disturbing daily episodes of screaming —there was no way in which anyone could communicate with her meaningfully. RC, who helped in looking after her, knew about her love for chamber music and on one occasion of routine feeding and watching a television program of chamber music, RC reminded the lady about her past passion for music. Her face lit up and a friendship that went beyond everyday instrumental contact was established. In a moment of breakthrough, made more poignant and powerful by silence, a relationship of quiet gestures and gentle touches started —one that could pacify and soothe the lady unlike anything else before. It was this part of her interaction that led to the inclusion of ‘touching’ as part of the lady’s formal care regime. ‘Touching’, under normal circumstances, would have been left out because the ‘usual’ practice in the home amongst the somatic residents was that there should be no non-specific body contact, i.e. other than those involved in feeding, washing etc. This practice in itself was the result of a social need in that society to avoid infantilizing the aged and thereby reducing them to some stature. My point here is that the anthropological encounter is a profoundly human one, sometimes channeled through non-verbal communication as this one was, and there are ways in which these could become the ways of reaching the ‘other’ and then making that relationship a kernel of anthropological insight.

The power of relationships is also the point that Rajni Palriwala (RP) seeks to emphasize in her own experience. RP was part of a team that collaborated with a Dutch anthropologist at Leiden to study a state-society dynamic as contextualized in changing family models. In this project, a part of the motivation also came from a desire to question the perspective that kinship studies were almost always framed through western categories and then empirically explored in the peripheries. In this sense, it was an attempt to reverse the flow by having “kinship” examined by the peripheries rather than in them.

Through this project, RP sets a comparison between her earlier fieldwork in Rajasthan and her work in Leiden, The Netherlands. As an insider in India and Rajasthan, her immersion in the field came about as a gradual co-optation into a community space bounded both territorially and socially. In spite of a large range of ‘cultural’ differences, in the ultimate analysis, the fact of belonging to same country, the recognizability of one’s credentials made accessibility and acceptance easier and comfortable. The nature of a relationship that forms within the community space there becomes a function of these factors. Also, the anxiety of making mistakes is mellowed by the knowledge that returning, extending one’s stay or even starting over is not an impossible option. The conditions change entirely when the field is another country, another social universe, especially when it is about an ‘Indian’ in a “western” social universe. The question then is how do relationships form the anthropological quest in these situations?

Through her experience, RP holds that the politics of place or voice becomes somewhat diluted when the focus turns to relationships which are negotiated and sustained in urban situations where making contact is a highly fragmented and fleeting experience. The relationships that emerge in this context, as RP discovered, bring together a tension between what she calls the instrumental relationship part and expressive friendship part of an anthropological contact. As a stranger in a foreign world, the expected problem in all anthropological fieldwork is about finding relationships that is initiated by a difficult process of establishing credentials that are convincing enough for those who will participate at

its other end. But the real difficulty for RP wasn't about finding the relationship; it was more in terms of striking the right balance between the instrumentality that was the underbelly of the relationship *and* the expressive intimacy that her contact with 'informants' elicited. In my opinion, the openness with which some of her informants were willing to share their problems and insights spoke of their desire to privilege the topic (of 'single motherhood', for instance) of conversation rather than the alleged anthropological hierarchy that underpinned that interaction (Indian researcher-western 'subject'). The desire could have been partly explained by the probable lack of such opportunities of discussion on such topics in their busy, everyday lives, nonetheless, the fact remains that it is the blend of intimacy and instrumentality that bridged the distance between the ethnographer and the ethnograph-ed, and made the anthropological journey possible. Clearly, understanding kinship and familial relationships in different social universes will draw upon existing anthropological classifications and in RP's case, also find insights from a comparison with local 'Indian' categories. But a 'new' insight was possible when underlying hierarchies of anthropological locations (and research agendas) could fructify into an anthropological bridging (a relationship of difference) that could amplify the understanding of a given issue, in this case, kinship.

Radhika Chopra's (RaC) research amongst the publishers and writers of popular romance fiction in New York reflects Palriwalra's in terms of a comparison between field work inside and outside as well as the research object itself that mediates between the distances traveled. One feature was her bridging of differences between the familiar and the unfamiliar. 'Traveling' to a village in the Punjab, in spite of being a 'Punjabi' was of a far greater 'distance' than was her travel to New York. In the former, the contrast between her personal profile and the anthropological world that she encountered was far more acute than her affinity, in the latter, with the world of romance fiction in a Western milieu. New York provided a common language universe (English), a common life style (urban), and a familiar territory (romance fiction). It was about traveling a great distance to something familiar. In the Punjab, she had to learn the language, train herself to understand codes and norm that would govern a round the clock embodiment of 'otherness' in bodily gestures, in speech, in conduct and so on. In other words, a small distance to the greatly unfamiliar.

On one hand, it is the shared 'cultural' world that even allows RaC the comfort of an affinity with her research agenda in New York. Romance fiction was a common ground of popular culture. Yet, her perspective was separate from those entrenched in that very milieu in which the novels are placed. Blending together this affinity and separation and then creating an interesting ground of difference was, in my opinion, her choice of a path that could make the familiar strange, i.e., she chose to write a novel—a completely new skill with which to walk the paces of her anthropological queries. An immersion into the writing process meant understanding a familiar world differently—create western protagonists, conjure western situations or discover the intrigue of a city as the backdrop—by changing, for the purpose of the novel, from being one kind of 'native' of the exotic east to a native of the 'west' (in the world of romance fiction). It was again a blending of the research object with process that gave fieldwork here the crucial anthropological twist.

In all these encounters, I describe above there are inherent contrasts between them.¹⁷ My episode of traveling is not to the west. At the same time, the point I am emphasizing here is precisely a blurring of such boundaries by drawing attention to the individual paths traveled, the issues explored and the knowledge gained. Ageing, familial relationships, popular culture or strategies of recovery are areas that produce ethnographies that inform a wider body of anthropological understanding, potentially produced by and about anyone anywhere. Yet, the significance in these cases is the fact that the agency of production has moved in a direction different from the classical anthropological journeys. It is this change that allows for a tacking between new places and voices that ultimately creates the discursive terrain for a new anthropology.¹⁸ In the final evaluation, the emphasis is really about the individual contact points made—the complexity of relationships that is developed—the range of contact points being established and crucially, the new anthropological milestones covered through these multifarious pathways.

Conclusion —The metaphors and metonyms of Difference

At the end of these registers that I have opened, let me return to the proposed theoretical framework. These episodes of fieldwork are meant to provide a descriptive indication of the substance of an anthropological encounter. I must add here that an “encounter” is a term loaded with anthropological historicity, most of which echo the hierarchies of relationships mentioned frequently here. In attempting to negotiate with these inequities, I have suggested the culling out of an inside, a core to this historical concept, by attaching a special significance to these fieldwork episodes in a way that Deleuze calls the secret of empiricism.

“Empiricism is by no means a reaction against concepts, nor a simple appeal to lived experiences. On the contrary, it undertakes the most insane creation of concepts ever seen or heard. Empiricism is a mysticism and a mathematicism of concepts, but precisely one which treats the concept as the object of an encounter, as a here-and-now, [...] from which emerge inexhaustibly ever new, differently distributed ‘heres’ and ‘nows’ [...] I make, remake and unmake my concepts along a moving horizon, from an always decentred center, from an always displaced periphery which repeats and differentiates them.” (Deleuze 1995: xxi–xxii)

At the outset, when I talked about establishing a new paradigm of the anthropological encounter, in place of the colonial encounter through the idea of maximal difference, I was implying this kind of a creation of a new concept, a new generality, from which, ever new singular encounters can be repeated.

To reiterate, the fieldwork instances I have described effectively map an ever-expanding anthropological cartography of locations, each of which is constituted by a field site, a researcher and an object of research—a constitution which can be based on heterogeneity and not on established hierarchies of power. Of course, each of these locations, by far, would also implicate a place in the historicity of anthropological world making. At the same time, they are *singular substantiations* accommodated into a new general model such that a growing collective language of anthropological epistemology is created, which in turn, releases the potential of many more specific contexts of analysis. Or, in another way, particular, *different* anthropologies finds expression in a universe of anthropological knowledge where the defining criteria does not speak of center or peripheries as the nodes of production, but underscores individual contact points, singular interfaces, heterogeneous points of anthropological production.

The epistemology of difference, in social anthropology, helps to grasp the social imaginary that defines the contemporary world. It is an idea of ‘everywhere’ anthropology that I am arguing for through the idea of difference. Difference allows for research agendas to break loose from the rigidities of localized metaphors. Objects of research require an open-ended compilation such that contemporary social imaginaries are reckoned with. Of course, the foundational relationship that tacks the researcher to the research object is tied to the genealogy of location in which each is placed. However, if difference privileges the issues under examination and not a first evaluation of conditions determining hierarchical place and voice, there is a possibility that boundaries and insularities do not get reified, but rather that anthropological knowledge achieve meaningful fructification. The logic of place and location should receive attention, but anthropological energies should be further focused on finding new connectivities, new maps, diverse locations and somewhat veered away from the persistent category of peripheral/marginal or dominant/central professionals and issues in anthropology. Through the ‘politics and poetics’ of subject positionings and representations, the inevitability of diversity needs to be assured, but as compatible isomorphisms rather than as homogenized clusters or isolated singularities. In the ‘changing’ world that the discipline of anthropology faces today, its new credo has to be that of achieving some sense of equity between the researchers and the researched, as well as between researchers themselves.

Through the narrative above, my intention has been to explore the idea of difference on the terrain of fieldwork, the undisputed cornerstone of anthropology. I am persuaded to argue that such a gloss of difference on the anthropological quest is possible not only in the realm of fieldwork locations/field researchers but also in the larger modalities of anthropological knowledge production. This does not deny the geo-political colonial genealogy that the anthropological endeavor has its anchors in, but a continuation of these very anchors into all potentialities of the future may not be a very constructive idiom. Fernando Coronil's (1996: 51-51) search for a 'decentralized poetics' of a 'non-imperial' world where a future builds on its pasts but is not imprisoned by its horror is perhaps an echo of the anthropological desire that my passage out of India appears to nurture.

Notes

¹ I am grateful to Arturo Escobar for his sustained engagement with and encouragement of the ideas I propose in this essay. Needless to say, my work on this essay and other themes it generates is still in progress.

² It is impossible to make a succinct list of post-colonial thinkers. Nonetheless, Edward Said, Dipesh Chakravarty, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Aijaz Ahmad, Ella Shohat, Anne McClintok are some of the thinkers that form my background here.

³ For a critical overview of some of the 'post-colonial' positions relating to Manichean binarisms, see Kyung-Won Lee (1997).

⁴ See, amongst other, Gustavo Lins Rebeiro (2005) for a quick purview of the various ways in which anthropology as a discipline has been implicated in global discourse of power and iniquity.

⁵ Details on this group, members and connected documents are available at www.ram-wan.org. (20th April 2003)

⁶ I may have oversimplified the notion of Manuel De Landa's (1997) meshworks. For a brief exposition also see, De Landa's "Meshworks, Heirachies and Interfaces" available at: <http://www.t0.or.at/delanda/meshwork.htm>

⁷ For an overview of network theory and its potentialities into the social, see Arturo Escobar's "Notes on Networks and Anti- Globalization Social Movements", available at: http://www.unc.edu/depts/anthro/faculty/fac_pages/escobarpaper.html. (15th July 2003)

⁸ I understand that this need not be a legitimate definition that anthropology has historically granted. Anthropology is perhaps more accurately defined, historically, as a discipline born out of the discursive 'savage slot' that the west had constructed within its own historicity. See Michel Rolph Trouillot (1991). I am not ignoring this part of anthropology's genesis; rather, it remains beneath the interface that defines the center/periphery interface.

⁹ Arnold Krupat's 'ethnocriticism' seems to bear some resemblance to the idea of difference that I propose here. Focussing on differences rather than oppositions, he states "a position not quite beyond objectivism and relativism, but somewhere between objectivism and relativism" (Krupat 1992:27). Carrying my discussion onwards to a detailed reflection on objectivism and relativism, though necessary, may detract the single theme I hope to explain here. However, I expect that some insight to these concepts and their relation to my argument will be found implicitly.

¹⁰ The text referred here throughout is Giles Deleuze (1995), *Difference and Repetition*. The ideas that I use here are meant to be heuristic devices and this essay is not a sustained reflection on Deleuze's work at large.

¹¹ By reducing the widely nuanced post-colonial critique to a relationship of all encompassing opposition is perhaps a gross reduction. However, these nuances do not necessarily apply themselves to the task of proposing some conceptualisation *out of* limiting dualisms. My attempt here is to attempt such a formulation that can break away from categorical critiques to seek out a new terrain of potentialities.

¹² See, for instance, Satish, Deshpande, Nadini Sunder, Patricia Uberoi (2000).

¹³ In addition, there could be a good number of Indian students (although I personally do not know of too many) who enroll in doctoral courses abroad and are involved in research that lead them to conduct fieldwork in locations outside their home country. My contention, in this case, would continue to be that research positionings, when centered through the form and frame of anthropological metropolises, get operationalized significantly by their own economies of research.

¹⁴ See for example, Hussein Fahim ed. (1982) and Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira (2000).

¹⁵ In addition to S. Deshpande et al (2000), also see Satish Saberwal (1982) for a discussion on the mentioned factors.

¹⁶ I mention three researchers, positioned in India and their experiences of fieldwork in the west. They are all teaching at the Department of Sociology, University of Delhi. Although there are a few others (less than 10, to the best of my knowledge, in India) who fit the same profile, I have included these three because I was able to contact them for conversations on the matter. Secondly, their professional affiliation is with the same institute I was trained in and therefore provided some common ground with which to discuss the trajectories of research. Most of the discussion on their work is based on personal communication between the scholars and myself. Wherever the projects are described or discussed, the opinions and issues raised are solely that of the researchers I have communicated with, or myself. They do not represent the views of other members or participants of the team, where applicable. Also, space does not permit me to discuss in detail the funding patterns, the institutional orientations for such research in India—they are crucial components in the discussion of such research from India.

¹⁷ Several other issues relating to fieldwork abroad from India are common to all the projects and they remain to be discussed. Publishing work done in such reverse situations may encounter 'structures of dominance' in mainstream journals, as expertise is often an exercise of western privilege. The other point that I would emphasize is the way in which these foreign ethnographies are received locally—in our case, their reception within local forums.

¹⁸ In this essay, I have chosen to foreground a conceptual outline that frames the experiences so far available to me in my milieu. In this sense, I have not really made any distinction between forays from India to the west or to any other part of the world. In fact, I have tried to show the common ground amongst these varying journeys 'abroad'. Elsewhere, I emphasize the greater potential fecundity of encounters as experiences of difference rather than of hierarchy, especially when these encounters are between regions of the 'south' or within and amongst the anthropological arena outside of the conventional centres. Paucity of space prevents a further elucidation here, however, it goes without saying that a reversal of journeys from the 'rest' to the 'west' takes on a separate canvass than journeys amongst the 'rest'.

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