Identities, Diasporas, Cosmopolitanisms, and the Possibility of Global Humanities[*]

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Upon what account? said I.

—'T's upon the part of the king, replied the commissary, heaving up both his shoulders,—
—My good friend, quoth I—as sure as I am I—and you are you—
—And who are you? Said he.—Don't puzzle me; said I.
Laurence Sterne, *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*

"there is action, but there is not an agent"
Reported saying of Buddha, *The Way of Nirvana*

"I am a professional businessman, not a professional Pakistani."
Stephen Frears/Haneef Kureishi, *My Beautiful Laundrette*

"Inside every gook there is an American waiting to be born."
Stanley Kubrick, *Full Metal Jacket*

Upon entering the area of uncertainty and contestation my topic opens, I light four candles to guide my first steps: The first is from *Tristram Shandy*, where Tristram is hailed by an agent of the post office with a demand in the name of the king. Tristram tries to challenge it with the most certain evidence we have, that of our personal identity, and finds himself lost when asked to produce it: ordinary language crumbles into the philosophical abyss. The second is basic to Buddha's teaching that identity is an illusion and the Self does not exist. This is repeated in a milder form, with trembling, in David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*. The third, uttered by a Pakistani slum landlord, Nasser Ali, epitomizes the issue of our multiple identities, the basic theme of Amartya Sen's book, *Identity and Violence*. The fourth, uttered by an American general in Vietnam over

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dead Vietnamese bodies can be seen at the heart of the US' democratizing mission. It is also at the heart of the modernizing mission of all nation-states. A recent news item from India: the state of Chhatisgarh, where the aboriginal people are battling the Indian state as it facilitates the destruction of their forests and lands by multinational corporations, has banned the aboriginals from carrying their sickles, bows and arrows, the traditional tools of their forest life, as these could be used against the enforcers of state violence.

Because of its social and political urgency, what concerns us about identity is not the question of personal identity, about which most of us seem comfortable, but group identity, and particularly the issue of its context-specific salience. This is what has produced the politics of identity that many view as emerging from the 1960s, beginning with the focus on race, gender, and sexuality in North America, and proliferating since the 1990s. Identity politics has been criticized from the right and the left: from the right because it threatens privilege and national solidarity, and from the left because it fragments the emancipatory struggle and produces a reformist rather than transformative politics. Sometimes identity politics produces pure silliness, as in the recent controversy over the Bank of Canada's 100 dollar bill draft, which depicted a scientist that the public perceived as an Asian stereotype. Sometimes it produces the tragic waste of opportunity frittered away in symbolism: In the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, a Dalit (untouchable) woman, Mayawati, became Chief Minister, creating great hope for the deeply oppressed Dalit population of the state. But the Dalit population had to be satisfied with mere pride at the thousands of statues Mayawati erected to Dalit heroes, herself included.

We are also cautioned within anthropology that the "ideological and institutional conditions of neoliberal modernity" have created a global "identity machine" for the production

of identities. An example of such production, it has been argued, is Nepal's Theravada Buddhists, who since the 1990s have called for political recognition of a group based in the nonexistence of the Self.

But this paradoxical example, read another way, shows the production of identity within the political contour of power. Political identities are agonistic and emerge because an imbalance of power shows possibilities of change. In the context of Nepal, the armed struggle waged by the Maoists challenged the hegemony of the Hindu, Brahmin-Hill elite. The Maoist advocacy of a constitutional structure including representation of Nepal's ethnic and religious identities enabled even Buddhists to seek recognition within a state identified as a Hindu kingdom.

Initiated by the work Erik Erikson in 1950s, the study of identity that developed looked back to the work of William James, whose insight that people have as many selves as people who recognize them, is basic to understanding identity today. Identity is relational and people have multiple identities because they occupy different positions in society. This is the basis of Amartya Sen's argument in *Identity and Violence* about the possibility of overcoming the violence produced by confrontations of identities.

Identity theory as presented by Peter Burke and Jan Stets sees identity as a construction that names the multiple agencies that we occupy in our social roles and group affiliations. These perform—produce and reproduce—the social structure within which they operate, but also are open to change because performances always leave an interpretive gap. Identities, whether group based or personal, are embedded in social relations.

Echoing this understanding in the light of "critical realism" and cultural theory, Satya Mohanty and Linda Martin Alcoff argue, in *Identity Politics Reconsidered,* that identities are no less real for being socially and historically situated constructions. Identities are context-specific ideological constructs that are, precisely for that reason, non-arbitrary references to the social world. The question about them is not that they are constructions but what difference different constructions make.

Let me illustrate this last point with a story of India as a nation-state (or "state nation" as it has been more accurately described) through two songs that engage in the construction of its identity. The 1955 Bombay film, *Shree 420/Mr. 420,* opens with Raj Kapoor as a Chaplinesque tramp marching to the city of Bombay, singing, "My shoes are Japanese, These pants English, The red hat on my head is Russian, But still my heart is Indian." This celebration of a hybrid identity produced by trade circuits, colonial history, and internationalist ideology is one of the most popular songs of Indian cinema and an unofficial supplement to the official anthem of India, a Rabindranath Tagore poem that produces the nation as a composite of multiple linguistic and religious identities. This is the official identity India tries to maintain at the cost of deploying vast military resources to defend its borders. At the same time a major national party, BJP, and its powerful civil society affiliates would like to transform the national identity into a homogenous Hindu nation. As for Bombay, the city that stands for the country in Raj Kapoor's song and film, Arjun Appadurai has shown that from the 1970s to the 1990s, right wing Hindus have used regional chauvinism and nationalist hysteria to ethnicize and rewrite Bombay's cosmopolitan urban space as sacred, national, and Hindu. Perhaps the most fundamental battle in India today is over the construction of its national identity: whether the identity proposed at its formation can be authenticated in practice, or whether it should be reconstructed to affirm Hindu hegemony.

Group identities are powerful because group affiliation offers the distinction of being inside a boundary from which others are excluded: It enhances self-worth, reduces uncertainty, and gives a sense of belonging, value, recognition, approval, and power, albeit through as sense of superiority to the other. Colonial naming creates multiple categories of homogenized others for the purpose of administration, and racial naming establishes hierarchy.

As we know, resistance to subordination usually involves the reinscription of the given name, rewriting "Red Indian" as "First Nations," and "Negro" as "Black" or "African American." There is a less familiar story that powerfully shows the politics involved in naming and resistance outside the colonial frame. The Indian caste system names about 25% of the country's population "achhut/untouchable" or "pariah/outcaste." The British first named this group "Depressed Classes," and in 1937 changed the name to "Scheduled Castes," which is still the legal name for more than one thousand caste groups that, according to the constitution of independent India, deserve special rights due to historical injustices. Gandhi, who supported the caste system but wished to ameliorate the condition of the untouchables, popularized the name "harijan," or "children of god," for them. But this benevolent nomination was never accepted by the untouchable community. In the 1970s, a group drawing inspiration from the Black Panthers, named themselves "Dalit Panthers," and popularized the name "Dalit," meaning "crushed." This name has become so widely accepted that the Government of India, which found it being used interchangeably with "Scheduled Castes" in the administration, had to ban its use in official documents.

One of the most well-known acts of identity creation by naming in recent years has been Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" theory. Huntington's basic argument is that with the

end of the Cold War, conflict is no longer generated by ideology, but civilizational identity, the world's division into distinct identities of the West and the Rest, with the West identified as the Christian civilization, and the Rest further divided between the Hindu, the Muslim, and the Buddhist. A great deal of what has happened in the world in the past decade has been explained in these terms. Casting the Muslim as the enemy of Western Civilization is, of course, not new: Edward Said has definitively traced the long history of European identity construction in opposition to Islam. But since September 11, 2001, the current regime of Islamophobia that makes it acceptable for the NYPD to subject New York's entire Muslim population to surveillance, that makes racial profiling normal in the US and Canada, indicates a new level of civilizational othering.

Yet, as Sen has argued, these civilizational categories are crude and ahistorical. They require overlooking a lot of differences and erasing a lot of history. To see India as a Hindu civilization, for instance, requires the erasure of more than a thousand years of history when Buddhism was the dominant religion in India, the long Muslim presence, the history of Christianity, and the very significant presence of Sikhs, not to mention the extreme diversity of beliefs and practices among those who identify themselves as Hindu.

Sen argues that the construction of civilizational identities as discrete and closed entities is untenable because of the heterogeneity of practices within all civilizational blocks, the circulation of knowledge and practice between them, and the parallel existence of values and concepts within different cultures. At the turn of the 16th century, Mughal emperor Akbar promoted religious freedom, considered a key aspect of Western civilization today. One might add, it was also practised in Andalusia in the tenth-century court of the Umayyads. As well, in 604 CE, more than

four hundred years before the Magna Carta, the Buddhist prince Shotoku instituted decision-making by public discussion in Japan.

As identities constructed within the social weave are the reality we live by, any risk to our identities from social change produces severe anxiety. Racist anxiety shows this very clearly: For example, a pin sold in Steveston, British Columbia in the 1980s showed a racist fear of losing identity privilege. It depicted a group of Sikh, Black, and Asian figures towering over a White figure with the slogan, "Who is the minority now?" On another level, when the Minister of Immigration in Canada declares a ban on the wearing of veils at citizenship ceremonies on the grounds that showing one's face is essential to being Canadian, it conveys anxiety regarding national identity produced by Muslim difference. A similar—though a good deal more violent—defence of identity at the site of a woman's face takes place in Pakistan or Indian-held Kashmir when Islamists, fearing contamination of their identity by the West, throw acid on women who appear in public without a veil. It is well known that fear of identity breaches through contamination has produced elaborate rules of caste, including untouchability, and theories of degeneration through miscegenation resulting in apartheid.

Identities surely face their most severe challenge in the displacement across spatial and cultural borders producing what has come to be known as diaspora. Though the term "diaspora" was originally used exclusively for Jewish exile, seen theologically as punishment for failing to live by the Laws, but with the promise of return if the Laws were obeyed in exile, it was extended in the 1960s to include the transportation of Black slaves, and then to include all refugees and economic migrants, whether compelled or voluntary. This goes with the recognition that diasporas are extremely diverse.

It is usual to make a distinction between exile and diaspora. Exile is the condition of being expelled by force or being compelled to seek refuge from persecution. It is seen as temporary, a condition of painful separation and longing for return to the homeland, while diaspora is commonly understood as of condition of negotiation between cultures, of adjusting to living in a new land with awareness of an original homeland. Edward Said has given voice to the Palestinian experience in his poignant description of exile as "the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: Its essential sadness can never be surmounted" (173), which no doubt expresses the feelings of many other exiles. But the distinction between exile and diaspora is not strong. The Jewish experience, for one thing, would go against it. As would the experience of the Parsees, the Zoroastrians who fled Muslim persecution in Persia, seeking refuge in India without longing for return, but retaining their distinct identity through religious and cultural practices.

Diasporas carry marks of various degrees of trauma according to their origin and history: At one end of the spectrum of violence is the Black diaspora, and at the other, the diasporas of economic migrants. Diasporas are heterogeneous, and have extremely diverse connections to lands of origin, depending not only on origin, but also on generational distance from it. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin have also included colonial European settlers who recreate their homes in the land of their settlement as diaspora, so that the term now seems to include most people.

However, there is also an exclusionary attempt. While some distinguish between creolization as the creation of a new identity that is severed from an old identity, and diaspora as retaining a double identity, others like Stuart Hall see diaspora as a creative condition producing creolization and hybridity. Using the term 'hybridity' metaphorically, Hall reserves it for the

production of new identities as Black and Caribbean hybrid identities while denying it to the Jewish diaspora:

> […] diaspora does not refer us to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return . . . This is the old, the imperializing, the hegemonizing form of 'ethnicity.' . . .Diaspora identities are those that are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference." (Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Monghia, 130).

Hall is representative of celebrating the creative potentiality of the hybrid in postcolonial theory, in which lost origin is recovered through a creative project. Against the sense of loss in exile, postcolonial theory offers the utopian possibility of creating new identities. Though this is culturalist, it has historical ground. Some homes are lost forever, and some returns only put others in exile. Hybridity is the creative potentiality within loss. The Guyanese novelist, Wilson Harris, imagined it as an inverted tree with its roots in the air. Homi Bhabha, addressing the migrant's position, theorizes a 'Third Space' for the creative condition of in-betweenness, transit, and translation. This diasporic condition is not being in two places at once but liminal.

But this is far from the whole story as many diasporas or fragments within them are actively engaged in the politics of their homelands, practising what Benedict Anderson has called "long distance nationalism." It is well known that the Jewish diaspora promotes the interests of the state of Israel. But we could look at some less familiar examples to see the possibilities. The Tamil diaspora from Sri Lanka is united in the cause of defending Tamil rights in their homeland. The Bangladeshi diaspora in Vancouver is passionately divided between the supporters of the two major parties in Bangladesh. The Pakistani diaspora is divided between Pakistani nationalists of various kinds and those who support Sindhi and Balochi nationalisms. The Indian diaspora is enormously complex and splintered. There are Hindu nationalists who collected funds to launch

the attack on the 16-century Babri mosque in 1992, set up a Ram temple in its place, and continue to promote the transformation of the Indian national identity. Sikh nationalists who, working from diasporic centres such as Vancouver, wanted to set up the Sikh state of Khalistan, were responsible for the Air India bombing. But there is also strong opposition to these nationalisms. It is also only in diaspora, and thanks largely to the internet, that there is an attempt to create a South Asian identity that goes beyond the borders of nation-states to address the issues of justice and peace common to all.

If this is the homeward political face of the diaspora, its hostward face is engaged with issues of presence in the host country in relation to policies on immigration, refugees, and integration, assimilation and recognition, which are covered by the term "multiculturalism." Clearly diasporas want more open and non-discriminatory policy regarding immigration and refugees, particularly from their homelands, while nation-states regulate these according to the needs of capital, traditionally with favour weighted toward Europeans. Of course, everyone seeks recognition, as it is fundamental to the sustenance of our identity, whether we seek it for our difference through multicultural integration or by erasing our difference through assimilation. The question here is whether a government recognizes difference, respects it, and creates a non-discriminatory environment for coexistence and integration with the host body, or requires the erasure of difference for assimilation within the host. Canada has wisely chosen the former path, but ongoing struggles to eliminate discrimination and resist assimilationist tendencies are still required.

There are problems with recognition and respect because they can essentialize difference. Some questions like female genital mutilation practiced and respected within certain communities

may be relatively easy to deal with, but the proposal to recognize Sharia law on family and business matters since Jewish law is recognized in these areas is less easy. There is the risk that recognizing and respecting difference will create cultural boxes and entrench the most conservative practices and values in diasporic communities. Values are always contested within communities, and multicultural practice has to be cautious not to favour conservatism, which grows in the face of identity risk.

A diasporic community is never wholly free from risk. The Japanese diaspora in Canada and the US bears witness to this. But one might look at a few less familiar examples from recent times. One is from Detroit, Michigan, where a large Arab population had assimilated, producing a US Senator, Union officials, and a leader of industry. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, Arabs were presented in the media as a threat because of "divided loyalties." Subsequently, in Detroit's Dearborn area, where approximately 30,000 Arabs live, Arab neighbourhoods were referred to as "ghettos" and "enclaves," and non-Arabs started to address their Arab neighbors as "you people."

In July 2012 there was an outbreak of violence against Muslims from East Bengal/Bangladesh settled in Assam. Thousands were killed, hundreds of villages were burned, and some 400,000 people were made homeless. The rage against the Bengali diaspora was supposedly directed at illegal immigration from Bangladesh. Yet the Bengalis have been in Assam since 1828, when the British annexed it and encouraged poor peasants from East Bengal to settle there.

There is a similar story about the Rohingyas of Myanmar, a group of Muslims from Bangladesh encouraged by the British to settle in Burma. They were massacred by the Japanese

during the war because they supported the British and since have been subjected to periodic fits of severe violence that has forced them to flee to Bangladesh. Thousands currently live in camps in Bangladesh. Bangladesh wants to send them back to Myanmar, but Myanmar, which has some hundred thousand Rohingyas in camps, does not want them either. Nearly a million Rohingyas settled in diaspora by colonial administration are lost between nation states.

We all know that the global flow of capital and the neoliberal hegemony of the last 25 years have produced a world with an unprecedented movement of people and circulation of information. There are more than 200-million migrants in the world who, according to a World Bank report of 2007, have sent $250 billion in remittances. Professionals from the Global South migrate to the Global North for better opportunities than available at home. As well, vast numbers of people from the Global South work as migrant workers in the Global North or more economically prosperous areas of the Global South. These migrants, whether privileged ex-pats or oppressed farmworkers, domestic workers and labourers, are temporary residents of global spaces. There are also a vast number of people who are in transit, usually at extreme risk, between a lost or abandoned home and a hoped-for host land.

Given this linkage between global economies and spaces, maintained through the rapid flow of finance capital, the hegemony of neoliberal ideology, and global institutions for the preservation of capitalism such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, the movement of peoples, the circulation of information, and the exchange of knowledge, it is not surprising that the idea of cosmopolitanism has become urgent and has been transvalued since Hitler used “rootless cosmopolitans” as a code for “Jews.” There has been a great deal of writing on cosmopolitanism in the last twenty years, from various points of view.

In his book on cosmopolitanism David Harvey gives a long quotation from Thomas Friedman's *The World is Flat* as an example of neoliberal utopianism. Friedman has an epiphany when he sees the two towers of IBM and Microsoft across the golf course in Bangalore and calls his wife to say: "Honey, the world is flat." Free market globalization and technology have created a world of

> digitalization, virtualization, and automation of almost everything. . . .we are entering a phase when more people than ever before . . . are going to have access to these tools . . . Everywhere you turn, hierarchies are being challenged from below or transforming themselves from top-down structures into more horizontal and collaborative ones. . . . Henceforth, more and more economies [will] be governed from the ground up, by the interests, demands and aspirations of the people, rather than from the top down by the interests of some narrow ruling clique. (51)

This should caution us to refer to "cosmopolitanisms" in the plural.

The dominant idea of cosmopolitanism today is that derived from Kant, as expressed in his essays, "The Idea of a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose" and "Toward Perpetual Peace." Kant's relevance to the world at this time of so much ethnic violence and so many wars has been powerfully advocated by Martha Nussbaum, who has traced cosmopolitanism to Diogenes, the Cynic in 4th century BC. Diogenes, who declared himself "a citizen of the world" rather than the Greek polis, in terms of which of Greek males identified themselves, influenced the Stoics, whose work, particularly that of Cicero, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius, lay behind Kant's vision of a politics based on reason rather than patriotism and group sentiment, a universal rather than communitarian politics. Nussbaum uses this idea to challenge Richard Rorty's influential 1994 *New York Times* article, which advocated American patriotism as an antidote to divisive identity politics ("Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," Wallace and Held, 155-156). She

proposes an educational reform based on the Stoic ideal of concentric circles of identity that expand outward from the self, family, and the local to the wider world. Such an education, she argues, would teach more about ourselves by looking at the world, enable us to seek cooperative solutions to international problems, and recognize our moral obligations to the rest of the world.

Nussbaum does not acknowledge the obvious limitations in Kant's progressive notion that humanity is necessarily and naturally developing in rational maturity from the historical condition that shows only evidence of "folly and childish vanity, and often of childish malice and destructiveness" (Brown and Held, 17). Maturity, according to Kant, will bring about the perfect balance between the natural unrestrained selfishness of the individual and the discipline necessary for social existence, to create the utmost dynamism of culture within a national constitution nested within international law. This maturity will spread from the European centre to the rest of the world. We are less confident about this Eurocentric universal reason, although it is necessary also to recognize that its antithesis in Heideggerian anti-cosmopolitan thinking of Being is equally Eurocentric in affirming philosophy and science to be exclusively Greek and European property. It seems to me that the prayerful attitude of Rabindranath Tagore toward cosmopolitanism is more convincing: "Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high/Where knowledge is free/ Where the world is not broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls/Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit/ Into that heaven of freedom My Father let my country awake." In his Bengali identity Tagore should have addressed Mother rather than Father. But the Mother had been appropriated by nationalists, who identified her with the nation and adopted the anthem, "Bnade Mataram" (I worship thee, Mother), so that the cosmopolitan Tagore turned to Father.

Cosmopolitanism often produces a lonely condition against the warmth and passion of communitarian and nationalist life and politics, as Tagore showed in his great novel, *Gharey Bairey* (*Home and Abroad*). Nussbaum mentions that Diogenes referred to his citizenship in the world as a kind of exile and finds a "boundless loneliness" in the writing of Marcus Aurelius and his American followers, Emerson and Thoreau (Brown and Held, 161). Anthony Appiah guards against this loneliness and potential aloofness of reason with the concept of "rooted cosmopolitanism," basing it on his experience of the Asante community in his home in Ghana. This is also compatible with the Stoic notion that we all belong to two communities, that of our birth and that of argument, as presented by Nussbaum (Brown and Held, 29).

But Appiah's attempt to reconcile community and national roots with universal responsibility, and Habermas's argument for a postnational "constitutionalized world society," visible to him in a reformed United Nations, as viable alternatives to nation-states that have lost their constitutional legitimacy under the "neoliberal economic regime" (Brown and Held, 276), both suffer from what Harvey, following Chomsky, has called "military humanism." In proclaiming the "duty of the international community to protect the population of a criminal or failing state against its own government" (270), Habermas not only uses the contaminated term, "international community," which has come to mean no more than the US and its allies but also legitimizes such actions as in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, and the prospect war against Iran.

But the most serious criticism directed at constructing a Kantian cosmopolitan world order is that it would operate within the limits of the nation-state, the neoliberal human rights regime of individual as against collective rights, and a horizon from which revolutionary transformation has been excluded. I do not think this can be denied. But perhaps that is not a reason for despair. It is

still possible to work with the instruments at hand within the limits of the historical horizon, while developing solidarity across borders for social change, and looking for alternative cosmopolitanisms beyond Eurocentric structures.

An alternative narrative of cosmopolitanism is offered by Sheldon Pollock, who suggests that the current order of vernacular, local communities with their distinct social and political identities was historically created over the last two millennia out of older cosmopolitan orders of the Latin and Sanskrit worlds. Communities are constructed through emulation and exclusion, but present themselves as indigenous by ignorance or suppression of history. Of the two older cosmopolitanisms preceding vernacular communities, Pollock sees Latin/Roman cosmopolitanism as imperialist and hegemonic, erasing difference as it spread out from the centre. By contrast, Sanskrit cosmopolitanism was decentred, voluntary, and enabled sites such as Java and Angkor to be within the Indian world. South Asian cosmopolitanism comprised a synthesis and circulation of a wide range of cultural and political practices across a vast space, and showed no interest in the origin of language and peoples, which obsessed Europe. The notion of "mother tongue," with the sense of deep biological attachment, and the related notion that "languages make peoples"—that one might add have an enormous importance in South Asian politics today—were introduced to South Asia with European contact.

All such accounts of the construction of social identity, including what Hobsbawm and Ranger called "The Invention of Tradition," are valuable as an antidote to the intensity that is current in various kinds of nativism, although they may not have much practical force. But at least an education in global humanities can put up a resistance to this passion. It is, however, not very comforting to consider the opposition of imperialist Latin and decentred Sanskrit

cosmopolitanisms since it translates in today's world to the opposition of McDonald and English cosmopolitanisms, both in the service of neoliberal globalization. It might be better to work toward a multilingual culture.

There is a more promising path to practice in Walter D. Mignolo's distinction between globalizing designs as managerial and homogenizing, and cosmopolitan projects as resistant and emancipatory, with a further distinction in the latter, between projects conceived within the historical globalizing regimes of Christianity, of Enlightenment colonialism, and 19th century imperialism, and the possibility of a "critical dialogical cosmopolitanism" as the emancipatory project responsive to the regime of neoliberal capitalism. This critical dialogical cosmopolitanism would escape the horizon of the current regime by being located in the colonial difference that marks the border of modernity/coloniality that has constituted our world since the 16th century colonization of America. Critical dialogical cosmopolitanism challenges the hegemonic cosmopolitanism of the Western heritage grounded in abstract universalism from the positionality of the subaltern, the colonial difference, the borderland that has been constitutive of the modern/colonial world. In other words, it is a cosmopolitanism that does not merely update the universals of benevolent inclusion, democracy and human rights but escapes the various civilizing missions of the West by a demand from below for recognition and engagement in dialogue. It is a transformative ethical and political project grounded in epistemic diversity, of diversity as a universal project.

Mignolo gives the example of the different use of the term "democracy" by the Zapatistas and the Mexican government as a place of dialogic engagement for the development of critical dialogic cosmopolitanism. I would like to offer a parallel scene from India to pose a question.

Aboriginal people under the leadership of the Communist Party of India (Maoist), which is banned by the Government of India, are engaged in armed struggle across one third of India. They exemplify the subaltern, speaking (to the extent that severe censorship will allow their voice to be heard) and acting against the modernizing/colonizing state that is also in the absolute grip of neoliberalism. These most downtrodden people in India are fighting for their rights to the lands, rivers and forests where they have lived from time immemorial against "development." In terms of Habermas's requirement of constitutional legitimation through the provision of social justice, clearly the Indian state has forfeited its legitimacy in the service of globalized capital. Does the project of critical dialogic cosmopolitanism demand of us an ethical and political solidarity with the Adivasis/Aboriginals, at least to the extent of demanding an end to the ban on the voice of the party that leads them? Can there be dialogism across a ban?

There is no certainty regarding the viability of any cosmopolitan project. But I find great hope in Derrida's reflections on hospitality and forgiveness in the context of a world in which an increasing number of people seeking refuge are met with increasingly hostile gatekeeping by states. As one would expect, Derrida interrogates these concepts and finds the aporia, or impossible place, at their core. Hospitality is coextensive with ethics, which is being at home, within one's dwelling, of being with oneself and others. Kant, says Derrida, recognizes its fundamental importance in his statement that "The law of cosmopolitanism must be restricted to the conditions of universal hospitality" (46). He first seeks "to extend the cosmopolitan law to encompass universal hospitality without limits" as the condition of perpetual peace. But then he restricts this only to the right of visitation and makes residence conditional on a treaty between states. The law of hospitality is unconditional but everywhere it is compromised in the laws of states. This is not a cause for despair but requires a continuous effort to negotiate between the a priori of the Law of

unconditional hospitality and the historical possibility of reforming the conditional laws, without which effort the Law of hospitality would remain a pious and irresponsible desire.

Similarly, Derrida discovers the aporia at the heart of forgiveness and the necessity of leaping across the abyss: forgiveness is in principle unconditional and has meaning only when it applies to what is unforgivable; yet within the very discourse in the Western tradition as well as in practice, forgiveness is always conditional, hence not forgiveness. Derrida's conclusion to this essay is inspirational:

> One is never sure of making the just choice; one never knows, one will never know with what is called knowledge. The future will give us no more knowledge, because it itself will have been determined by that choice. It is here that responsibilities are to be re-evaluated at each moment, according to the concrete situations, that is to say those that do not wait, those that do not give us time for infinite deliberation.

I want to end with a story: an Iranian-Canadian filmmaker met a representative of the Dr. Hari Sharma Foundation for South Asian Advancement at a Humanities Institute symposium and told of his desire to make a film on Phoolan Devi, an untouchable woman who had taken to banditry after being gang-raped by upper caste landlords. He had discovered Phoolan Devi during research for a film on the women's movement in Iran, been inspired by her struggle for justice, and wished to correct the misrepresentations in the existing filmic representation. He was encouraged to apply for funding from the foundation and received funds to facilitate his research. This connection across several borders in solidarity with the oppressed was made at the site of an argument community on unceded Coast Salish territory. Perhaps this is an example of possible cosmopolitanism. I acknowledge with reverence the unbounded hospitality of Aboriginal people toward the strangers who came in boats long ago and to all migrants to their land that has enabled

this practice of a possible cosmopolitanism. Perhaps in them we will find the forgiveness of the unforgivable that is the only true forgiveness.