Subaltern Biopolitics in the Networks of the Commonwealth[1]

Sourayan Mookerjea, University of Alberta, (Edmonton, Canada)

Abstract: *This essay plots an encounter between two insurrective characters: The subaltern and the multitude. Both figures articulate a politics of the common and so name collective bodies of resistance and opposition to neoliberal led processes of globalization. As such, the disjuncture between the theoretical and political registers from which these two concepts of agency emerge demand reflection. The essay first critically discusses Hardt and Negri's (2009) concepts of biopolitical production and the common. The second section takes up the figure of the subaltern tracking the vicissitudes of this conception of agency. The third section, based on field research in 2006 and 2010 at a software technology park in the suburbs of Kolkata, India (Rajarhat New Town), locates both figures of multitude and subaltern at a specific site of production and its politics. The focus here is on a description of the complex structure of exploitation on which Kolkata's articulation with the world economy rests via IT outsourcing. The final part of this essay argues that multitude and subaltern, as mediatory allegorical figures, pose a narrative form problem without generic solution. Rather, the experimental social movement learning process that the left today needs to undergo, demands an encounter between these characters through a local mode of theoretical construction and cultural production in which each character mediates the other as its symptomatic imposter or problematic allegorical double.*

1. Introduction

For those who seek to understand the prospects of any of the innumerable demands for social justice that quicken our era of defeat and dispossession, two figures of political agency are today unavoidable points of departure: the

[1] Support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for the field research discussed in this essay is acknowledged by the author with gratitude.

multitude and the subaltern. This essay endeavours to plot an encounter between these two insurrective characters. On the one hand, they are both figures articulating what may be called a politics of the common (rather than a politics of identity or any other essentialized particularity) and so name collective bodies of resistance and opposition to neoliberal led processes of globalization. In this regard, both figures entail an elaboration and complication (if not a veritable *aufhebung*) of the conceptual resources hitherto available to class politics, pointing the way ahead for its reinvention on a field of struggle composed of unprecedented proximities, speeds, heterogeneities and inequalities. To this end, both assert the centrality and diversity of the world's poor to politics today, a modern invention socially engineered in recent years at a scale that is both massive and unprecedented. On the other hand, the former has always seemed suspiciously northbound, even if globalized and well travelled, a frequent flyer to the most elite of theoretical resorts, but unable to break out of a certain epic transcendence. Whereas the latter is a refugee from the project of decolonization which most everyone now considers to have reached its desperate dead end so long ago that all that remains is a kind of militant memory to brood over, uselessly. But perhaps, today, things have so fallen apart that an attempt to tell some story where both these characters meet will lead to a situation of leftist theory from which something worthwhile can be learned.

The argument of this essay unfolds over four parts. I first turn to a critical engagement with the figure of the multitude, examining especially its formulation with respect to Hardt and Negri's (2009) concepts of biopolitical production and of the common. My discussion focuses mostly on the more recent developments of their theory in *Commonwealth* (2009) though I draw on their previous books as well. The second section then takes up the figure of the subaltern, first in the work of the subaltern studies collective in India and then subsequently by others, tracking the vicissitudes and developments of this conception of agency. The third section takes us to a software technology park in the suburbs of Kolkata, India called Sector Five (or more officially, Rajarhat New Town), in order to locate both figures of multitude and subaltern at a specific site of production

and its politics. Based on field research I carried out with my colleague Dr. Gail Faurschou in 2006 and 2010, this section of the essay presents a case study. I examine the international and local division of labour through which middle class software professionals and information technology enabled service clerks are articulated to a transnational ruling class, on the one hand, and a large, informalized, marginal subsistence sector of petty manufacturing and services on the other. The focus here is on a description of the complex structure of exploitation on which Kolkata's articulation with the world economy rests via Sector Five and on the conjunctural processes through which these arrangements were put into place. The fourth and final part of this essay tries to draw lessons from this case study and the more theoretical discussions preceding it. I return here to the issues raised in the first two sections and argue that multitude and subaltern, as mediatory figures, pose a narrative form problem without generic solution. Rather, for the experimental social movement learning processes the Left today needs to undergo, the encounter of multitude and subaltern demands a kind of storytelling and cultural production where each character mediates the other as its symptomatic imposter or problematic allegorical double.

2. Globalization and Biopolitical Production

Have we just crossed the threshold of what Giovanni Arrighi (1994) calls the terminal crisis of U.S. hegemony in the modern world system? Are we on the brink of a major re-organization of the geo-political arrangements of global capital accumulation, whether polycentric or Sino-Pacific as Gunder Frank (1998) and others argue? The importance of Hardt and Negri's "multitude trilogy" (*Empire*, 2000; *Multitude*, 2004; and *Commonwealth*, 2009) is its compelling theorization of transformations of similar magnitude. They take several steps further forward the well-nigh Copernican revolution achieved by the dependency theorists, the world system analysis collaborators, and postcolonial theorists (though inaugurated, indeed, by Marx) which grasps axiomatically the necessity of the prescription that the

present cannot be understood, whether culturally or social-scientifically, in terms of particular cultures, civilizations or national societies and histories. Rather, the basic "unit of analysis" must be global in scale (or what Wallerstein (1974) calls the modern world-system). Now, however, it is precisely this world scale point of departure that, very paradoxically, has given urgency and intelligibility to innumerable and various local histories and local studies, since the world scale does not present itself anywhere immediately; This paradox will remain at the core of our argument as it unfolds below. For the moment, let us only note that Hardt and Negri's work carries this critique of provincialism into the very heartland of contemporary Anglo-American political theory. Secondly, they throw cold water onto the symptomatic ideological fantasy of abject paralysis that has captivated several streams of contemporary Anglophone theory by constructing a sophisticated theory of agency through an astute re-reading of Foucault's analyses of biopolitics. Foucault himself used the terms "biopower" and "biopolitics" interchangeably. But Hardt and Negri impose a more rigorous and systematic distinction between these terms in order to foreground those moments in Foucault's work where he conceived the productivity of power in terms of the event of liberation: "Events of resisitance have the power not only to escape control but also create a new world" (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 61). Crucial to their new conception of agency is their theorization of the emergence of just such a new world of capitalist production.

At the very outset, Hardt and Negri's formulation of the epochal transformation in capitalist production presents formidable difficulties: "Economic production is going through a period of transition in which increasingly the results of capitalist production are social relations and forms of life. Capitalist production, in other words, is becoming biopolitical" (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 131). But, of course, in one way or another, the results of capitalist production, like any other mode of production, must be social relations and forms of life, as always, and virtually by definition. The historically new emergence therefore needs to be found somewhere else, in contemporary processes re-making the forms of social life. To this end, Hardt and Negri specify

three characteristic features of the epochal change through their analysis of technical and organic composition of capital.

Services, or the "immaterial production" of images, information, ideas, affects, codes, knowledge, the "labor of the head and heart", are said to increasingly subordinate the value of industrial production in the valorization process. So it is not quite the ascendence of finance capital that is being invoked here. Rather it is its very opposite. Many other observers (Arrighi, 1994; Brenner, 2006; Harvey, 2003) have argued that the characteristically postmodern feature of our contemporary wave of neoliberal, U.S. led, globalization crucially involves the expansion and autonomization of the circuit M ---> M', now floating aloft from the circuit M ---> C ----> M', on the hot winds of speculation and other rent-seeking scams. For Hardt and Negri though, the power of finance capital is not itself the crucial new key feature of our times. The new power of finance is only one aspect of an emergence immanent to the production process, to the circuit M ---> C ---> M' itself, said to be now increasingly "anthropogenetic"; in which the "production of forms of life is becoming the basis of added value"; in which "putting to work human faculties, competences, and knowledges – those acquired on the job but, more important, those accumulated outside work interacting with automated and computerized productive systems — is directly productive of value (Hardt and Negri, 2009). But the production of services in the world economy encompasses a vast range of different kinds of production, under very different circumstances and arrangements. We will look closely at one location of such articulations below.

The second feature of the emergent mode of production Hardt and Negri point toward they call the feminization of work. But this could just as pertinently be described as the global defeat of mass struggles over the length of the working day. Their account of this, however, is very symptomatic and makes clear that a northbound monocentric perspective is being normalized theoretically: "Part-time and informal employment, irregular hours, and multiple jobs —aspects that have long been typical of labor in the subordinated parts of the world— are now becoming generalized even in the dominant countries" (Hardt and

Negri, 2009: 133). Conditions of production 'that have long been typical of labor' in most of the world become characteristics of a major trend, an index of the new, only when they appear in 'the dominant countries'. We will return to unfold the implications of this logic later.

The third feature Hardt and Negri cite as characteristic of the biopoliticization of production involve "new patterns of migration and processes of social and racial mixture" (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 134). Here, the difficulties are manifold, even though Hardt and Negri have revised their position in the face of criticism.[1] They now acknowledge the political significance of the full spectrum of labour migration rather than the privilege Empire had given before to the south to north flows. Consequently, they also now grasp more cogently the political significance of racism, especially for their theory of the multitude. Nevertheless, patterns of migration and processes of social and "racial mixture" are long-standing processes of historical capitalism, even the south to north flows much discussed in recent years. Instead of merely denying their novelty for that reason, however, what might be a more promising and productive reading of this argument would be to insist that the newly emergent, as the new and the emergent, has its own slow-motion temporality of occurrence which we can no longer ignore. I will return to this issue as well.

Together, these three characteristic processes of the present are grasped as strategically potent contradictions of Empire's domination, giving rise to crises which have all been extensively discussed in the social scientific literature on globalization. They therefore need only brief mention here: The immaterialization of work makes the private control of ideas, images, symbolic systems, cooperative familiarities extremely difficult to fence and police through patents, contracts, and surveillance since their value consists primarily in their public circulation. The precarious feminization of work condemns households to live in the prison of a perpetual present undermining their capacity to nurture the maturation of children and the ageing of adults, so that illness, death, distress escalate state repression and

[1] For further discussion of Hardt and Negri's account of migration in *Empire*, see Mookerjea (2007).

violence. Lastly immigration is structurally necessary as a growth strategy and so promoted, only to provoke a racist backlash.

For Hardt and Negri, these crises of rule attending service, precarity and migration constitute both objective and subjective "transcendental" historical conditions of possibility for a political project of the making of the multitude. There are two main steps to their argument here. The first involves their innovative intervention in contemporary discussions of privatization and commodification that understand them to entail new enclosures of the commons. Hardt and Negri connect these critical analyses with the key insight underlying Marx's critique of both political economy and German ideology. This critique draws its political lessons from its demystifying recognition of the social character of all production, whether of goods, services or images and ideas. Marx (1973) draws out the full implications of this insight in his concept of general intellect and this serves as Hardt and Negri's point of departure for their elaboration of a concept of the commons that includes but goes beyond the idea of the common bounty of nature. Their concept of the commons, rather, is "dynamic, involving both the product of labor and the means of future production. This common is not only the earth we share but also the languages we create, the social practices we establish, the modes of sociality that define our relationships . . . This form of the common does not lend itself to a logic of scarcity as does the first." Such a concept of the common "blurs the division between nature and culture" (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 139) and, in relation to the crises of rule connected to service, precarity and migration, point the way toward the autonomy of biopoliticized production from capitalist power and class inequality. Insofar as services require the autonomous organization of networks of cooperation, insofar as precarity requires the autonomous management of time, insofar as migration depends on the autonomous negotiation of differences in urban life, the intensified dependence of biopolitical production on the common also intensifies and augments the possibility for biopolitical production to reproduce the common and produce ever new kinds of commons without the mediation of capitalist institutions.

These aspects of production together constitute a common power that various ruling class governmental instruments of command and control are said to be increasingly having a harder time subsuming and exploiting:

> All three of these contradictions point to the fact that capital's strategies and techniques of exploitation and control tend to be fetters on the productivity of biopolitical labor. Capital fails to generate a virtuous cycle of accumulation, which would lead from the existing common through biopolitical production to a new expanded common that serves in turn as the basis of a new productive process (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 149).

The transnational ruling classes cannot ride these contemporary processes with mastery; their very efforts to steer and reign the common powers deepens the crises and makes them more explosive. While capital accumulation depends upon the dominance of biopolitical production, increasingly production does not need Empire. This then is the objective situation of our present, as Hardt and Negri describe it. Let us note in passing the apparent dialectical character of the inversion on which the argument here turns: it is the very intensified dependence of biopolitical production on the common that is said to amplify and intensify the common's capacity to serve as a platform of liberation. This impression is only deepened by their description of this boomerang effect as a "vertiginous loop" in the production of subjectivity unleashed by biopoliticization: "One might still conceive of economic production as an engagement of the subject with nature, a transformation of the object through labor, but increasingly the "nature" that biopolitical labor transforms is subjectivity itself" (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 172-73). Indeed, it would seem that, against the drift of their own rhetoric throughout the trilogy, their concept of the common now concedes a dialectical formulation: Biopolitical production depends on the common and to this extent it is immanent to Empire. But the common is also what makes biopolitical production creatively excessive to itself so that biopolitical production is already on the road to autonomy from Empire: "Crossing the

threshold gives us a first definition of the process of biopolitical exceeding, which overflows the barriers that the tradition of modern political economy built to control labor-power and the production of value" (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 317). In the first two books of the trilogy, the slogan had been "there is no outside" to Empire. But now the common is posited crucially as *outside-in* Empire. We will also return to this issue below. For the moment, let us only note that it is because the common is for them a social world of "historical and ontological overflowing" that they insist that biopolitical production entails the production of subjectivity and that for them "multitude" names nothing else than its own "perpetual becoming other, an uninterrupted process of collective self-transformation" (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 173). In this precise sense, the multitude then is a figure of political agency and a political project to be organized, rather than an identity position.

This line of argument no doubt raises several questions. Before I outline those I want to take up here, let me underscore what I think makes their theoretical construction crucially important. Political theory in the dominant northern countries, unlike the more empirical social sciences of globalization, has had virtually nothing interesting to say about the politics of production or class in the last few decades, so that this theoretical effort, especially insofar as it also endeavors to avoid being parochial, deserves critical engagement by postcolonial scholars and social scientists studying global inequality. Most important in this regard is that Hardt and Negri's theoretical construction attempts to describe and define what they call a "materialist telos" for the agency of the multitude. This line of argument that we have been following regarding the technical and organic composition of capital seeks to describe the historical conditions of possibility for a path of liberation from the contemporary catastrophes and destitutions of global capitalism. As such, their work does not offer normative platitudes nor dress up ethical banalities in brand new logos, let alone culminate in the pathos of another "figure for our modernity". Rather, their theoretical construction produces concept-characters that are utopian and experimental. Consequently, our critical engagement with the trilogy needs to closely scrutinize their construction

of the materialist telos and their account of the historical emergence of biopolitical production.

Here, several questions can be raised. The main one I will take up in the discussion below has to do with how we understand the hegemonic ascendency of biopoliticized production. The contemporary world system is made up of many different modes of production articulated with industrial and post-industrial or biopolitical production. How are these modes of production articulated together and what does that tell us about the organization of exploitation and domination on local and world scales? Does the growth of services always and everywhere promote the autonomous organization of cooperation or is cooperation obtained through assemblages of political and economic dependency? Does precarity in fact promote the autonomous management of time or is the timing of practices being organized at some more abstract level? Indeed, does not the recolonization of leisure and the economization of ever more aspects of social and cultural practices result in a time now so completely homogenous and empty that it is, not a bare life, but nothing but a sheerly pointless working to die? Moreover, does the consecration of the migrant's metropolis as the privileged social space of the common lead the materialist telos toward a dead-end, especially on ecological matters? Questions such as these, however, cannot be answered in general but only in relation to the singularity of local situations. I will return to them in my discussion of the new urban forms that are being constructed for the global and Indian IT industry in Kolkata, West Bengal. But first, let us allow our second figure of agency to step onstage for a turn.

3. The Subaltern Line of Fight

In the early work of the Subaltern Studies Collective, the Gramscian category of the subaltern is revitalized and deployed by way of a critique of elitist historiography, whether colonialist or nationalist. In this first stage of the collective's research practice in which the influences of British Marxist history from below are explicitly registered, the problematic of agency occupies center stage. This point of departure was not nearly as original a break with leftist

historiography on the subcontinent as international readers have sometimes been led to think. In fact, the collective's practice emerges out of a rich and flourishing tradition of labour social history. Nevertheless, the strategic turn to the category of subaltern history seemed to be full of promise as it was made in response to a peasant uprising, the Naxalite movement (1967-76) and the crisis this presented for the organized mass communist movements. The emphasis on insurgent peasant culture, myth and ritual as well as insistence on a domain of politics "autonomous" from elite organization and leadership indeed broke new ground, as did the new focus on overlooked and marginalized events such as struggles over forest rights, hill tribe revolts, food riots, communal conflicts, and insubordination against landlord domination. The subaltern, in Ranajit Guha's redefinition, referred to a popular configuration of social locations "as a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way" (Guha and Spivak, 1988: 35). On the one hand, the problem of subaltern agency then presents itself as a methodological issue: Insofar as an oral culture and a non-literate collectivity leaves behind no documents of their own authorship in the archives, how is their insurrective participation both in the Indian nationalist movement but also beyond it in direct revolts against landlord and colonial domination to be studied? The need to invent a hermeneutic strategy capable of deciphering this absent presence leads to Guha's theoretical innovations, drawing on Barthes and Foucault, which finds a way to read various symptoms in the texts of colonial administration and rule for traces of subaltern agency.

The main point we need to note here about Guha's theoretical intervention, however, is the link it establishes between the question of mediation and the problematic agency. Insurrective agency cannot be accessed directly and immediately. Rather, its effectivity and intelligibility must be reconstructed on a distinct register of representations and codes that have their own internal history.

Now the problematic of agency presents a further dilemma which the subaltern studies project in its first phase thematizes and tackles through its critique of

colonialist and nationalist historiography. This is the dawning recognition, widespread among twentieth century and especially postcolonial historians, that the practice of history writing itself folds back and begins to have effects on the unfolding of history; in the project of nation-building and its characteristic pedagogic methods of domination, for example. For subaltern studies, this was the common point of "nationalist" collusion between bourgeois and Marxist historiography and this is what gave urgency to the project of retrieving an autonomous domain of subaltern politics able to slip the leash of elite leadership. (No doubt, the fact that the Communist Party of India was able to accommodate itself to the Congress-led postcolonial state and so opt for the parliamentary road in 1950 and that the dissenting splinter Communist Party of India, Marxist repeated the same trauma in 1966 were crucial conditions for the elaboration of these historiographical-theoretical positions). In Dipesh Chakrabarty's (2000) work, this line of critique is developed theoretically into a critique of the discipline itself. What the subaltern studies project then enables us to grasp clearly and cogently is that these two facets of the problematic of agency are connected but not reducible to one another. How and why does the past matter in and to the present? Agency in the past and agency of the past pose linked but not the same narrative problem for historiography and the historical turn in the social sciences. Between them is an incommensurable or heteroclite space demanding the invention of some dialectic that would allow us to plot a trajectory through the interaction of the two force fields of these two narrative problems.

The subaltern studies project, however, proved to be unequal to the task of confronting the very conditions it had initially established for its historiography. As numerous commentators and critics have observed (Lal, 2003; O'Hanlon, 1988; Ortner, 1995; Sarkar, 1997; Sivaramakrishnan, 1995), the subsequent work of the collective, especially after Ranajit Guha's resignation from his editorial position there, became mired in various reified binary oppositions. Indeed, the major binary oppositions structuring the core concerns of subaltern studies subsequently — subaltern religiosity versus elite secularism, community versus class, myth versus

rationalism, the West versus the indigenous — are all derivatives of the hoariest ideological and orientalist binary of them all, that of tradition and modernity. As a result, the slippage from locating a practical space of autonomy from elite political leadership to a quest for the authenticity of traditional consciousness was easily made. The potential of the category of the subaltern to lead to a more concrete determination of class relations as a social multiplicity dissipated instead into another ideal type with even less analytic usefulness. Adrift in the ambivalences and dead-ends of the dominant Anglo-American reading of Foucault, unable to locate the crucial movement in Foucault's thought underscored by Hardt and Negri's terminological distinction between biopower and biopolitics, the critical energies of the collective relaxed in this second stage of its career into an Americanized area-studies cultural nationalism, drawing withering criticism from both feminist and Dalit scholarship (Bannerji et al., 2001; Nanda, 2003).

Two silences in particular have been deafening. Over the 1990s, the Hindu fundamentalist movement (Hindutva) was on its murderous march to state power. As part of its propaganda campaign on the subcontinent and throughout the diaspora, Hindutva ideologues mobilized falsified historical "evidence" in support of its twinned fantasies of a Hindu golden age and a subsequent Muslim barbarism. Indian historians dramatically entered the public stage in numbers to contest Hindutva claims but in this collective disciplinary effort the subaltern studies historians were conspicuously absent. Secondly, liberalization of the Indian economy in 1991 has deepened social inequality in India over the ensuing decades during which resource extraction, contract farming, and industrialization has especially immiserated forest dwellers, landless cultivators, and migrant labourers. (Breman, 2010) So much so that a renewed Naxalite insurrection or Maoist movement has emerged and now controls a substantial band of rural India, the so-called Red Corridor, from UP to Andhra Pradesh. Until recently, the subaltern studies collective have also had little to say about this neoliberal project of accumulation by dispossession despite the very active and determined subaltern movements of protest against it.

Breaking this silence, a newer generation of historically oriented social scientists (Bannerjee-Dube, 2007; Da Costa, 2008; Dube, 2004a, 2004b; Ghosh, 2006; Kapoor, 2009a; Mayaram, 2004; Munda and Mullick, 2003; Shah, 2006a, 2006b, 2007) have re-appropriated the figure of subaltern and have sought to understand and theorize the trajectories and prospects of these contemporary subaltern social movements. For this new third stage of the subaltern problematic, the emphasis is on the one hand on locating subaltern agency in relation to domination and exploitation institutionalized on regional, national and transnational scales. On the other hand, instead of a focus on cultural alterity and primordial or authentic religiosity, there is a return to question of political autonomy, now understood in relation to a world-wide struggle in defense of the commons. Indeed, these new thematics connect the studies of subaltern social movements of the subcontinent to research on contemporary subaltern movements in Latin America, Africa, Asia and elsewhere (Kapoor, 2009b; Lee, 2005; Mignolo, 2005). Scholars around the world have globalized their otherwise rigorously localized research in order to better understand the local impact of neoliberalized political economies and the global significance of the struggles for the common that very often make up their sites of study. In many respects, the theory of the multitude will stand or fall on the question of whether it can yield new perspectives on subaltern politics and subaltern anti-systemic movements. In order to probe such possibilities, I will now turn first to a critical discussion of the information technology industry in Kolkata, West Bengal.

4. Sector Five, or, a Subaltern Right to the Metropolis

While India's 8.8 percent annual growth rate has been making headline news in the business press world wide, India's information technology industry has shared much of this limelight. In fact, the National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) and other industry representatives like to claim that IT and software exports in particular have served as the main engine of growth. Such claims can and have been disputed. Some scholars observe

that India's growth rate was on an upward swing well before liberalization policies were introduced (let alone had a chance to take effect) (Basu, 2008, Subramanian, 2008) and that domestic demand, particularly for old-economy industrial production, has been the more significant driver (Basu, 2008). Nonetheless, the size and growth of software exports has been striking, growing 28.7% (compound annual growth rate) in the last five years and totaling 71.7 billion US dollars in 2008-9 alone, comprising now 5.8% of India's GDP (India Brand Equity Foundation [IBEF], 2009) Direct employment in the IT sector has grown by 26% (compound annual growth rate) over the last decade, employing now more than two million Indians. However, not only IT but the entire formally organized sector, public and private, employs at most ten percent of India's population while the rest are located in informal modes of production (Bhaduri and Patkar, 2009).

The IT and ITES (information technology enabled services) industries in India have their roots in a constellation of circumstances. A crucial precondition was the establishment of a network of advanced research and teaching campuses, the famed Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT), by the postcolonial state. Bangalore, the most renowned of Indian IT centers, however, was where the Indian Air Force and the Indian Space Research Organization had located its research and development labs, and was therefore a major center of computational research going back to the 1960s. All of the other major centers of IT in New Delhi (Gurgaon), Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad and Kolkata are home to either IIT campuses or major Indian universities. Secondly, the Y2 K2 problem was largely addressed by U.S. based industries by importing large numbers of Indian engineers to grind through the algorithms on cheaper contracts. According to industry insiders we interviewed, this set in place the personal networks between Indian engineers in Silicon Valley, corporate America and corporate India that would be crucial to the emergence of IT/ITES startups with access to U.S. markets at one end and Indian labour, capital and political will at the other. Thirdly, the dot-com bust of 2000 suddenly and precipitously dropped the cost of transmitting data through trans-oceanic fiber optic cables. Lobbied by interests sensitive to the

opportunities, (NASSCOM was founded in 1988), the central government launched its Software and Technology Parks of India initiative (seeding tax free export processing zones) in 1991, opened a special ministry dedicated to overseeing foreign investment in information technology in 1997, and introduced a new IT/ITES policy in 2003. In intense competition with other states for capital investment, the government of West Bengal soon began reclaiming wetlands, expropriating farmland and developing infrastructure for a new Special Economic Zone, called "Sector Five", on the marshy edges of Kolkata's suburb of Salt Lake in order to locate the IT/ITES firms it was trying to attract. As investment began to flow into the generously subsidized gridwork, plans for the expansion of Sector Five into Rajarhat New Town, encompassing over 3000 hectares of prime agricultural land, were set into motion by dispossessing farmers by stealth and by force.

In the view of the dedicated ministries for information technology at both levels of government, industry insiders and observers alike, the main reason by far for the dramatic growth of IT and ITES industries in India is the labor cost saving realized when the work is done in India compared to the U.S. or the E.U. According to the Indian government's own estimates, this cost saving ranges from twenty-five to sixty percent of an invested dollar. So a politically crucial question to ask is where does the saving on the cost of production go? Workers in the north who are losing their jobs to relocation are told that new, better jobs are on the horizon and that it is poor India's turn to have a slice of the pie. Middle class Indians are led to believe that the wealth produced by this industry is trickling down. Our research, along with that of others, however, suggests that wealth is rather trickling up and out (Upadhya and Vasavi, 2006). The policy framework for the industry in fact ensures such a flow, as only formal sector incomes and consumption is taxed but not export sales or profits where the margins are incomparably larger. Nor does the policy framework ensure that any of the expected technology transfer to Indian MNCs will ever become a public resource. While it is the case that India has gained many higher paying jobs as a result of outsourcing, two aspects of the situation offset this gain as well. First of all, ever since India accepted an IMF loan after

the oil price hike following the first Gulf War, the Indian government has scaled back social security programs under pressure from the World Bank and redirected public resources to the needs of the corporates (Chandra, 2010; Ray, 2010). In the case of West Bengal in particular, public spending on the development of infrastructure for Sector Five (roads and highways, power grids, fibre optic networks, water and sewage works) has entailed the reallocation of budgets from other public commitments. Secondly, liberalization has meant the arrival of global brands and consumption patterns as well, so some of the gains in higher wages are repatriated through nonlocal consumption, though how much is difficult to ascertain. But in order to gain a deeper understanding of the structure of exploitation through which the IT/ITES industry in Kolkata is articulated to the world economy, we need to take a closer look at the social relationships on which it depends and which link Sector Five not only to the older urban fabric of Kolkata but beyond that metropolis to rural India as well.

Industry observers and ministry officials classify formal occupations in the IT/ITES sector into three broad categories. First of all there are the relatively lower skilled and lower paid jobs in call centers and data entry stations. Secondly there are middle skill level jobs in technical support and back office business processing operations. Thirdly there are relatively higher skilled, higher paying jobs in IT-enabled professional (legal, financial, research) services and in IT software development, product design and engineering firms. There are significant differences in conditions of work and remuneration between these three strata of employment. While attrition is high in call center and data entry operations, employment in top tier jobs are more secure and sometimes offer opportunities to move up into management positions. Top tier employees are also more likely to receive health insurance and pension benefits. Nonetheless, as far as the production process itself is concerned, all of these kinds of service work are examples of what Hardt and Negri call biopolitical production. Not only do these processes of production involve information technology and its world spanning networks of cooperation but also the predominance of symbolic operations and affective production. While call centers and back office

business process operations usually run rotating shifts "24-7", engineers, designers and other professional service providers regularly take work home with them or find themselves responding to "emergency" work demands on a regular basis. We find here the very production of subjectivity itself said to be the signature of biopoliticization, whether as an Americanized or Anglicized friendly neighbourhood character on a service or sales call, or as corporate team player sucking it up to make the deal for the chief. If there is a multitude in the making in Kolkata, these workers are certainly potential subjects of such a process of becoming, according to the definitions.

But this entire location of biopolitical production depends for its condition of possibility on several other social spaces we now need to consider. Most immediately, there is another vast body of service work without which Sector Five's internally differentiated division of biopolitical virtual labour power could not be mobilized into production at all. These are the cooks, the cleaners, drivers, bearers, security guards, domestic workers, construction workers, carriers, rickshaw and autorickshawallahs, bus drivers, and street vendors who all play their crucial part in the everyday social reproduction of the very space of immaterial service production. Not only is the availability and accessibility of IT/ITES labour power to the globalized production process dependent upon this other branch of the social division of biopolitical labour but, just as crucially, the all-important cost saving the Indian IT worker offers the world economy is a saving drawn from this vast urban sprawl of subsistence wage production and pooled and concentrated in the biopolitical virtual labour power brought to market in Sector Five, from where it is transferred up and out. (Patnaik 2010) After all, why is the Indian IT worker ten times cheaper than their U.S. counterparts, if not because their needs are met that much more inexpensively locally? The IT workers thus serve as the mediation by which this saving is converted into profit. As such, the exploitation and domination articulating the local division of labour is also re-instrumentalized through them, as we shall see.

One of the main reasons for this cheapness is the precarious situation of this broad array of services. This precarity, in turn, is mainly predicated on a cluster of

conjunctural conditions: de-industrialization and informalization; political disarticulation and a renewed rural crises. Let us briefly examine the implications of each of these processes.

At the time of national independence, West Bengal was one of the most highly industrialized states in India, where British managed, colonial era export oriented processing industries predominated, especially in jute and tea (Chakravarty, 2010). Postcolonial India's emphasis on import substitution industrialization resulted in neglect for Bengal's export industries, already floundering from the recession of the 1930s, the disruptions of Second World War and Partition in 1947. Through a period of protracted class conflict throughout the first half of the twentieth century, industrial manufacturing in West Bengal nonetheless emerged politically well organized through several mass trade unions; so much so that the organized labour movement provided crucial support enabling a Left Front to be elected into government in 1977 and to keep winning elections until recently. But the ascendence of the Left to state level governmental power was punished by capital flight and West Bengal lost ground to other states, ending up with a concentration of labour intensive but low productivity, low wage manufacturing units in the national division of industrial labour. Liberalization brought two political changes that have dramatically transformed West Bengal's labour market. First of all, it has to be understood that whereas most observers expect the Left Front to lose power for the first time since 1977 in the next elections, in fact the Left had already been defeated a long time ago in West Bengal and that it has been a zombie communism that has been governing after Jyoti Basu's (Chief Minister 1977-2000) faction faded from power. For the CPI-M, the leading party of the Left Front, then embraced neoliberalism with relish (or at least its politburo did) and has assiduously worked to create a favourable investment climate for national and multinational corporations. One of the main tasks in this, of course, was the government's attack on organized labour. Here we come face to face with a couple of remarkable contradictions, for the attack was relentless, and yet West Bengal had and still has one of the most pro-labour codes on the books. In so far the CPI-M's popular front alliances in

particular, and Left Front hegemony more generally, depended on a militantly pro-labour and militantly pro-poor public political platform, the cultivation of a favourable investment climate was a delicate matter. Here the very arrangement that had been instrumental to consolidating labour's power proved to be its undoing. This was the subordination of the main trade union organization, Congress of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) to the CPI-M. In the 1950s and 1960s, CITU had earned a reputation for being a militant union able to win the big battles. In the 1980s, with the Left Front in power, West Bengal gained a reputation for its labour peace, though in a context of a prolonged capital strike and rising unemployment. While industrial strikes then declined, over the 1990s, lockouts dramatically increased. Deepita Chakravarty's (2010) study of trade unions in West Bengal provides key insight into these changes out of which the informal sector expanded prodigiously. For it was CITU's close ties with the CPI-M that ensured collaboration so that permanent workers' positions were replaced by contract/casual positions through lockouts and attrition. CITU continued to bargain adamantly for wage increases for its core permanent constituency but collaborated with the government in refusing to organize the growing ranks of casual and contract workers. As workers continued to be locked out by firms, they eventually returned casualized or joined the main trend moving into (mostly subsistence) informal manufacturing and service sectors (Chakravarty, 2010).

This flow from formal industrial manufacturing into informal manufacturing and services is being joined by another flow from agriculture, as rural West Bengal has also slid into crisis over the last two decades. Along with labour militancy of 1960s and 70s, another political force that initially brought the Left Front to power was an armed peasant revolt (the Naxal movement, 1967-76). The roots of this revolt go back to the very depths of the modern construction of world-scale poverty, to the fact that industrialization, as led by the European bourgeoisie, could not but create crisis and destitution throughout all other modes of production around the world as it did in rural Bengal (and as Ranajit Guha's study of the Permanent Settlement, *A Rule of Property for Bengal* (1996 [1963]), helps

us better understand). Thus subaltern revolts have been a constant and recurrent feature of the modern world system ever since and the Naxalbari movement was one of a series of uprisings in India that has currently reincarnated itself as the Maoist "peoples' war". Eventually brutally suppressed, the Naxals nevertheless were crucially influential in defining the initial character of Left Front hegemony. They ensured a radicalization of the CPI-M, especially with regard to its rural policies, even though the parliamentary party splintered on the question of whether and how to ally itself with the Naxalites. While a few among the urban middle and elite classes may have voted for the CPI-M in the expectation that they would be the most effective at coopting and containing the Naxalites, the Left Front won several convincing majorities because of their land reform, social justice and social equality policies. Indeed the extent of the Left Front's land reform program and panchayati raj initiatives (decentralized rural participatory democracy) have been unprecedented in India. In the late 1960s, a spontaneous subaltern uprising, supported by left United Front parties, distributed 500,000 acres of 'benami' land to landless cultivators in rural West Bengal (Dasgupta, 1984). The Left Front came to power riding this tide of revolt and among its key initiatives of agrarian reform was "operation barga" where share tenants were registered in order to break the exploitative relation between landlords and sharecroppers. Secondly, the new government re-distributed surplus land beyond a negotiated ceiling to the landless which also reduced agrarian inequality somewhat without dismantling landlord power any further (Bhattacharyya, 2007). Moreover, the Left Front imposed a minimum wage rate for agricultural labourers. These agrarian reforms were implemented through the local self-government institution of panchyati raj. Not without their own contradictions, limitations and problems, land reform and panchayati raj did transform rural West Bengal, so that researchers and other observers could claim by the late 1980s that the Left Front government had achieved impressive agricultural growth and significant poverty alleviation in the countryside. (Chattopadhyay, 2005; Khasnabis, 2008)

However, these improvements began to rollback once liberalization policies began to take effect, as Maumita and

Sudipta Bhattacharyya's (2007) study of West Bengal's "agrarian impasse" shows. As the public food distribution system, an institution designed to avert famine and endemic hunger, was dismantled under orders from the World Bank, and as food, fertilizer and credit subsidies were withdrawn and the market opened to agricultural imports, agricultural producers faced rising costs of production and declining prices for their produce simultaneously (Bhattacharyya and Bhattacharyya, 2007). The resulting shock has been especially devastating for landless agricultural labourers as rural employment began to shrink. This unfolding crisis has then resulted in a flow of migrant labour from the countryside to metropolitan Kolkata where they too seek a place in the informal service economy. This indeed was the biography of most of the women construction workers we interviewed building Sector Five's IT parks and executive condominiums. (Several of the younger drivers and security guards we interviewed, on the other hand, told us their fathers had lost their jobs in manufacturing many years ago). Joining this steady flow of migrants are not only those from the countryside of adjacent states of Assam, Bihar, Orrissa, but also from a vast and densely populated rural belt stretching as far north as Nepal and Bhutan and east into Bangladesh who are being displaced from agriculture for similar reasons. All these migrants form a reserve army of service workers in the streets and slums of Kolkata who ensure that the broad base of the division of labour remains at the most meagre of subsistence. In Kolkata, then, service, precarity and migration come together, articulating the agrarian to the metropolitan through the "contingent structuring" of these conjunctural processes.

5. Subaltern and the Multitude: Vanishing Mediators of the Political

Kolkata and its environs then may be thought of a vast, predominantly informal, biopolitical service and manufacturing metropolis onto which Sector Five and its satellite townships have been implanted as one node of articulation with the world economy. The sons and daughters of relative privilege who work long, odd and variable hours in state of the art IT campuses are mostly

distinguished from the security guards, drivers, clerks, construction workers, cooks and domestic servants who work among them and the small manufacturers and scavengers all around them primarily by their command of English, the quality and extent of their education, as well as their caste and class backgrounds. The IT workers hail from every strata and location of India's middle class which, contrary to the claims of North American journalism, is not a new formation but one with roots that go well back into the nineteenth century. What is new is their global brand consumption, the only thing that catches the eyes of the business press. Also new, in a way, is the *growing* inequality between the small core of the IT sector and the large mass of the labouring urban poor variously serving it. What we find, then, is a clear segmentation in the division of labour of biopolitical production in which both segments are exploited by a transnational capitalist class (in which non-resident Indians figure prominently) but also articulated by a structure of exploitation between them.

How then are we to now mobilize the categories of class, multitude or subaltern in order to grasp the possibilities here, if any, of social transformation, liberation, or even of some rupturing event revolutionary becoming? The well-nigh infinite gradations of the stratification of class and status inequality that we find here in Kolkata is but the local appearance of the fine gradations of inequality now characteristic of the world economy. These have proven over the twentieth century to be so durably inheritable that one is tempted to think them as new social formations of caste hierarchy, if one really insisted on dispensing with class as an obsolete nineteenth century problem.

But both names "multitude" and "subaltern" are arguments for the continued relevance and pertinence of class politics in the present conjuncture. So let us first consider how Hardt and Negri themselves raise the problem of coordinating the two figures: The postcolonial criticism of their theory of the multitude, they say, is that it excludes the subaltern, that their analysis forgets about the subalterns and about the subordinated global south, etc. They understand this criticism to claim that they have failed to be fully dialectical, of grasping the remainder through which the multitude as a concept becomes delimited and intelligible.

Hardt and Negri's response to their own characterization of this criticism is two-fold. On the one hand, *Multitude* and *Commonwealth* do attempt to bring histories of colonialism and processes of the development of underdevelopment more comprehensively into their analyses of contemporary politics. Indeed, in this regard, their trilogy is a welcome and important advance over many other major positions in political theory today (such as Agamben, in whose work these issues are largely and typically absent, or even Zizek, who reads it all through *Avatar*). On the other hand, they argue that the concept of the multitude somehow "transposes the exclusive and limiting logic of identity-difference into the open and expansive logic of singularity-commonality" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 225); that it may be the case that there happens to be nodes outside a given network, such exclusions are not necessary and structural. On this ground, they underscore their argument that multitude names a task of political organization that the multitude must be made. Consequently, we are invited to suppose that the theory calls for some project or process of articulation between subaltern and multitude. Nevertheless, the problem with their theory is not only one of exclusion, of forgetting about the South, but rather one of obscuring or erasing the complex structure of exploitations constituting the very multiplicity of the social on a world scale.

For example, the predominance of service, or actually of the informal sector whether in services or small scale manufacturing, may provoke the self-organization of networks of cooperation without the direct intervention of capital in some situations but this is clearly not the case in the IT industry in Kolkata. To the extent that it is so in the ancillary services such as with drivers and autorickshawallahs, these remain entirely dependent on the IT boom. For example, men and women who had been able to set up street food stalls across from the gates of the campuses preparing meals for the IT workers had organized their own management committee to collectively solve problems like refuse removal, water and produce delivery, and to settle minor disputes. Such self-organization has the potential to raise and press for other political demands. Nonetheless, the stall proprietors and their staff cannot be

said to possess even the most rudimentary autonomy from the FDI flows into Sector Five.

Nor can we say that precarity universally enables workers to regain control over their management of time. It may be a stunning achievement of North American civilization that now enables people to bring their work with them on their vacations in order to get ahead, or catch up on their blackberries in the toilet, but these freedoms are hard to find in Kolkata. As is notoriously well known, the work schedule of IT workers are set by their clients in North America or Europe whereas the marginal subsistence nature of much of the supporting services requires ceaseless engagement in production. Domestic workers we interviewed, for example, without exception complained of being at the beck and call of their employers, of not getting any time to give their own families; as did private household drivers, whereas those working for car pool companies reported that they frequently worked through the one day off they are supposed to get.

The lesson to be learned from this case study, then, is that social multiplicity must be understood not as an open series of positions on a number line (race, class, sex, gender, one thousand and one ethnicities, etc.) as most postmodern social theories presume (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 167), but rather as a multiplicity of exploitations, crises and contradictions. For social multiplicity is not a matter of the multiplicity of positions but rather of positionality. In this, the multiplicity of exploitation mediates all other political multiplicities insofar as the (international) social division of labour is the very nonsensical objectivity of all histories at their world scale. The division of labour is both a historically given result of subaltern and class struggles of the past as well as the very site of ongoing subaltern class struggles of the present. As such it is, indifferently, a cultural, political, economic, juridical and ideological artefact of such struggles, the very body of their occurrence. No mode of subjectivization can escape being decentered and relativized by it, for there is no transcendent heaven or hell outside of social reproduction. Any specific point or place in the division of labour, after all, crucially depends on other places or points on the division of labour, some very obviously and heavily, but also ultimately on most if not

every other point as well. Any singular configuration of movements of production can be set into motion only through their determination by all other movements of production. After all, this is precisely what a division of labour in effect is: The very fact that somebody doing one thing enables someone else to do something else. This is precisely where the main potential for gains in productivity lies – in multiplying the power of cooperation through differentiation. The crucial point to be underscored here, though, is that part and whole of the division of labour cannot be represented or understood separately or discretely. Rather the representational challenge is precisely that of figuring the multiplicity of exploitations that relates part to whole and vice versa.[1]

If the figure of the multitude is to be distinguished, then, from the concept of the people, on basis of the imposed unity of the latter versus the open network multiplicity of the former as Hardt and Negri insist, then, this distinction can only turn on the very objectivity of the social division of labour as historically and politically constructed and given to all possible subjective becomings. For this body of accumulated human history on a world scale, as a crucial transcendental condition of possibility of the common, can never be completely subjectified itself. The objectivity of histories at their world scale is a dimension of the common but this is why the common exceeds itself. Here, the key argument of postcolonial subalternist critique must be kept clearly in focus. For contemporary eurocentric cultural and political theory mystifies in two ways: Either capitalism is assumed to be eternal, inscribed in human nature; or the break of industrial capitalism is assumed to be a total one that completely transcends its own historical situation. But as a broad range of scholarship in historical sociology, postcolonial studies and the world history movement has demonstrated, this very break creates its own world scale context by bringing all other modes of production into an equally new machinic assemblage as its ground. Thus it is that any relationship of exploitation or domination is never identical to itself but supplemented by some other kind of accumulated violence.

---

[1] For a discussion of these representational issues see Mookerjea (2001).

Returning then to Kolkata, we can say that "multitude" and "subaltern" are two alternate ways of totalizing this complex articulation of exploitations and fine stratification of inequality into utopian figures of agency. As elsewhere, the left in India faces a cultural, educational and ideological task, as much as an economic, political or organizational one, of constructing some kind of new politics based on new solidarities and new identifications. In West Bengal, the left now has split between those who have gone over to support the main opposition party, Trinamool Congress, (with even more deeply entrenched ties with the business mafia, whose policies favour crony capitalism more ardently than the current Left Front government, and which would, in any case, face the same structural constraints at the national and global level) and those who are in despair that their politics have been stolen from them. Most commentators expect Trinamool Congress to sweep the next state level elections as result of their opportunistic manipulation of the Left Front's own contradictions. Whether or not this comes to pass, the time is now ripe for a root and branch reconstruction of the left in India (a task that will require both solidarity and critical engagement with the ongoing Maoist insurgency currently being subjected to brutal scattershot repression from the state). In such a situation, both multitude and subaltern are utopian figures, in Fredric Jameson's (2005) sense of a cultural and aesthetic pedagogy on which all political movements cannot but depend. As agents, neither are available without cultural-pedagogical mediation. But as mediating pedagogical figures, they are both alternate ways of telling the story of social and political change, of struggling to defend the common, of plotting a political future. Subaltern and multitude then are two ways of mapping how the conjunctural processes and ongoing struggles unfolding in Kolkata may be organized to lead into a transformative event, how a passive revolution might be turned into active revolution. They are both figures operating at local and global scales simultaneously. But the two figures do not add up to a complementary unity nor do they coincide with each other, nor can we choose between them. Rather, each posits a different chronotope of agency insofar as we read each figure as a vanishing mediator in relation to the other. The two figures pose a narrative form

problem without a generic solution. For this very reason, it is in the allegorical mediation of each figure by the other, that we need to search for a new political pedagogy and social movement learning process for the left that is both locally grounded and yet not provincial.

Let us begin by observing that the core experiences and raw materials of the new solidarities to be made still remain unclear but they will nevertheless have something to do with the conjunctural processes we have discussed above. Any programmatic story that one could then try to learn to tell of the multitude's liberation will at some point fall apart, as we have seen above, because an unplaceable figure of the subaltern will eventually turn up as a symptom, a ghost, a geoperspectival aporia with its own local pedagogical lessons, re-articulating the metropolis to its agrarian and forest ecologies.[1] As a mediating figure for the multitude, the subaltern then is a supplementary historiographical figure which forestalls the multitude's reification into unity and its transcendence into northbound epic discourse. On the other hand, similarly, any story of the subaltern's liberation will breakdown and grind to a halt before it can slide back into some renewed nationalism, ethnocentrism, communalism, or populism, insofar as the subaltern will keep setting off on a line of flight and keep melting away into the multitude and into insurgencies breaking out across the planetary common. In this regard, the multitude, as a mediation of the subaltern, is a supplementary sociological figure which forestalls the subaltern's reification into culture, ethnicity, and community by networking subalternity into the common.

As a result, left cultural production and social movement learning today, whether in West Bengal or elsewhere, will have to assume this oscillation between these two figures, this narrative form problem, for its pedagogical aesthetic. If only for the good reason that any figure of agency, if it is not to relax into a facile discursivist platitude about "undoing fixity", needs to face squarely not only the unimaginable weight and glacial duration of our human history; of accumulated violence; of subaltern defeat and

---

[1] For a discussion of geoperspectival aporias (and the Jamesonian idea of narrative form problems) see Mookerjea (2001).

dispossession whether from the neolithic revolution or even before; but also the historically unprecedented quantum leap in inequality and in the imbalance of power between the transnational ruling classes and the multitude that has emerged over the neoliberal decades into what Samir Amin (2003) calls global apartheid. Narratives which foreclose the future consequences of both this historical duration and these conjunctural processes, such narratives of transcendence (whether of biopolitical production floating free of all other modes of production that comprise it, or of this or that posthuman or technopoetic overcoming of production itself, or any other fleshless event without conjuncture) will be sites at which the figure of the subaltern will continue to emerge as a symptom of that foreclosure. Badiou writes somewhere that events are never miraculous. The figure of subaltern agency is there to remind us of the long revolution of the past that must take place before the future can arrive; of the geological slowness of the multitude's event as it emerges across the duration of accumulated violence and out of the contradictions of conjunctural processes. The agency of the past is not reducible to agency in the past, but we cannot escape determination by the former without understanding the latter. But this is precisely the wide open space where the prodigious force animating the figure of the multitude by sheer theoretical will becomes most necessary and advantageous to the left's learning processes and cultural-political production today: Equally utopian, the multitude names the event of the subaltern's disappearance through its own autonomous, networked, world-scale struggle for liberation.

References

Amin, Samir, (2004). *Obsolescent Capitalism: Contemporary Politics and Global Disorder*. London: Zed Books.

Arrighi, G, (1994). *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Times*. London: Verso.

Basu, Kausik, (2008 February 3). "India's Dilemmas: The Political Economy of Policymaking in a Globalised World". *Economic and Political Weekly*, pp 53-62.

Brenner, Robert, (2006). *The Economics of Global Turbulence: The Advanced Capitalist Economies from Long Boom to Long Downturn, 1945-2005*. London: Verso.

Bhaduri, A, and Patkar, M, (2009, January 3). "Industrialisation for the People, by the People, of the People." *Economic & Political Weekly*, pp. 10-13.

Bannerji, Himani, Mojab, Shahrzad and Whitehead Judith (eds), (2001). *Of Property and Propriety: The Role of Gender and Class in Imperialism and Nationalism.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Banerjee-Dube, I, (2007). *Religion, Law and Power: Tales of Time in Eastern India, 1860 –2000*. London: Anthem Press.

Bhattacharyya, Maumita and Bhattacharyya, Sudipta, (2007, December 29). "Agrarian Impasse in West Bengal in the Liberalisation Era", *Economic & Political Weekly*, pp. 65-71.

Breman, Jan, (2010, June 5). "India's Social Question in a State of Denial", *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. XLV, no. 23, pp. 42-46.

Chakrabarty, D, (2000). *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Chakravarty, Deepita, (2010, February 6). "Trade Unions and Business Firms: Unorganized Manufacuring in West Bengal", *Economic and Political Weekly,* vol. XLV, no. 6, pp. 45-52.

Chandra, Nirmal Kumar, (2010, February 20). "Inclusive Growth in Neoliberal India: A Facade?", *Economic & Political Weekly*, vol. XLV, no. 8, pp. 43-56.

Chattopadhyay, Apurba Kumar, (2005, December 31). "Distributive Impact of Agricultural Growth in Rural West Bengal", *Economic and Political Weekly,* pp 5601-5610.

Da Costa, D, (2008). "Tensions of Neo-liberal Development: State Discourse and Dramatic Oppositions in West Bengal", *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, vol. 41, no. 3, pp. 287-320.

Dasgupta, Biplab, (1984). "Sharecropping in West Bengal: From Independence to Operation Barga", *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 19, no. 26, pp. A85-A96.

Dube, S, (2004a). "Terms that Bind: Colony, Nation, Modernity", in Saurabh Dube (ed.), *Postcolonial Passages: Contemporary History-Writing on India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Dube, S, (2004b). *Stitches on Time: Colonial Textures and Postcolonial Tangles*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Dube, S, (2007). "Historical Anthropology of Modern India", *Historical Compass*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 763-779.

Frank, Gunder, (1998). *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age*. Berkeley: California University Press.

Ghosh, K, (2006). "Between Global Flows and Local Dams: Indigenousness, Locality and the Transnational Sphere in Jharkhand, India", *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 21, pp. 501–34.

Guha, R, and Spivak, G. (eds), (1988). *Selected Subaltern Studies*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Guha, R. (1996 [1963]). *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permament Settlement*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Hardt, Michael and Negri A, (2000). *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Hardt, Michael and Negri A, (2004). *Multitude*. New York: Penguin Press.

Hardt, Michael and Negri A, (2009). *Commonwealth.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Harvey, David, (2003). *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Indian Brand Equity Foundation, (2009). *Information Technology*. IBEF: New Delhi

Jameson, Fredric, (2005). *Archaelogies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*. London: Verso.

Kapoor, D, (2009a). “Subaltern social movement learning: Adivasis (original dwellers) and the decolonization of space in India”, in D. Kapoor (ed.), *Education, decolonization and development: Perspectives from Asia, Africa and the Americas*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Kapoor, D, (2009b). “Participatory action research (par) and People’s Participatory Action Research (PAR): Research, politicization and subaltern social movements in India”, in D. Kapoor and S. Jordan (eds), *Education, participatory action research and social change: International perspectives*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Khasnabis, Ratan, (2008, December 27). “The Economy of West Bengal”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, pp. 103-115.

Lal, Vinay, (2003). *The History of History: Politics and Scholarship in Modern India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Lee, Christopher J, (2005). “Subaltern Studies and African Studies”, *History Compass*, vol. 3, no. AF 162, pp. 1-13.

Marx, Karl, (1973). *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* [trans. Martin Nicolaus]. London: Penguin.

Mayaram, Shail, (2004). *Against History, Against State: Counterperspectives from the Margins*. New Delhi: Permanent Black.

Mignolo, W, (2005). “On Subalterns and other Agencies”, *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 381-407.

Sourayan Mookerjea, University of Alberta, (Edmonton, Canada)

Mookerjea, Sourayan, (2001). “Montage in Spatial Ethnography: Crystalline Narration and Cultural Studies of Globalization”, *Symploke*, vol. 9, no. 1&2, pp. 114-131.

Mookerjea, Sourayan, (2007). “Cultural Studies with Multitudes: Immanence and the Multicultural Commons”, *The Review of Education, Pedagogy and Cultural Studies*, vol. 29, pp. 261–305.

Munda R.D, and Mullick S. Bosu (eds), (2003). *The Jharkhand Movement: Indigenous Peoples’ Struggle for Autonomy in Jharkhand*. Copenhagen: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs; New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House.

Nanda, Meera, (2003). *Postmodernism and Relgious Fundamentalism: A Scientific Rebuttal to Hindu Science*. Pondicherry: Navayana.

O’Hanlon, Rosalind, (1988). "Recovering the subject: subaltern studies and histories of resistance in colonial South Asia", *Modem Asian Studies*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 189-224.

Ortner, Sherry, (1995). “Resistance and the problem of ethnographic refusal”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 173-93.

Patnaik, Prabhat, (2010, March 6). “The Diffusion of Activities”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. XLV, no. 10, pp. 40-45.

Ray, Sunil, (2010, April 3). “Economic Growth and Social Cost: Need for Institutional Reforms”, *Economic & Political Weekly*, vol. XLV, no. 14, pp. 17-20,

Sarkar, Sumit, (1997). *Writing Social History*. Oxford University Press: New Delhi.

Sivaramakrishnan, K, (1995). “Situating the Subaltern: History and Anthropology in the Subaltern Studies Project”, *Journal of Historical Sociology,* vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 395-429.

Shah, A, (2006a). “The Labour of Love: Seasonal Migration from Jharkhand to the Brick Kilns of Other States in India”, *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, vol. 40, pp. 91–118.

Shah, A, (2006b). "Markets of Protection: The "Terrorist" Maoist Movement and the State in Jharkhand, India", *Critique of Anthropology*, vol. 26, pp. 297–314.

Shah, A, (2007). "Keeping the State Away: Democracy, Politics and the State in India's Jharkhand", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 13, pp. 129–45.

Subramanian, Arvind, (2008). *India's Turn: Understanding the Economic Transformation*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Upadhya, Carol and Vasavi A.R, (2006). *Work, Culture and Sociality in the Indian IT industry: A Sociological Study*. School of Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Science Campus, Bangalore: National Institute of Advanced Studies.

Wallerstein, I, (1974). *The Modern World System, vol. 1. Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century.* New York: Academic Books.