ISSN: 2456-9550
JMC
November 2019

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Volume 3, 2019

THE JMC REVIEW

An Interdisciplinary Social Science Journal of Criticism, Practice and Theory

JESUS AND MARY COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF DELHI
NEW DELHI-110021

COSMOPOLITICS, CITIZENSHIP AND THE NATION STATE—A COSMOPOLITICAL APPROACH: DRAMA FROM PALESTINE AND IRAN

PAYAL NAGPAL*

Abstract

This paper analyses cosmopolitics as a positive and constructive term that challenges cosmopolitanism's claims of inclusivity and healthy coexistence. It assesses these ideas against the backdrop of a globalised world. The argument indicates how we might gain from such a scenario the realisation that a globalised world dictated by economic superpowers will not be in the interests of the larger humanity. The same understanding might also become the basis of an egalitarian perspective under which all nations of the world would play a significant part in the framing of policies. The need to acknowledge and accommodate difference, with the realisable potential to differ, has created the need for cosmopolitics that could make space for 'different' and 'differing' communities. Mutually benefitting and joined at the root by struggle for dignity is what constitutes 'cosmopolitics'. This paper presents cosmopolitics as a methodology to examine the changing power equations of a volatile world. Doubting the status quo, raising critical questions to show gaps and lapses, and putting them parallel to the idea of give and take between equals is therapy our times need. Since deeply political, such a vision inspires thought, imagination and creativity. Therefore the argument in this paper is divided into four parts. The first part situates the citizen within the discourse of globalisation and cosmopolitanism. The second part examines the citizen as subject and her/his relation to the state. Louis Althusser's Marxian understanding of the functionality of the social dynamic and Etienne Balibar's idea of neo-racism are relevant to this analysis. The final sections look at the literature shaped by imaginative minds to construct a viewpoint that will strengthen the perspective discussed above. They engage with two plays—Ismail Khalidi's *Tennis at Nablus* (2015) from Palestine, and Mohammad Yaghoubi's *A Moment of Silence* (2016) from Iran. The analysis attempts a cohesive

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view of the present-day cultural scenario and locates optimism in our historical moment of deep instability.

Key Words: cosmopolitics, cosmopolitanism, globalisation, neo-racism, mode of production, superstructure, ideology, ideological state apparatuses, citizen, subject.

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I

'Cosmopolitics' is a composite term with connotations of cosmopolitanism and politics. The two are at times understood as coterminous. The question to be asked is, does cosmopolitics pose a challenge to cosmopolitanism that confines intellectual considerations to the developed First World? Yet, there may be a link between the two. In this paper, I stress that cosmopolitics, in the positive, constructive sense of the term, challenges cosmopolitanism's claims of inclusivity and healthy coexistence. The discussion is divided into four parts. The first part situates the citizen within the discourse of globalisation and cosmopolitanism and uses Balibar's idea of 'neo-racism' to analyse the nation. The second part examines the citizen as subject and her/his relation to the state. The final sections engage with two plays—Ismail Khalidi's *Tennis at Nablus* (2015) from Palestine, and Mohammad Yaghoubi's *A Moment of Silence* (2016)[1] from Iran, and attempt a cohesive view of the present-day cultural scenario and locate light in our historical moment of deep instability.

In 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' (1971), Louis Althusser has argued that every 'dominant' mode of production brings with it a new set of social formations.[2] Althusser's contention extends the Marxian understanding of society at the level of mode of production to the superstructural level of culture.[3] The concept is worth considering when we take up issues of literary representation—the latter ever contends with not just the given structures, but also the production process of ideas and norms. We may also bear in mind that ideas and norms are changed with changes occurring in social life that adjusts with and modifies itself in new economic pressures. In applying this idea to the present argument, one can map the impact of the globalising trend on the many formations in the post-Second World War period. The neo-liberalist economic reforms in the 1990s brought with them a new idiom to understand nation, border and citizen that had empirically emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. In the wake of the reforms, free flow of trade between countries redefined state

boundaries. Would free trade weaken, if not dissolve, the existing boundaries? Would human beings follow the pattern of commodities that crossed borders without obstacles? It might be the case that economies altered at the root rose to impact norms and principles that remained resistant for long. The 1990s were witness to the rising spirit of cosmopolitanism—it was a coming together of subjects from different formations. A multicultural ethos with its slogan of plurality sought in the cosmopolitan subject an expansion of consciousness. The latter accommodated variety and difference. With it, the postcolonial perspective earned a concrete edge, a form that questioned with vigour the long-held views of loyalty, integration and acceptance. The bigger identity perforce became a cluster of identities, independent and assertive. Althusser's open-ended structures helped understand such a process.

In addition, market as a paradigm gave a shaking up to the ideas of identity, both cultural and political. Free flow of trade and goods in the market indicated a reconstitution of the understanding of borders and communities. A network that created new needs and opportunities was laid out in the market that hinged on relations and trade agreements between different state structures. Thus, seeds were sown of the free exchange of goods that entailed a mammoth global state without borders. It may be the case that renewed understanding of the constitution of border-lines (call them 'shadow lines' if you will) and their porosity was sought as the desired goal. Ironically, however, in the euphoria over the world as one large market, the myth of the global citizen loomed large. One may indeed ask if that was true cosmopolitanism!

Yet further, cosmopolitanism propelled a pool of ideas from various spatial zones, communities and cultures and breathed optimism; it allowed for an interaction of the many structures in one large space. Seminars and conferences in academia in the 1990s were dedicated to these ideas. Did cosmopolitanism as a blanket term with its acceptance/ accommodation of 'difference' make space for them to 'differ' with each other ideologically?[4] The idea of differing communities sat uncomfortably with an illusory peaceful cosmopolitanism. The term was used to look at the differing/different communities as thinking alike on humanitarian grounds.

Let us also analyse the claim of the global market as one integrated structure with space for everyone. This is not the case; we see that in the post-Cold War era, two big powers—USA and Soviet Russia—reigned supreme for four decades, even as the remaining countries were placed in the category of the Third World. In that time segment, a unified world was a distant

dream. Later, in the 1990s, we saw the emergence of a unipolar world with America heading it. A decade and a half later, a world of mutually clashing parts unfolded; China came into the picture and offered a potentially balancing factor. It is an unsteady world. Cosmopolitanism may be in the air, but that would assume a tangible form only when the gap between the mighty and weaker nations is filled at least partially. But can the gap be filled and a world of fewer dissentions than before be conjured up? We observe that for the First World, imposing sanctions on the other countries is an effective tool that would stand in the way of achieving peace and harmony. This is proved beyond doubt by assertions of Cyrus Newlin's report: 'With a new bill that expands sanctions on Russia circulating within Congress, it is clear that the United States will continue to rely on sanctions as a primary tool for confronting Russia….In the past six years, the United States has imposed more than 60 rounds of sanctions on Russian individuals, companies, and government agencies spanning nine issue areas'[5]. The ongoing trade war between America and China is another instance of the same phenomenon. This puts paid to hopes of cosmopolitanism if that was ever a potential dream. It is a matter of concern not just for our world's political aspirations, indeed it pushes boundaries of cosmopolitanism still farther away. We might gain from such a scenario the realisation that a globalised world introduced on terms dictated by economic superpowers will not be in the interests of the larger humanity. The same realisation might also become the basis of an egalitarian perspective under which all nations of the world would play a significant part in the framing of policies. Mutually benefitting and joined at the root by struggle for dignity is what constitutes 'cosmopolitics'. Since deeply political, such a vision inspires thought, imagination and creativity. If we look at the literature shaped by imaginative minds the world over, we might construct a viewpoint that will strengthen the perspective discussed above. Needless to say, the venture can be analysed in concrete terms with help from structures that operate in the economic, social and cultural domains at the present time.

Against this background, we might note that the global citizen of a supposedly cosmopolitan world has remained mythical all along. The need to acknowledge and accommodate difference, with the realisable potential to differ, has meanwhile created the need for cosmopolitics that could create space for 'different' and 'differing' communities. It can be argued for cosmopolitics that thinking, operating and functioning in different ways at economic and social levels goes beyond cultural difference; it necessitates differing and disagreeing, even as they remain part of a corpus. This ability to be different also brings to light the inherent limitations of present-day globalisation, and its mythical cosmopolitan

subject. From the time cosmopolitics crystallised, around the 1970s, it began to tell new stories and create new narratives in the realm of culture. It provided a methodology with which to understand the workings of a less developed economy in tandem with the developed world. The method constituted in clarifying dissensions and disagreements. The operation worked at two levels. The countries of the Third World gained consciousness through visualising common masses participating in broad struggles in their respective home territories. That would later pave the way for mutually agreed policies among smaller nations. Such cosmopolitics would allow for an examination of the logistics of majoritarian and marginal economies and their ways of thinking, the method that will augment its worth and scope. To reiterate, this is yet to acquire tangible shape and is only an imaginative projection, the same way as the free market that is mutually beneficial for all parties is an imaginative projection. What renders cosmopolitanism mythical is the power it possesses and which stops it from being egalitarian; on the contrary, cosmopolitics seeks inspiration from struggle, where physical and mental labour are the source of its dynamic. That makes cosmopolitics deeply and essentially political, qualifying it to lay claim to the name it is called by.

For cosmopolitics, Althusser comes handy, particularly his superstructure-based argument of forging ideas in the domain of politics. It is generally not recognised in contemporary discussions that the point of departure for Althusser is Leninism. That answers the accusation of structuralism laid at his door. For Althusser, the argument of structure and superstructure and their basis in the economic mode of production is to grasp the functionality of the social dynamic. It does not detract from political struggle. The same may be true for us in the case of cosmopolitics that elucidates for us the vision and the method it requires us to adopt. Theory for us is to familiarise ourselves with the inner dynamic of change. If we do not see this aspect in its working, praxis if you might, we would be charging Althusser of being a structuralist. For him, the argument is theoretical, which is not a replacement for practice, but only a provider of broad direction; that is to be viewed as light in which to see the object as well as to work for its movement.

Here, we clear the path for discussion on culture. Let us remind ourselves that cosmopolitanism of a globalised world, our problem area in the present analysis, facilitates a mixing of cultures and simultaneously homogenising difference. That is a negative trait. It ignores equations of power between different economies and social groups. This dynamic of accepting as well as condoning power difference creates hierarchies referred to by Etienne

Balibar as a kind of 'neo-racism'.[6] It is similar to biological racism where a community asserts its superiority over others by projecting itself as a genetically advanced race that carries the burden of civilising the lesser ones. The entire programme of western colonisation justified itself on this count. Balibar defines neo-racism as,

> It is a racism whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences, a racism which, at first sight, does not postulate the superiority of certain groups or peoples in relation to others but only the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of life-styles and traditions (1991: 21).

This he calls 'differentialist racism', and also a kind of meta-racism. It is a form of racism that functions along economic and cultural lines. A culture that is universal is considered to be 'progressive', and the one that is particularistic is seen as 'primitive'.

II

The question one might pose at this point is regarding the 'hazy'[7] connections between nationalism and racism that reflect upon the writing of cosmopolitics, assuming that the writing is present on the scene with effect and influence. Let us raise the issue of the citizen as subject, something that a significant part of the committed writing concerns itself with. In the process of constitution of the nation-state, nationalist assertions also construct the citizen in a specific manner. Borders help organise exploitation in smaller units of the world, producing contradictions that can bring out internal assertion and conflicts in the outer world. For instance, we keep in purview the area within the colonial paradigm that could get extended from Europe to other countries (Balibar 2004: 7). Borders accompanying the formation of nation-states have had a deterministic impact on the construction of the citizen. We admit that globalisation worked towards the dissolution of market divisions, and yet in effect it did provide mobility to the citizen, a positive happening. The cosmopolitan subject is symbolic of the grand narrative of globalisation, there to be handled for keeping steady the unfolding arrangement. A look at the relationship between marginal communities with the nation-state, and the power equations between nations as well as their impact on the citizen, tells us how the 'citizen' is a contested construct—the identity of people from conflict zones ruptures both the narrative and its exemplary subject, laying bare surfaces of possible awareness meaningfully.[8]

In that framework, the citizen is constituted within the border and wins a sense of belonging to the nation-state. Conversely, within the borders of the small state, the many communities, cultural groups and ethnicities struggle to become conscious parts. Largely, the determining frame is the physical sense of belonging, it might be both real and imagined. 'Patriotism' reinforces the borders and gives a defence mechanism to the citizen bound to the bordered territory. Belonging to the nation ensured rights within hierarchies formed in the nation. Balibar aptly points out how, at the time of globalisation, these become the seat of 'violent tensions'. The opening up of markets might have facilitated a free flow of goods, but these being largely capitalist meant that the idea of surplus and profit motive in the market would continue to function. The result would be a series of power divisions continually alienating communities from production and transforming them into marginal entities. This would be both within the nation and between nations. Market anxieties get transformed into power relations and privilege only a few. 'Development' in Third World countries is on terms set by the First World and at the centre of it the exploitation of labour. Balibar has discussed the citizen–subject as a construct of the system of exclusion. He states:

> [The] modern citizenship, working through institutions characteristic of national sovereignty, whose function is, in a sense, to administer the universal by subjecting individuals to it (the school, judiciary, public health and other systems) has gone hand in hand with a vast system of social exclusions that appear as the counterpart of the normalization and socialization of anthropological differences. (Balibar 2004: 60).

Here, we are given to understand the connections between the nation-states and the inclusion/ exclusion of citizens from it, inherently a Gramscian idea,[9] later developed by Althusser in terms of the state apparatuses. The citizen's construction is accompanied by required doses of national sentiment that are administered through institutions such as the school, the church, the judiciary. The nation-state is a continuous reinforcement of the hegemonic idea of what is projected as nationalist and patriotic. The true citizen adheres to this consciously created dogma. My purpose is to problematise the idea of the citizen and state to place the nation-state in a globalised world from the angle of cosmopolitics.

At present, outside cosmopolitics the citizen as a myth, s/he without community, poses a threat to the universal subject's access to human and political rights. 'Human rights' no longer form an integral part of 'political rights'. In contrast, it is the political right or citizenship, a notion of political belonging to a nation that gives one access to human rights

(ibid: 117). The nation-state in the global world posits, willy-nilly, the citizen as a political category, and that ruptures the myth of the global citizen in a cosmopolitan world. In the opening up of borders between nations, people as such get excluded from this global trade of movement, their position being marginalised since they are no part of the picture left by dissolution of borders.

Cosmopolitics brings within the ambit of discussion an inquiry into the citizen status being constructed. Ironically, as stated above, most citizens are kept out of the process. Giving rise to clusters of conflict zones, such a process brings into question the monolithic category called nationhood. The fact of exclusion from nationhood assumes bizarre forms, reminding people that there was much that was amiss in the golden tenets of globalisation. This translates into the free market theory, granting space to the citizen becoming suspect.

Cosmopolitics interrogates the relationship between citizenship and community in modern nation-states, where crises are the norm. Instances of people from Syria, Kashmir or Palestine are the case in point. Globalisation as a dubious category understandably has complicated matters, with citizenship being compromised frequently. Vulnerable zones get converted into battlegrounds that cause hierarchies to raise their head.

Cosmopolitics is the new methodology to examine the changing power equations of a volatile world. Doubting the status quo, raising critical questions to show gaps and lapses, and putting them parallel to the idea of give and take between equals is therapy our times need. Pointing towards neo-racism based on denial of economic inequality can shake up smugness crucially. This is being done by discomforting voices of the sane in our midst. The following two sections will look at the imaginatively drawn pictures of Palestine and Iran, inspiring us to reassess conflicts from the political angle of intervention. In the case of Palestine, both strategies of elimination and oppression are at work. Iran is different, where resistance to the global normative is stressed as the need of the hour.

III

The word aubergine, for example, 'your highness,' derives from the Spanish 'berenjena' which comes from the arablic 'bidenjan,' which in turn is from the Persian 'badnigan,' all derived originally from the Sanskrit, 'vatin gameh' (Khalidi 2015: 869).

In global perception, Palestine is a country recognised primarily in terms of its conflict with Israel, and only secondarily as a nation with an independent existence and culture. It continues to be a country whose 'statehood' is not recognised by certain major superpowers or by Israel. In the United Nations, it has received Non-Member Observer State status only as recently as 2012. Is Palestine a nation-state in the normative understanding of the term? Does it have people who have rights as citizens of the nation? Is the nation-state on its part empowered to guarantee full citizen status to its people? These questions disturb the comfortable discourse of globalisation. This does not mean that we discredit the gains of the two joint movements of globalisation and cosmopolitanism. They have indeed facilitated the coming together of cultures and an awareness of each other even as they remain under that comfortable umbrella of terminologies. But in the 21st century, the viability of these terms must be assessed from a cosmopolitical approach. These have become instruments to exercise the hegemony of the dominant powers as they apparently dissolve difference and promote the grand narratives of nationalism and statehood. Having asked how Palestine negotiates its citizen status or lack of it, this section will look towards literature to understand these ideas in their complexity.

Palestinians are citizens of a country in which the idea of space has remained entangled with that of citizenship. In 1948, the British departure from the colony was followed by Jewish immigration in the aftermath of Nazism. This was also the beginning of the Second World War that polarised nations across the globe. The formation of Israel meant a mass exodus of people from Palestine. Numerous stories recount how Palestinians were left clinging to the key to their home thinking they were soon going to move homewards. Spatial transitions along with complex citizenship claims for the Palestinians ensued. The Palestinians are citizens with a community but without a synchronous space[10] as they remain without the means of assertion from where they are stationed. People who remained within Palestinian territory had to meet with an understanding of their citizen status only within narratives of conflict. If we believe that political rights provide access to human rights as citizens, then we are already in a grey area as these people can hardly exercise either of these rights.[11] Moreover, in global perception they are always on shaky ground. The Palestinian as 'citizen' disrupts the harmony of the equation between political rights, human rights, the nation-state and citizen.

Palestine, with its rich theatrical tradition, problematises some of these issues. Hala Khamis Nassar, who specialises in theatre and performing arts, argues as to how most research on Palestinian theatre focussed on the theatrical traditions from the 1970s onwards. But recent archival work has revealed a 'vibrant' history of theatre in the pre-1948 period (2018: 199). The play focusses on the pre-1948 period and helps raise pertinent questions on the issue of citizens and her/his relation to the state. This section analyses Ismail Khalidi's[12] play, *Tennis at Nablus.*[13] The play is set in the period 1936–1939, the years of the Arab rebellion against the British coloniser.[14] It constructs the Palestinian as citizen by concentrating on her/his role in the period before the Palestine–Israel conflict. Strategies of the dominant discourse, that culturally delegitimise[15] their work, are countered. A historical cosmopolitical approach allows us to reformulate complex issues of nation and the citizen. Why is it important to re-look at the warped relation between citizen and state from the pre-1948 period? In their colonial phase, Palestinians were denied citizen status and struggle against the British coloniser reinforced Palestinian identity. Later, as the coloniser moved out of the colony, Palestine became empowered to negotiate between state and citizen; a factor soon to be complicated by the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

Tennis at Nablus is about the Arab revolt against the British and has at its centre, a tennis match at Nablus. Historically, Nablus was important as a seat of trade and power. According to Nassar:

> Jerusalem along with other Palestinian cities, such as the two main coastal cities, Haifa and Jaffa, and Nablus, Hebron, Nazareth and Gaza, 'were important foci of Palestinian cultural and intellectual life, as well as being political, administrative and economic centres' (2018: 200).

Rashid Khalidi also points out that 'Nablus was Palestine's principal trade and manufacturing centre' (in Nassar 2018: 200). Ismail Khalidi's choice of Nablus for the play *Tennis at Nablus* is therefore significant. It is based on an image remembered by Khalidi, wherein an Israeli historian recounted how, during the Arab rebellion, prisoners were kept 'chained together as ball boys' as the British officials played a tennis match. As the writer explains, this play is a point of 'historical intervention into the discussion between Palestine/Israel'. This moment ratifies the identity of Palestine outside of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and becomes

> [a] way to subvert the timeline and the narrative and to show not only that Palestinians existed before Israel, but also that they had a sophisticated society and culture and that they were struggling against colonial British rule for their own freedom and self-determination (2015: 367).

The play counters the effacement of the history of resistance of the Palestinians. The nation otherwise imagined only through a structure of conflict focusses on the Arab rebellion and becomes an identity marker for the Palestinian as citizen.

Historically, these were the years of the outbreak of the Second World War marked by Nazism and its barbaric treatment of the Jews.[16] But, back in the Palestinian colony, the British used the Zionists to curb the Arab rebellion. The Palestinians were well aware that the British promise of Palestinian land, as per the Balfour declaration,[17] would leave them in a state of conflict. Jewish entry into Palestine through trade and land deals was encouraged and facilitated by the British in the colony. The rising bourgeoisie of Palestine supported the move. This is the background against which the play is set. It raises crucial questions about the Palestinian as citizen. In the pre-1948 phase, people are denied citizen status. But in the post-1948 *nakba*,[18] their citizen status will not fetch them human rights available to people in other erstwhile colonies.

Tennis at Nablus is set in 1939 against the backdrop of the decline of the Arab revolt. The rebel Yusef Al Qudsi is married to Anbara, a Palestinian writer who writes under a non-de-plume. Her latest one is Mohammad Ali Baybars. Yusef is in hiding and enters disguised as a British soldier. The rebellion has for the most part been curbed by the British forces, even as Yusef continues his fight against them. Yusef invites his nephew Tariq to meet him and knows well that his nephew might reveal his whereabouts. Tariq is a businessman and supports the British as he negotiates land deals for them and the Jews. He also sells them houses owned by the Palestinians. Yusef is arrested as his whereabouts are revealed by his nephew, Tariq. As Yusef pre-empts the act, he frames Tariq and as a result both are arrested. While in prison, they are chained and made ball boys in a match between General Falbour and Lieutenant Douglas Duff. Meanwhile, Anbara's articles as Baybars have become a threat to the British, who are willing to buy 'him' out. Anbara goes to Tel Aviv and accepts the money to stop writing, but uses it to set Yusef free. She collaborates with two people serving the British army—Rajib, an Indian, and Michael O' Donegal, an Irish. However, the plan fails, as Yusef is tried a day before and hanged, so as to not disturb General Falbour's tennis

match with the High Commissioner. The dead 'Arab' will be a mute spectator to the match as 'the general insists the Arab watch the tennis match' (Khalidi 2015: 2281). Anbara continues to write under a new name. Tariq, who has had a change of heart, finds it difficult to stay amidst violence and aggression in Palestine and moves to Beirut.

The action begins as Yusef comes home after being in exile and decides to meet Tariq. Yusef is the rebel, Tariq, a supporter of the regime. Tariq's store in Jaffa was burnt during the Arab rebellion as he did not shut it down during the boycott. He is bitter and sees no profit in revolution. A rational bourgeoisie driven by self-interest and money making, Tariq sells land and houses of Palestinian people to the British and Jews. As Anbara tells Yusef, 'There's a killing to be made on real estate these days and your nephew isn't one to miss out' (ibid.: 1029). This has of course earned him the right to go to the Governor's party. It is therefore no surprise when arrested from Yusef's place, Tariq is convinced it was a mistake on the British side.

Tariq understands revolution as a process of 'evolution' and calls it 'rational nationalism'. He is the rich bourgeoisie who follows 'rationality' to toe the line of the coloniser. He pursues 'civilisation' as projected by the British. Yusef counters Tariq by telling him that 'they [British] were painting their bodies blue and drawing on caves when we were building fountains and universities and inventing mathematics!' (ibid.: 1165). But Tariq is the capital man who transacts land to escape his identity as Palestinian and colonised. He builds around a hybrid identity akin to his counterpart in India—only Palestinian in looks but British in his thinking.[19] He even juggles between two newspapers, the British and the Arab. Yusef sees him as a 'collaborator' who will soon escape the situation by buying a flat in London—'A naïve, collaborating ape walking the rainy streets of the imperialist capital in a nice European suit' (ibid.: 1472). The rebel resists this kind of hybridity that mocks the colonised human. One can mark the genesis of Balibar's idea of 'neo-racism'. Tariq thinks arrest will sully his name with the British, but as Yusef tells him it is the one thing that will help forge his Palestinian identity. Where Tariq strives for his hybrid identity, Yusef sees him as a Palestinian.[20]

Yusef and Tariq are arrested, and even as the latter clings to his hybrid identity, he is labelled Palestinian. The tennis match between General Falbour and Lieutenant Douglas Duff is placed at the centre of the play. Yusef and Tariq are chained and kept as ball boys to chase the tennis balls. It is the ultimate spectacle that exposes the coloniser and their treatment of

the colonised. Where Yusef refuses to move to their tune, Tariq, who is conditioned to accepting their commands, keeps bobbing from one side to the other. The powerful thrive on the bourgeoisies who makes money in this time of conflict. They support the colonial regime, but what is their status as people of the country? As Yusef tells him, the British have turned him into a 'monkey' dancing to their tune.

Tariq's arrest and time spent in prison make him confront his identity as Palestinian. The sound of Yusef being beaten up, as he lies in his cell, gives him a sense of the enormity of the situation and the sacrifice of the rebels. He reads Baybars's articles that inspire the people at large. As the crowd of protesters cheer for him, Tariq feels a sense of guilt and understands how he is part of the community and shares a world view. The struggle establishes a bond between the nation-state and citizen. On his part, Yusef re-examines his own views about revolution. Analysing critically the nature of rebellion, Yusef thinks of it as not just a moment of courage, but one that ushers change, positive and constructive—'we want independence, fine, but what's next? So we just fight to forget, to survive, and chaos and violence become the wine and hashish of the oppressed' (ibid.: 1860). He is angry at the appearance of a 'European city that has appeared on the coast of Palestine and it wasn't there thirty years ago'. But Yusef realises that anarchy and violence must be replaced with a consistent struggle. Any notion of what it means to be a citizen has to be constantly re-negotiated; there can be no fixed answers.

This play is important for its historical understanding of the Arab–Jew relationship. Yusef sees the Jews as his 'long lost cousins'. He tells Tariq to stop trading with the British:

> No, I said Europeans. They are Europeans to me. I have no interest which way they talk to God. We've always had Jews among us, but they were Arabs, like us. These Zionists, they are Europeans, fighting side by side with the British Empire (ibid.: 1217).

The British coloniser 'buys' land and treats the people of that land in an inhuman manner. Soon enough they cease to exist as people with rights and basic human dignity in their own land. Tariq is saved by Mr Hirsch, a Jew. On his part, Hirsch tells Tariq, 'I want to live in Palestine, as a proud Jew. Alongside the Arabs safe' (ibid.: 2000). However, he is sharply conscious of Palestinian economy as dependent on the British. Tariq realises the futility of his rational enterprise; it had only compromised Palestine. Hirsch believes his relation with Tariq

will no longer be the same. He ensures Tariq is set free, and in his letter to him, Hirsch dreams of a future in which there is enough space for the Arab and the Jew.

The play moves through a continuous process of formulating identities. Yusef's understanding of the revolution becomes more sensitive. Tariq realises his roots. However, he decides to move to Beirut as he finds it difficult to deal with the frenzy of rebellion. Anbara is the voice of resistance—a woman who writes under a male pseudonym. She does not see a revolution without the participation of women. And as a woman writer, it is she who mobilises people through her writing. Even as her articles disturb the powers that be, she cannot be traced. Each time her resistance is curbed, she is sensible enough to politick—she gives up the name and acquires a new identity: from Mohammad Al Baybars to Abdel Qader Salah al Din. Her articles make heroes out of the rebels; they unify the people and create common cause.

Tennis at Nablus imagines citizen-nation-state bonds as one of constant negotiation. Fixed and frozen identity politics is illusory and regressive. The play reclaims the lost identity of the Palestinians and their rich cultural heritage. Performed in 2010 and set in 1939, the play reconstructs Palestinian history through its struggle against the British coloniser; this becomes an assertion of their identity. Empty rhetoric of patriotism is rejected in favour of a balanced one to recreate the possibility of the co-existence of people with difference.

IV

I believe that the day will come when people can write whatever they want or at least won't be threatened to death because of their writing (Yaghoubi 2016: 68).

This section will analyse Iranian playwright, Mohammad Yaghoubi's *A Moment of Silence*, a play that problematises citizen–state relations from within the nation. The play is set in the period immediately after the Iranian Revolution of 1978–1979. The revolution ousted Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and brought the Shi'ite clerics to power with Ayatollah Khomeini at the helm. The family of the Shah with its political inclinations towards the West was

ousted through a people's revolution. In a recent article in *The Hindu* newspaper, Ramin Jahanbegloo explains the revolution thus:

> The Iranian revolution was surprising not because it caused a monarch to collapse, but because of the way in which people organised themselves and participated in massive demonstrations…Khomeini was not only popular among Iranians for his uncompromising attitude to the Shah and his anti-imperialist and populist rhetoric since 1963, but also because he and his followers were fully ready and organised for the establishment of an Islamic regime in Iran. As a result defying all the myths of secular modernisation and shattering all the political ideologies of modernity, the Islamic Republic became the first theocratic state in the modern world to have institutionalised the Shi'ite idea of *Velayat-e-Faqih*, or the 'rule of the jurist' (2019: 6).

Iran poses a different problem to the seemingly harmonious connection between citizen and state in western theoretical ideas. The people revolted against the Shah's rule to establish a 'Republic' governed by the ideas of religion. The ruler in the new structure was brought in with the 'consent' of the majority and seen as supreme. This was a contradiction of sorts. Envisaged as a forging of authentic Iranian identity to resist the cultural-political onslaught of the West, the revolution became trapped in its own contours. The idea of the Republic became enmeshed with strictures of Shi'ite theocracy. What happens to identity and citizenship in this case? Cosmopolitics helps us understand the case of Iran not in terms of its own politics, but in the context of its relation to the powerful blocks, especially the West. After the overthrow of the Shah's regime, through revolution, the nation re-imagined itself anew on religious and nationalist lines. Iran, heavily dominated by the Shia clerics, weaved a conception of the nation along new hegemonic lines. The establishment of the Shi'ite theocracy became a natural outcome of the revolution.

Mohammad Yaghoubi's *A Moment of Silence* is set in a 20-year time period from 1980 to 2000. The play is about a family of three sisters, Sheida, Shirin and Shiva. It examines the aftermath of the revolution in Iran through the eyes of Shiva. *A Moment of Silence* begins with the waking up of Shiva, asleep during the period of the Iranian Revolution. Against the story of these three sisters is the story of Hasti and her husband, Sohrab. Hasti is a woman writer engaged in writing a play entitled, *Goodbye Until I Don't Know When*. The two

narratives presented as disjointed structures run parallel, and are finally brought together towards the close of the play.

A young woman, Shiva slept through the revolution, and woke up to a world where 'order' had been restored through the 'Cultural Revolution' that followed the people's struggle; a world in which the women faced more restrictions than before. What were the rights of the citizen, especially the woman as citizen in the restructured world in Iran? Identity was negotiated through religion, whose interpretations were fixed; in short, non-negotiable identities. This was especially detrimental to the women, writers and intellectuals as citizens. Shiva went into a deep slumber during the Shah's rule—a time when women were assertive, and writers and intellectuals engaged in a free exchange of ideas. In contrast, she gets up, in 1980, to a world where women have practically no freedom. Universities have been shut and the women have to wear the *hijab*. Hasti questions Sohrab on what he remembers of the revolution, and he replies:

> Hijab. Just imagine, before 1980 most women used to go out without a headscarf. I remember the first time my mother came home from work wearing one. I really couldn't recognize her at first. I thought she was a stranger! For a long time I couldn't understand why all women accepted to wear that thing…I'll never forget the first time our literature teacher came to the classroom wearing a chador….She used to only wear miniskirts, nothing else would do. Until one day, she came to school fully covered. It was unbelievable! The same women we used to see without a headscarf in short dresses, ended up veiled just two months later (Yaghoubi 2016: 21).

Sohrab's reminiscences of 1980 reflect on the sudden adoption of what he thought to be a more conservative identitarian politics. Unlike the situation before the revolution, women no longer had the freedom of choice with respect to the hijab. In Sohrab's reminiscences, the mother had become a 'stranger'. The individual had to renegotiate her/his citizen status in this socio-cultural and historical transformation. To be patriotic and consequently a valid citizen, s/he has to visualise once again what it means to belong to this world. Disconcerting though it may be, s/he has to forego the earlier identity. The literature teacher who received education and was also engaged in the process of imparting education, had to 'become' a different person. The words that Sohrab associates with the time are 'Imperialism, World Domination, Cultural Purification, Executions, personal vendettas' (ibid.: 22). Citizen identity in Iran becomes complex in the late 20th century. Recourse to religio-cultural

assertion as a consequence of the revolution shifts the axioms of power from outside the nation-state to the inside. In resisting the forces outside, the West, in this case, people carry out a cultural purging to re-define the nation and its people in terms of sharp coordinates from within the nation. This makes it markedly different from the West, but at the same time leaves the citizen at a loss. Negotiation takes place within a fixed ambit. Mention of writers such as Forough Farrokhzad[21] in the play remind of time past when despite restrictions, poetry critical of the times was written and read. Her poetry was banned in the years after the revolution. The relatively vibrant life of writers, teachers and intellectuals in the pre-revolution phase stands in glaring contrast to the post-revolution period when women are confined in chadors and the intellectuals are under threat. The idea is not to privilege one political period over another. There were censorship issues during the Shah's reign too, but a people's revolution meant to usher change ended up limiting the rights and expression of the citizen. The social and political situation presented by Yaghoubi was the reality of the time in Iran. In a PEN anthology on Iranian literature Nahid Mozaffari describes the atmosphere as follows:

> Most writers supported and participated in the revolution of 1979, and enjoyed the brief period of freedom of expression it brought. Before long, the religious factions attempted to consolidate their power by taking American hostages and launching a cultural revolution. Universities were first purged of all non-religious elements and then closed altogether. Political opponents were imprisoned, killed, driven abroad, and otherwise silenced. Sanctioned broadly by the West including United States, Saddam Hussein attacked Iran in September 1980. Cities were bombed and hundreds of thousands of people perished under rockets and chemical weapons. Despite facing repression and strict censorship from their own state, war with Iraq, international vilification from abroad, and dire personal financial circumstances, Iranian writers have resumed writing and publishing from the early 1980s (Mozaffari 2005: xix).

As Shiva wakes up, Jimmy informs her that the reign of the Shah was over and now they are a 'republic'. But the formation of the Republic jars with Shiva's understanding as she is confused looking at women in headscarves. Shirin informs her, 'There's an Islamic government now, honey. No woman is allowed to go out without hijab…Jimmy used to study zoology, but they closed all the universities after the Cultural Revolution' (Yaghoubi.: 25-26). The revolution led to the exodus of a whole lot of people, as Jimmy tells her:

> The revolution happened! They closed all the bars. All the singers left. Everyone who left took a fistful of the homeland's soil, even EBI, the singer. The homeland almost ran out of soil! (Yaghoubi 2016: 25)

Where in *Tennis at Nablus* the citizen status is complicated by the state as 'conflict' zone, in *A Moment of Silence* the re-imagination of the state post-revolution on religious-nationalist lines complicates citizenship and identity. In a rather sudden manner, the citizen must reinterpret and renegotiate self with the state or else they will be forced to leave. Memory of soil becomes a vestige of their earlier relation with the state.

Changes at the national level find parallel at the domestic level. Each time Shiva awakens, she confronts a new set of relations. Her husband Kayvan has divorced her and married her sister as he thought she might not awaken. The next time, her sister has moved in with Kayvan, they have a baby, and socially, the times are more difficult than before. As she gets up in 1983, the Cultural Revolution that began in 1980 is over, but the war between Iraq and Iran is on. People struggle both at home and at the level of the state. As Shiva awakens in 1987, Sheida plans to move to France and wants to meet her one last time. Times have become increasingly suffocating. Hasti, a writer, is hounded by fundamentalists who crush any voice of dissent. They threaten her over the phone—'Death to the intellectuals! Death to the intellectuals! Death to the intellectuals! Death to the intellectuals!' (ibid.: 59).

Hasti started receiving threat calls as the Cultural Revolution began in 1980 and these became fiercer as time passed. Missiles exploded with greater intensity than before. This horrific reality made people wish for sleep; a kind of oblivion to this change. Each time Shiva gets up, the situation in Iran has become more regressive. How does Shiva as citizen negotiate her/his identity with this reality? As Shiva sleeps yet again, she tells Jimmy, 'Goodbye Until I Don't Know When'. As she gets up once again, reality has become more difficult to bear. Jimmy has had a stroke and is bedridden. The only 'positive' development is that Shirin can be a taxi driver if that is any indicator of changing times.

The two strands of Shiva and Hasti are brought together at the end of the play. Times are difficult, writers are under threat; Hasti records her dissent to this clamming down without wearing a hijab. Two writers of the 134 who had 'signed the letter on freedom of expression' are assassinated. Hasti records a long speech about how she does not feel safe in her own house as she receives continuous threats from strangers. However, she finally decides not to

submit this recording to any channel as in going public she will fall prey to the conservatives and their agenda of supressing dissent. She explains, 'I don't want to lie. I don't want to be a hero. I love life. I love my country' (ibid.: 67). As writer, Hasti rejects the patriotic citizen model imposed on her and negotiates with the self on her own terms. Is there space for such assertion? Can the citizen create identity differently? What then is Hasti's relationship as citizen of Iran to her own country? She defines it as one of continuous struggle and negotiation through writing; an act of assertion. Hasti continues her fight fearlessly and tries hard to create the space for negotiation otherwise swallowed by *patriotic* sentiments in the construction of this new nation-state. She looks ahead, dreams about a future hundred years later in which she wants to come back to the same job and name, and live fearlessly. Hasti elaborates her dreams for the future:

> I believe humanity moves toward wisdom and away from ignorance…I want to feel safe. I wish the best for all writers of the future. I had hoped to see the day when we can write freely, and speak freely. I had hoped to see the day when no one is killed because of their beliefs (ibid.: 68).

In these visions, Hasti envisages her place in her country as constructed on humanitarian grounds—Identity as shaped not through the hegemony of conservative religious nationalism, but through a renewed sensitivity.

Shiva echoes Hasti's sentiment as she says, 'I'm going to bed Jimmy. Pray that I'll sleep for many years. I pray that I will sleep for a very long time and wake up to see that you are all better' (ibid.: 74). The play was intended to end on a hopeful and optimistic note. But Hasti realises the tragedy of the times. Writing has to be about the times and therefore 'hope is pretty much impossible right now'. Hasti's play remains unfinished as Hasti Yekta has been assassinated. Anbara in *Tennis at Nablus* and Hasti in this play are both writers and torch bearers. Both are women who write with conviction about the times and wait for change.

Where Yaghoubi's *A Moment of Silence* ends, Hasti Yekta's play remains unfinished. The two threads are brought together as a voice at the end of the play informs the audience:

> Dear audience members, the play, "Goodbye Until I Don't Know When" written by HASTI YEKTA remains unfinished due to the assassination of the playwright. In

> memory of this writer and other writers who have been killed around the world, we respectfully ask that you rise to observe a moment of silence (ibid.: 75).

The audience is invited to observe a 'moment of silence'; they are invited to create the optimistic ending that Hasti and Shiva looked forward to. This 'moment of silence' is a point of entry into pausing to think about the relation in which we exist to the world around us. This could be our immediate community or the state. What happens when as citizens we are denied the powers of negotiation in our own country? How do citizens deal with this? Yaghoubi's sensitive rendering of these questions in the play flouts any normative understanding of the relationship between the citizen and the community. The cosmopolitical method of entering into complex domains of understanding helps raise questions about these negotiations.

Balibar (2004) contends how the 'practical confrontation with the modalities of exclusion' is the 'founding moment of citizenship'. This is a 'domain' not of its solution but a 'permanent reopening'. It is

> a dialectics and not a constitution, a sociology, or a logic….A dialectic of 'constituent' and 'constituted citizenship'…it is a contradictory process, fed by permanent conflicts between several types of subjectifications or identities, some cultural or pre-political, others political (and from this point of view, divided into several degrees of civic consciousness, ranging from patriotism or the spirit of 'resistance' to 'class consciousness' or engagement in feminism, movements of struggle against racism, etc.)—whence subjects always come to inscribe themselves, historically, between the figures of tragedy and those of epic (2004: 77).

Cosmopolitanism in the early phase of globalisation signalled a coming together of markets, cultures and people. In the post-globalised era this 'coming together' needs to be reassessed against new graphs of economic powers in the world. Cosmopolitics investigates the 'prescriptive' view of cosmopolitanism to expose its veneer of perfection and examine the fractured idea of citizenship. There can be no easy solution to the issues raised. Citizen identity in historical formations needs to be continuously reassessed and renegotiated. Emerging economies and marginalised social groups must seize the moment of 'permanent opening' and make it their own and defy western logic. The purely nationalistic and the completely global models of citizen–state relations are flawed and need to be resisted.

Dialectical processes of continuous assessment and negotiation must be employed to evolve new models of citizen–state relations in this phase of world politics.

Notes

1 *Tennis in Nablus* was first performed in Atlanta in 2010. *A Moment of Silence* was first performed in Toronto in 2010.

2 'To simplify, my exposition, and assuming that every social formation arises from a dominant mode of production, I can say that the process of production sets to work the existing productive forces in and under definite relations of production' (Althusser 1971: 124).

3 In expanding Marx's base–superstructure model, Althusser puts forth the relative autonomy of the superstructure determined in the last instance by the base.

4 This ideological difference was at the level of culture and thinking.

5 https://www.csis.org/analysis/us-sanctions-against-russia-what-you-need-know, 30.10.18, accessed on 12.2.19.

6 Mark how Balibar's book comes in 1991, the beginning of globalisation. His understanding of 'neo-racism' identifies the way in which national boundaries are redrawn in the world. Balibar sees it as a relation of reciprocity. Discussing the case of Hitler and Germany, or the liberation struggles in colonies, Balibar explains it in the following way:

'From this accumulation of entirely individual but historically linked cases there results what might be called the cycle of historical reciprocity of nationalism and racism, which is the temporal figure of the system of nation-states over other social formations. Racism is constantly emerging out of nationalism, not only towards the exterior but towards the interior…racism is not an "expression" of nationalism but a supplement of nationalism or more precisely a supplement internal to nationalism, always in excess of it, but always indispensable to its constitution and yet always still insufficient to achieve its project, just as nationalism is both indispensable and always insufficient to achieve the formation of the nation or the project of a "nationalization" of society' (2004: 53).

7 Balibar refers to the 'hazy' connection.

8 Taisha Abraham demonstrates how, in the context of India, the marginalised communities, especially women, are severely impacted by the logic of globalisation and neo-liberalism:

'Third Way thinking projects globalisation as an epoch-defining phenomenon both in its descriptive and in its prescriptive aspects. In its descriptive aspect globalisation is seen as the international flow of capital, investment and technological development. Transnational corporations, along with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Economic Forum, are the main organisational conduits for the policing of this new economic order in the interests of the Western powers. Through the Structural Adjustment Programme, these organs streamline world economies to align them to the changing needs of the new economic order. Under this system many Third World countries have been coerced at "the gun-point of debt" to "divest their assets, open their markets and slash social spending" (Fraser, 2009, p. 107). In its prescriptive aspect, the so-called "developmental" paradigm of globalisation is seen as inevitable rather than as contingent upon capitalism (Abraham 2016: 246). The 'descriptive' flow of capital is backed by the 'prescriptive' construct of development. The two fuse in the cosmopolitan subject, symbolic of the grand narrative of globalisation. A closer look at the relationship between marginal communities with the nation-state and the power equations between nations and their impact on the citizen tell us how the 'citizen' is a contested construct.

9 Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci had proposed the idea of political society and civil society. The political society enforced the state and its power directly. But it was in civil society that the hegemony of the dominant class was created.

10 Lack of synchronous space means that the place in which the Palestinians lived was away from the state. As certain people moved to areas under Israeli control, people who were in these areas did not have the right to vote in Israel. So they continued to remain Palestinians in territories controlled by Israel. The relation between citizen and state is supposed to be coherent and synchronous.

11 Balibar's model does not work here as it is situated within the West.

12 Ismail Khalidi was born in Beirut in 1982. His parents were Palestinian. In 1983, his parents left Lebanon and settled in Chicago. He is now based in Chile. The play, performed in 2010, was nominated for a Suzi Bass Award for best world premiere play in the same year.

13 The play is dedicated to Juliano Mer-Khamis and Francois Abu Salem. Mer-Khamis ran the Freedom Theatre in Jenin and was murdered there. Abu Salem was the founder of Palestinian National Theatre.

[14] Palestine was under British mandate and a colony from 1920 to 1948.
[15] Ismail Khalidi and Naomi Wallace explain how the work of the Israeli dramatists has to face the odds against their work—'their work is culturally delegitmised, derailed and delimited by the Israeli–Palestinian "conflict" wherein the Israeli perspective is always/already privileged' (Khalidi 2015).
[16] One is reminded of the work of Bertolt Brecht who wrote his well-known plays around this time. As he moved from Germany to Scandinavia, he continued his critique of Hitler's regime through the mode of the Epic theatre and the parable play; a brave act.
[17] According to the Balfour Declaration in 1917, the British formally announced a home for the Jews in Palestine. At the time, Palestine was a part of the Ottoman Empire.
[18] The exodus of Palestinians in 1948.
[19] One is reminded of Macaulay's Minute on Education with its claim—'We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.' This idea of course enters Palestine much later as compared to India, as the former became a British colony only in 1917, prior to which it was a part of the Ottoman Empire.
[20] The Israeli historian, Yuval Noah Harrari has a 'lesson' on 'Nationalism'. In it he projects Europe as an example from where to draw lessons. He debunks the theory of nationalism and promotes 'global identity because national institutions are incapable of handling a set of unprecedented global predicaments' (2018: 125). Where the empty rhetoric of nationalism is indeed problematic, global identities too have failed to provide any succour to people in emerging economies and conflict zones. The discussion on Palestine is a case in point.
[21] Forroughzaad was a famous Iranian poet known for her liberated views on women. In her poem 'The Wedding Band', she asks the meaning of the wedding band. The poem ends with the following lines—'The woman grew agitated and cried out:/ O my, this ring that still sparkles and shines/ is the band of slavery and servitude.'

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