

## ESSAY

# On Classification of Postmodern

BY IFTEKHAR IQBAL

THOUGH secularism, industrialization, urbanization, nationalism, liberalism, scientific socialism, democracy etc. are generally perceived as the symptoms of modern, they are not necessarily the last word of it. The most important thing about modern is that it is a comprehensive process of power. In the Western Europe, the renaissance, mercantilism, arrival of the Europeans in the 'dark' and 'savage' continents of Africa and Asia and modern-all processes started almost simultaneously. The project of modern became attractive and inevitable keeping intimate consonance with the process in which renaissance spread, capitalism flourished, the Europeans turned political.

The term modern started appearing in the West's intellectual front in the early 16th century (in a poem by Dunbar around 1520 AD; in another poem addressing the British Queen). This is not a coincidence that the modern state just coming out of the womb of middle ages also increasingly got involved in the use of military technology.

In Europe (by the year 1500 AD) especially the new power changed significantly the power of the state, and the old, medieval structure were replaced by the foundation of the modern state.

At the same time, modern came as an intellectual dress-up to legalize the post-middle age empowerment process. Gradually it was made a popular import item for the colonies. But without consolidating power bases modern would not be an official agenda. Thus the historical modern age in South Asia starts right after the victory of the British over the locals in 1757 AD. Meanwhile as those materials and abstract phenomenon, issuing from industrial and technological revolution that nourished modern could not have stand firm without having hold or halt the economic management of the non-Western world. As a result, for the first time in history, the (ethnocentric) narrative of knowledge evolved. Power was joined to knowledge and at the same time the power of knowledge was fixed to the knowledge of power. The fullest and vivid account in this regard has been made by Edward Said in his book Orientalism.

That is, though knowledge, power and modern started their journey quite separately, soon became interdependent with the growth and globalization of capital. The process of pure learning that has been constant since the Socratic Greek thinkers to Ancient Asian and the Muslims, came to a tragic end with the hurly-burly of European expansion. Aristotle took knowledge to be nothing more or less than knowledge. In the 7th Century when Prophet Muhammad (SAS) symbolically suggested to go to China to acquire knowledge meant this precisely. Muslim scholars, during the speediest era of expansion, went everywhere from Andalusia to India with the military but did not seem to serve the economic interest of Medina, Baghdad, Cairo or Damascus with an economic strategy. But this pace of unmixed learning was frustrated by the intellectual agents of enlightenment. At a time when colonization process started getting impetus, Francis Bacon pronounced that knowledge is power. Robert Young pointed it clearly when he said that, 'All Western knowledge is a form of colonial discourse.' It is worth mentioning that when during the late 1700 AD the English were singing 'Rule Britannia Rule the Waves,' Macauley was talking about Indians of duality: Indian in skin, English in thought. Around the same time Rudyard Kipling was asking the English parents to sent in their most brilliant sons of Africa to humanize the 'half devils and half child'.

More open confession came from Marlow's hero, Dr Faustus: I will have them (spirit) fly to India for gold

Ransack the Ocean for Oriental pearl

Interestingly the discourse of desire also evolved around this time. An example can be drawn from the verses of Tennyson:

I will take some savage woman

She shall rear my dusky race

Here as Marlow was sure of the situation in which his power could collect Indian gold or oriental pearl, Tennyson was also sure about his power to make dark savage women his choice.

## POEM

### Durga Puja

BY SUDEEP SEN

today/man will triumph over gods  
T Khair, 'My India Diary IV'

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Through the swirling fumes of the scented incense, the arati echoes as the priest hums, and the Chandipaat chants in a scriptural rhyme.

From the bamboo pedestal she stares through her painted pupils, frescoed and tinselled, the three-eyed primate of the Goddess Durga --

resplendent, statuesque, armed with ten hands on her roaring chariot, her glazed clay demeanour, poised, even after the mythic bloody war.

Every year after the monsoons diminish, she comes partly to perform heriot high from her Himalayan palace sculpted in fresh snow and the open sky.

to the earth where she once belonged, her home with the voice of her parents and people, reminiscing the quadrangle of her playful days.

Today, and for the next four days, we worship and rejoice at her presence and her victory over Ashoor, the demon.

half-emerging from the deceptive black buffalo, as she spears his green body crimson in a cathartic end to the Crusades.

These five days are hers, exclusively hers, even her children -- Saraswati, Lakshmi, Ganesh, and Kartik -- fade in her presence.

For five days we spark and light, sing and dance, laugh and cheer, untutored, uninhibited, unlike the rest of the year.

The dashami came even before we realised the barone was graced. After the mid-afternoon rites, the procession began --

Durga's face totally effaced, red and white with sindoor and sandesh, or perhaps it is the residual stains of the fervent worship;

her body weary, her coat of arms mutilated, often dismembered, as she sits on open lories, while the young men and women

dance the continuous drum beats, possessed -- and Durga, bewildered, now one of the multitude -- a rare frozen moment when the gods look human.

Though it may seem today that men will triumph over the goddess, that her immersion at the ghats with mortal hands seem real,

it is, like some myths, only an illusion of victory and sadness, as she mingles, melting with the great silting Ganga.

her soft clay body browning the greenish-blue bhasbaan waters, the damp stripping her flesh bare, as we hear the receding din of the last offerings.

see the muted wick's faint glimmer of the floating earthen lamps, and the moonlight's occasional flicker on the damp strewn petals,

as she wades her way upstream miraculously through the cantilever of debris, dirt, sewage and homage of many unknown towns and villages,

back, to the pristine snow-crowned peaks, where triad incarnate Shiva welcomes her home in an unusual dance of life;

while we, on the earth, await her return the following year, perhaps to celebrate, perhaps to pray, perhaps to forget

the life around, but perhaps to believe that really, without fear, the life force still lives, that the celestial cycles still exist

just as Durga visits, once every year, ceaselessly, just as, at the close of every season, she whispers from the heavens,

"Akhone aami aashhi" -- that I'll return once again -- Shahsti, Shaptami, Shtami, Nobami, Dasbami ... Shashti, Shaptami, Ashtami, Nobami, Dasbami.