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Author

Maurya, Vibha

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Travel Memoirs of Indian Freedom Fighters to Post-Revolutionary Mexico: An Epitome of Transversal Dialogue Between Two Spaces of the Global South

VIBHA MAURYA
UNIVERSITY OF DELHI

Abstract

India and Latin America have historically witnessed the presence of cross-cultural dialogue for centuries. Latin American intelligentsia was well informed about the struggle for Indian national liberation and thus formed critical opinions about the ideas emanating from there. One of the ways of information flow was through the travelers who visited Latin America. These ideas from India led them, sometimes, toward spiritual matters (Theosophical) and others towards revolutionary politics. I will deal with the second aspect based on my reading of the Memoirs of two Indian freedom fighters, Pandurang Sadashiv Khankhoje and Manabendranath Roy. Similar conditions compelled the two contemporaries from India to travel to Mexico in the 1920s. Their engagement with Mexican people resulted in strengthening the existing knowledges, as well as proposing new ways of knowing and being. These contacts represent their world according to their perspectives so that "the cognitive justice may mirror and enhance the cognitive diversity of the world." (Santos and Meneses 243). My reading of these memoirs will focus on the transversal dialogue between India and Mexico and discuss the transfer and sharing of knowledge between the two nations in their formation.

Keywords: Travel memoirs, cognitive justice, transversal dialogue, indigenous knowledge, Indian independence.

Preliminary Ideas

Historical contacts between India and Mexico began a transcontinental dialogue by the late Nineteenth century and early twentieth century and continues till date. It is indeed significant because, even before establishing political and diplomatic relations between governments, relations were established between the people committed to the cause of national liberation and sovereignty in both countries. In fact, the chanced arrival to Mexico of two of India's independence movement activists laid the foundation for developing lasting relations. Pandurang Sadashiv Khankhoje (1886-1967) and Manabendra Nath Roy (1887-1954) travel to Mexico during the most tumultuous period in the two countries' history. Pandurang was given political asylum in Mexico in 1924, while Roy arrived there in 1917, during the revolution and Civil War. The two were contemporaries and militants of the struggle for freedom, and their meeting in Mexico was indeed a strange coincidence. Roy was able to write part of his memoir, covering eight years of his life, which was published posthumously as *M. N. Roy's Memoirs* (1964), while Khankhoje wrote notes about his life and activities, and sometimes sent his reflections to the press. Khankhoje's elder daughter,

Savitri Sawhney, collected all the writings and recreated her father's biography, which was published in 2008, entitled *I Shall Never Ask for Pardon: A Memoir of Pandurang Khankhoje*. Fortunately, now, we have an account of the lives of these two, as well as the account of their journey to Mexico, that particularly interests us. In my opinion, the journey of these Indians is an unusual story, not only because of the way it was carried out but also because of what was achieved at the personal level of the two individuals and at the level of the two nations in formation. Therefore, it would be only appropriate to study it within the paradigm of epistemological dialogue between the countries of the global south with historical and cultural similarities. The *South*, both as a concept and as a political site of thoughts and action, deals with many important questions concerning diverse political options and practices in the struggle against social, intellectual, and cultural oppression. In this process, the epistemologies of the South also refer to other ontologies and other ways of being that had been so far omitted from the discourses on dominant ways of being and knowing. Thus, before discussing the journey of two freedom fighters of Indian independence to Mexico, I would like to briefly allude to the South and the Southern epistemologies, as articulated by the eminent Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos.

Two nations belonging to the Global South, Mexico, and India, have inherited, through the ages, the most diverse traditions of struggle and resistance against oppression by colonial/imperial domination. Such experiences have enabled the excluded ones to question and confront the post-independence capitalist, patriarchal ruling elite that has replaced the colonial ruler and is continuing the same practices of oppression and exploitation. The question that is, therefore, posed is whether these experiences have produced new knowledges or, rather, has the South become more conscious of its abundant knowledge and whether some lessons have been drawn from those incredible human endeavors for freedom. In fact, the South is not only questioning and challenging the immediate postulates and principles of dominant political ideologies but has become capable of presenting a political alternative. Therefore, the task for the southern nations is to get acquainted with multiple experiences of resistance, as they enhance our cognitive diversity (Santos and Meneses 17-18) in order to promote alternative thinking that would reinvent and fortify resistance against oppression by new masters. Thus, Boaventura de Sousa Santos explains that the epistemologies of the South are "a time of epistemological imagination aimed at refounding the political imagination … to strengthen the social struggles against domination" (Santos and Meneses xvii-xviii).

By "occupying" the conventional concept of epistemology, the epistemologies of the South appropriate it in order to stimulate the production and validation of knowledges anchored in the experiences of resistance and struggle of the social groups that systematically suffer the injustice,

the oppression, and the destruction caused by capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy. (Santos and Meneses xvii-xviii)

De Sousa Santos has argued that the states that had fought and won erstwhile struggles for national liberation embody an amalgamation of ontological, epistemological, and political aspirations. Therefore, it is crucial to study the epistemological south instead of the geographical one. We know that wherever these struggles are taking place, multiple epistemologies are being produced there. These could be found as much in the geographical South as in the geographical North, irrespective of historical, political, social, or cultural differences. In terms of time, Santos and Maria Paula Meneses insist that this is the moment of return and assertion of the subaltern. Santos's *Manifesto for Good Living/Buen Vivir* points out its true subjects: We are not victims; we are victimized and offer resistance. We are many, and we use our new learning in very different ways. (Santos 10) Santos and Meneses affirm that it is not only the epistemic assertion but also an ontological return because the subalterns or the oppressed ones, who are supposedly not even human and whose knowledge is not counted and endorsed by the modern thinking of the hegemonic West, have begun to reclaim their space in the world. They "claim their humanity by representing the world as their own and in their terms." (Santos and Meneses xvii)

Hope and desire to bring about change demand new thinking on the part of the South, which would involve epistemic decolonization of their world to foreground the human experiences of struggle. However, as is known, the world is embedded in the binaries of the *self* and the *other*, in which the Other's knowledges were categorized as local or inferior, and the only way to legitimize them (knowledges) has been to validate it through scientific certification, i.e., by applying, till date, the colonial norms of interpreting the world. Santos proposes a *concept of abyssal thinking* that is constituted based on:

> [A] system of visible and invisible distinctions, where the invisible ones are the foundation of the visible ones. The invisible distinctions are established through radical lines that divide social reality into two realms, the realm of "this side of the line", the metropolis, and the realm of "the other side of the line", the colonized space. (de Santos 45)

Notably, Western epistemology creates this division and reduces reality on the other side of the line as meaningless and non-existent. This characterization assumes that this reality and knowledge (if any) do not fit into any acceptable frame within the Western methodological paradigm. It so happens because these are created by the subjects that are supposedly not human or are absent and silent. Thus, unprepared to produce any recognizable knowledge, they are excluded from all types of social and political emancipation. On the other hand, the Southern

epistemologies pay special attention to the silenced/non-existent knowledges. In this sense, the South effectively rejects the abyssal line, thus asserting its epistemic plurality that is directed to strive for altering the Eurocentric norms in order to convert the experiences of their struggle into a rich source for producing new insights into and knowledge about, the diversity around us. The epistemic South generates a certain type of wisdom through its resistance against exclusion, ontological degradation, and political de-recognition, which eventually empowers the social groups to reinvent and rethink their alternatives. As Santos points out,

> Methodologically, the epistemologies of the South must proceed in line with the sociology of absences, that is, they must transform absent subjects into present subjects as a primary condition for identifying and validating knowledges capable of reinventing social emancipation and liberation. The task of the sociology of absences is to produce a radical diagnosis of capitalist, colonial, and patriarchal relations, whereas the sociology of emergences seeks to transform the landscape generated by the diagnosis of absence into a vast field of living, rich, and innovative social experience. *These are two fundamental conditions for the epistemologies of the South, since, as we maintain, social justice is not possible in the absence of cognitive justice.* (Santos and Meneses xx, emphasis are mine).

Effectively, the epistemologies of the South—emerging from the argument that different knowledges reflect different livelihoods and living practices and, therefore, should be treated equally—aim to get cognitive justice. They emerge in the recognition of the plurality of knowledge and their co-existence. This idea would, in turn, strengthen and enable by novel means the social groups, as much in the South as in the North, to struggle for social justice. Thus, cognitive justice is central to any struggle for freedom or equality. The global South is grounded in the most diverse histories of resistance; it has experienced all types of divergences, agreements, and disagreements among its fellow citizens, thereby accruing the kind of knowledge required in the process of resistance. The shared knowledge then shows different ways of being in the world. Epistemologies of the South imply that the world is so diverse, and the alternatives are so many, that one single method or framework is not sufficient to interpret it.

Discussions—emerging from the time of the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and the peasants' uprising demanding agrarian reforms—led to the vindication of indigenous knowledge rooted in their struggle for land and freedom. Lessons drawn from the long years of struggle of the common people did lay emphasis on the need to evolve local methods and new strategies to address people's livelihood problems. Pandurang Khankhoje and M.N. Roy understood this and recognized the question of social justice as a central issue of Mexican life. Therefore, they took

steps in that direction. In this context, I intend to read the life story of the two Indian freedom fighters and underscore their contribution to Mexican life.

Pandurang Sadashiv Khankhoje

Pandurang Sadashiv Khankhoje was born in 1886 in a village in Maharashtra. From a very young age, he began to participate in the underground movements of Indian revolutionaries for the liberation of India. At that time, several political formations were fighting against the British colonial rule in their own ways. One of these was that of the Extremists, who believed in armed struggle. Pandurang's childhood was spent in an atmosphere of revolutionary fervor as he grew up hearing the stories of legendary tribal leaders' daring exploits and heroic struggle against British rule. Their stories were sung in the form of ballads in the region. Those incidents served as a mass awakening for Maharashtra. In fact, Pandurang's family was deeply involved, as much in the intellectual discussions as in the political actions of their time, thereby leaving a profound impression on the young boy's mind.

By 1888, radical thinkers like Lokmanya Tilak had plunged into the movement for political reform and freedom of expression and started their own newspapers to disseminate the message of freedom. By the end of the 1890s, several violent attacks on and assassinations of English officers led to massive repression and imprisonment of Indians. Amongst them was Tilak, who was arrested on charges of sedition and was accused of spreading hatred and delivering inflammatory speeches against the British. These repressive acts only served to exalt Tilak's image in the eyes of the younger generation. He was considered the principal architect of India's freedom, whose foundation was laid the day Tilak took the pledge that Freedom (or Self-rule) was a "birth right." By 1916, he had established the All-India Home Rule League in Belgaum with the slogan *"Swarajya is my birth right and I shall have it."*

Thus, Tilak became the strongest moving force for Pandurang Khankhoje's young mind. The seed of rebellion had been sown in his mind, and he began to understand the meaning of subjugation and injustice. These principles guided his life till the end and nurtured in him a strong sense of commitment to the cause of independence of India. The whole of India was in a state of revolutionary upheaval; students and youth formed several secret and underground societies to express their discontent against the State's apathy. Naturally, Pandurang joined one such society. He writes,

> There were about thirty members of the Bandhav Samaj. We were divided in the cells of four and sworn to utmost secrecy…We had to undergo many tests of courage and fortitude before becoming members. These tests consisted of mainly

> committing provocative acts against the British and undergoing many ordeals to improve our physical and mental strength and fortify our determination.
>
> I decided that Bandhav Samaj should raise an army of Gond and Bhil tribes in the manner of Tantya Bhil. I thought they could be trained into an army to attack police posts. I was caught red-handed by the police as I was inciting the tribal to rebel. My father was warned to keep an eye on me. From that moment on, all my activities were closely monitored by the police. (Sawhney 10)

As is evident, these young upcoming revolutionaries were inclined to get formal military education, as they thought that armed training was paramount for launching a strong resistance against the British. Therefore, they prepared themselves for an armed struggle, learning to handle the guns and manufacture them. In his endeavor to become active, he tried to contact Tilak. Pandurang left his home when he was eighteen years old. Restless and impatient, he wanted to get on with the tasks he had assigned himself. The matter was discussed with Tilak, and it was decided that Japan would be a proper destination for military training. As Savitri Sawhney has described, leaving India had almost become an obsession with Pandurang, and fighting militarily was his main aim. He had no resources for traveling. Completely alienated from the family and a marked man, he faced several odds. However, around February 1906, he traveled to Bombay, where he regularly went to the harbor to look for a place in any ship going out of India. Finally, he got a place on a French ship. Pandurang writes about his moving experiences on the ship *Yara,* going to Colombo:

> I was on the verge of desperation; I went back to the ship and breaking down, begged the captain for work as part payment. The Frenchman took pity on me and engaged me as a general helper. I was to work under the African cook and the French sailors, and to help in anyway required.
>
> The British police were checking all the people leaving India. I mixed with black sailors and pretended to be one of the crew. I was in effect working with them, but I had no papers. Much worse I was 'wanted' by the police, for my so-called seditious activities. I still do not know how I escaped their notice. (Sawhney 37 - 38)

The ship finally sailed to Colombo. Once again, the police searched him, and after being informed that he was a sailor on the French ship, they left him alone. Some days later, the ship reached Saigon, beyond the domain of British surveillance, and thus began Khankhoje's journey into the unknown geographies that would take him to different places, countries, and continents. He did not return to India for many decades and would never see his parents again.

As it turned out, Pandurang Khankhoje's journey was to a practically indefinite destination. He passed through China, Japan, and Persia and arrived in the U.S. On the way, he did disembark in Japan; however, his experiences of interacting with Chinese students on the ship and during his stay in Tokyo were most enriching in terms of his education in radical politics. He learned how China had passed through a stormy period, culminating in a rebellion. The power of the Manchu Empire was declining, and European commercial interests were on the rise. Chinese students and youth were engaged in civil disorder, fighting for democracy and against autocracy and corruption. Dr. Sun Yat-Sen had emerged as a modern, inspiring leader with a clear vision of establishing democracy in China. He was exiled to Japan but had almost a cult following in his own country. Dr Sun and his Japanese acquaintances had formed a center to give military training to his cadre. Khankhoje's friendship with Chinese students helped him enrol at the training center. He also met Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, who appreciated Pandurang's revolutionary zeal and aspirations. During several discussions, Dr. Sun underlined the importance of the development of agriculture in a country's progress and advised him to study it scientifically. All his conversations with Sun Yat-Sen greatly impacted him, and he realized that ideals of equality and social justice would have to be won through an arduous struggle. His first stop in Japan was an extraordinary period of learning. He understood that the fight for independence was going to be long, and more than patriotism, they needed material and economic support in the form of arms and ammunition.

He had also realized that it was time to go to newer destinations, as Japan was not the place to achieve what he was aiming to get. He did understand that with the help of the Chinese and Japanese workers, he could get a chance to go to America. He had read in the newspapers that San Francisco was devastated by a terrible earthquake, and Americans were looking for a workforce to rebuild the city. Japanese people had a work permit to travel to the USA under the Asiatic Steerage law. His friends managed to smuggle him on board. He left the Japanese shore in 1907 and arrived in San Francisco to find it in complete ruins. Therefore, jobs were available everywhere, though it was manual labor. He finally got a less-paying job in a hospital in Oakland. It was eight hours of work a day, and his food and stay were guaranteed. He soon met workers of the Indian community, mostly poor Sikh peasants from Punjab. As the fight for India's independence was the main objective for Pandurang in Oakland, too, he decided to dedicate his free time to educating these peasants and other Indians about the liberation movement and encouraged them to form revolutionary groups. He learned about the Indian students' group at the University of California, Berkeley and Stanford University. He had saved money working in the hospital for a year; therefore, he decided to take admission in the agriculture courses at Berkeley. He still needed some resources for his daily sustenance. He thus looked for weekend

work and found one at a railroad construction company. There, he met migrant workers from Mexico and made good friends with them. He writes:

> Those Mexicans looked just like me. They were brown skinned, short in stature and slightly built. They never believed that I wasn't one of them. I adopted studied silence and kept quiet, not wanting to offend them. During that period, I met not only workers, but also educated Mexicans who had come to study further in the United States. I developed an affinity with them that would last a lifetime. (Sawhney 63)

The railroad job did not last very long, and he returned to Berkeley. Nevertheless, he had to look for a job that would enable him to support himself while, at the same time, his military training, too, had to be continued. This compulsive desire took him to a military academy in San Rafael, where a retired Irish commandant gave him a patient hearing, as Ireland also had its share of problems with the United Kingdom. Five centuries of English domination had created bitter discontent and rebellion amongst the Irish, which served as a common ground for mutual sympathy. Soon, Khankhoje was assigned the work of a waiter in a students' canteen and was allowed to informally attend classes. Thus, finally, his wish for military training was getting fulfilled. Nevertheless, the main goal of fighting for India's independence continued. Even though he did not directly engage himself in revolutionary activity, he kept meeting the Indian community, exhorting them to join the Indian League, and educating them about the Indian Freedom struggle. During the recess from the military academy, Khankhoje traveled to various cities in the US to address Indian workers. On his arrival in Seattle, he learned that the university was conducting summer courses and joined in. He had always considered Dr. Sun Yat-Sen's advice about studying agricultural science. In 1911, having completed his training, he returned to his studies at the Washington State College, where he dedicated himself to studying and researching dry-land farming, keeping in mind India's uncertain monsoon rains. He proved to be an excellent student and a brilliant researcher.

During this period, he was also in touch with Mexican revolutionaries, as he wanted to know the progress that they were making in their struggle. He had wished to participate in that struggle, firstly to support his Mexican friends and, secondly, to test his own skills of armed training. Nevertheless, he also had his studies upper-most in his mind. Therefore, he soon finished his course, received the degree, and then proceeded to engage himself in the Mexican Revolution. He writes that "I was armed with two weapons: my military diploma and my degree in agriculture" (Sawhney 92). He also utilized this time to read books on world history, philosophy, etc.

Fulfilling his wish of testing his own skills in handling arms, he joined his Mexican friends. He was advised to go to Calexico through southern California and further advanced to Mexicali. He entered this small town and decided to assess the situation, after which he wrote:

> I proposed to lead a few Sikh ex-servicemen and join the Mexican revolution in order to train a body of men, get them ready for battle. I was very excited. I was young hotheaded and anxious to test my mettle. But the actual situation in Mexico shocked me. The revolution was much more violent than I'd thought. There was no way I would risk innocent lives on Mexican soil during this conflict. The training of volunteers during actual battle was just not possible under the circumstances... They (my friends) pleaded with me to go back. I decided to listen to them and return to Portland. (93-94)

After returning from the Mexican front, Khankhoje took up the task of visiting different cities in America to organize the farmers and workers around the aim and ideology of India's Independence. A party called *Azad-e-Hind* (Free India) was formed, and it had branches in Sacramento, Fresno, and Canada, among other places. Khankhoje had assigned himself to meet and address workers, peasants, and other revolutionaries from Punjab, as their numbers had exceeded over five thousand. He realized that the movement was doing well. Obviously, this loose network of various groups needed to be brought under one umbrella. A meeting of the *Azad-e Hind* Party[1] was held in Portland. Under the leadership of a prominent comrade, it was decided to rename it as the Ghadar party; Ghadar, in essence, signifies 'mutiny.' (Sawhney 103). It was mainly a revolutionary outfit that believed in armed struggle to free the country. It is also a fact that for the first time, a party to fight for India's freedom was born outside India. It took the shape of a dynamic movement by bringing out its publication to disseminate its ideas far and wide. By 1913, its activities became known in other countries, and relations were established with Germany, France, Russia, and others. All these connections were used to acquire arms and ship them to India. As the cost of equipment, military training, and other logistics were very high, it was decided to use the guerilla tactics of Mexican revolutionaries. Many Mexican names appear in the Khankhoje's list of who had contributed to Indian freedom. In the course of all these preparations to wage war on the British, Pandurang Khankhoje and other Ghadarites traveled between America and Europe and even to Asia (Baghdad, Aleppo). All this while, he had to face not only tremendous economic difficulties but also had to live a clandestine life with passports of different countries. The war's end had presented a completely grim and rather pessimistic scenario for him. He started getting more and more disillusioned about India's independence. His stay in Germany was also

becoming difficult. He wrote to his father, *"Mental stress and financial constraints made living in Germany unbearable."* Savitri Sawhney describes his helplessness during this period:

> He had been successful in America, but his links with Germans made his return to America impossible. The fear of extradition was very real one. Mexico appeared to be the only alternative. He had some good friends in Mexico and some Indian revolutionaries like M.N.Roy had already been welcomed in that country. After deep introspection he realized that quest for Indian independence was over --- at least for him. The dream that had kept him alive through many years of struggle and war had ended. (225)

A fighter that he was, he decided to dedicate himself to other occupations and continue to serve the people. Thus, immediately, Mexico turned out to be an optimum choice. He had a good impression of Mexican revolutionaries, their liberal thinking, and their compassion for the downtrodden. And having graduated in Agriscience, he was convinced that his knowledge could be put to good use in that country. Thus, he left for Mexico in 1924, determined to begin a new life, even though he was a stateless man without a passport and in his own country, he was a wanted man with the death penalty on his head.

In Mexico, he initially settled in Xochimilco, a small town near Mexico City. He worked as a farm laborer and often traveled to Mexico City in search of his friends. Soon, he found two of his old friends, Ramón P. De Negri, who had become the agriculture minister, and Luis Monzón, a Senator. With the help of De Negri, he was appointed professor at the National School of Agriculture in Chapingo. This led him to become part of the mainstream research that was going on in his field. There, he started the research on new varieties of corn. Khankhoje was a progressive, thinking person. He would till the land with Mexican farmers, whom he found simple and affectionate. The devotion that he would have had to the Indian farmers was completely transmitted to them. In his interaction with the farmers in Chapingo, he understood that those farmers needed to learn new methods and techniques of cultivation to improve the quality and yield of their production. Under the influence of Emiliano Zapata's ideology, he also established free agricultural studies schools. Official recognition came in the form of a decree:

> The League of Agrarian Communities appointed, according to the Revolutionary dictates and with the consent of all colleagues, Professor P. Khankhoje and colleagues as rural teachers in order to augment the techniques and agricultural knowledge of the farmers in the region of San Miguel Chiconcuac Texcoco, Mexico. (Sawhney 241)

Thus, the first school was named after Emiliano Zapata. By now, news about his successful research in the agricultural sector had become common knowledge and was recognized by the state and the public. In Chapingo, the National School of Agriculture opened a new department of plant genetics headed by Professor Khankhoje. A series of experiments were carried out on hybrid varieties of maize, and efforts were made to improve the quality of wheat and beans. Gradually, free agricultural schools were opened in other areas as well. People in the region started calling him the "wizard of Chapingo," and newspapers like the *Excelsior* published articles about his research and photographs of corn without kernel (only grain) taken by the famous Italian photographer and artist Tina Modotti.

Those were indeed interesting times for Mexican cultural, intellectual, and scientific fields. Therefore, Khankhoje's investigation and agriscience discovery were considered groundbreaking contributions. The art scene flourished, be it painting, murals, sculpture, or performing arts. Unique murals in public buildings narrating Mexican history and the introduction of frescoes and paintings with autochthonous elements and designs had become a central part of Mexican art. The muralist Diego Rivera, who reinvented the Mexican school of painting, had just returned to Mexico from Europe; nevertheless, instead of importing European forms, he introduced novel ideas about indigenous artistic forms. Belonging to the progressive Mexican cultural movement, his art was embedded in the ideals of humanism. Therefore, his murals depicted the social and economic inequality of Mexico. However, the murals were grounded as much in the labor unrest as Catholic values that deeply influenced them.

It is against this backdrop that we must appreciate the scientific research conducted by Pandurang Khankhoje. By a strange coincidence, Rivera was assigned to paint a series of murals on the façade of the National College of Agriculture in Chapingo during this period. Khankhoje met Rivera and assisted him all through in the creation of those frescoes. Savitri Sawhney writes,

> Their interaction may have also helped Rivera in the scientifically correct depiction of plants and their development, which can be seen in many of his paintings, notably the famous mural in Rockefeller Foundation in New York. This mural was later obliterated due to political reasons, in view of the communist tendencies depicted therein. It was later reproduced in the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City. A detail of the mural depicts Khankhoje's research on maize. (237)

Rivera knew Khankhoje as an agronomist whose discoveries supplied bread to every poor Mexican. Therefore, the effect of Khankhoje's work was found notable representation in his works. As Eva Alexandra Uchamany describes in her important book *India-Mexico: Similarities and Encounters Throughout History:*

> Diego Rivera's admiration for the short, soft-spoken Indian devoted to the peasants' cause is reflected in the beautiful painting that the artist dedicated to him in the Palace of the Ministry of Education. The mural in which Khankhoje is shown distributing bread to a family at a table is a tribute to the director and founder of Free Schools of Agriculture. The mural has been interpreted by many art historians and critics as a Christian allegory of the Last Supper or as the miracle of the multiplication of loaves performed by Christ. But Diego Rivera, a revolutionary and communist, was not thinking in those terms. For him distribution of land to those who cultivate it and improving scientific method of cultivation, were the only means to make human family happy. (197)

Pandurang Khankhoje acquired Mexican nationality, married a Belgian woman, and had two daughters. After independence, the Indian government invited him to become an agricultural scientist and requested his advice and help in developing Agricultural science in India. He lived in India for a season and returned to Mexico. In 1955, he moved to India permanently and lived in Nagpur. He passed away on 18 January 1967.

Manabendra Nath Roy

Despite some similarities—regarding the deep concern for and commitment to the fight for India's independence—Manabendra Nath Roy's case differs from that of Pandurang Khankhoje.

A close friend and associate, G. D. Parikh, characterizes the persona of M. N. Roy in the following words:

> Among his Indian contemporaries, Manabendra Nath Roy was without peer, there is perhaps no comparable figure in the East. He was unique in the universality of his experience. A dozen different countries, spread over three major continents provide the background of his chequered career. He occupied leading positions in the great movements of Nationalism, Communism, and Humanism, continuing to grow throughout in his understanding aided and enriched by his rare intellectual gifts and vast experience. (Roy 3)

Manabendra Nath Roy was born in a Bengal village near Calcutta, Urbalia, in 1887. He was named Narendra Bhattacharya at birth. He had joined the revolutionary movement as a schoolboy. But after barely moving to Calcutta to pursue his higher education, he got involved in clandestine activities of obtaining arms for the liberation army, and, for that reason, he even robbed banks, was engaged in smuggling arms, etc. Due to these activities at a very young age, he was imprisoned. Soon, he came to be known as a bold and brave member of the militant group, and immediately

after the start of the First World War, Narendra traveled abroad in disguise to get arms for the national army to throw the colonial masters out. In his Memoirs, he writes:

> At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Indian revolutionaries in exile looked towards Germany as the land of hope … Indian Revolutionary Committee in Berlin had obtained from the German Government the promise of arms and money required to declare the war of independence. The job of finding money for initial expenditure, entrusted to me was soon done according to plan … I left for Java, my first trip out of country. I returned within two months with some money, not much; but as regards to arms, the coveted cargo … They failed to arrive, because it was discovered later, the whole plan was a hoax…But our youthful enthusiasm, thoughtless optimism and, above all the faith in the liberating mission of Germany were not so easily to be daunted. We resolved to try again, and a new plan was made; I left India for the second time in early 1915 … As it happened, I did not return until after sixteen years. (3-4)

In 1915, he took almost the same route as Pandurang to travel to Burma, Indonesia, Malaya, and the Philippines and finally reached San Francisco. As he represented an organization, he had contacts with the committees for the independence of India in Germany. But due to the First World War, he was compelled to head towards the U.S.A., where he had another interesting adventure:

> Having spent a year and a half wandering through Malay, Indo-China, the Philippines, Japan Korea, and China, in the summer of 1916, I landed in San Francisco. Next morning newspaper carried the banner headline: "Mysterious Alien Reaches America—Famous Brahmin Revolutionary or Dangerous German Spy." I decamped from the hotel after a rush breakfast in my room and made for nearby town Palo Alto, the seat of University of Stanford. (Roy 22)

He went to Stanford University, where fellow Indians received him. However, his activities did not stop, and at one point, he was captured by the American police, who had news of his involvement in the Hindu-German conspiracy. But he managed to escape. In order to avoid the police, he was advised by his friends to wipe out the past and begin as a new man. That is how Manabendra Nath Roy was born. The new identity stuck with him for life. He was on bail from the American court when he gave a miss to the police and escaped to Mexico. He arrived in Mexico in 1917 and stayed there until 1919. This way, Roy seemed to have been living the life of a permanent fugitive.

On reaching the Mexican shores, he got off in Yucatán without money and without friends, although he was in possession of a letter of introduction to General Alvarado, which gave him access to the government circle, and he was able to see the defense minister, who informed him that Mexican agency knew of his movements and they had already notified him of his arrival in Mexico. His first impression of Mexico was very similar to that of Pandurang Khankhoje:

> I didn't know a soul in Mexico; nor did I try to make any contact before coming here. Despite this, in a very short time I began to love this country and its people immensely, I felt at home. My decision to come to Mexico was not deliberate at all. Since I did not want to spend my life in an American jail, nor did I want to be deported to India where an even harsher sentence awaited me, I decided to come to Mexico. When I arrived in Mexico, I did not feel strange, there was something welcoming in the atmosphere. (Roy 58)

Even though Roy had a letter of introduction for General Alvarado, he decided against meeting him. He checked into a hotel and began looking for his way around. Being a fighter and a committed revolutionary, he contacted crucial people in Mexico City. The outcome of his meeting with the defence minister felt like a pleasant surprise to him. He lauded the Mexicans, saying that his meeting acquainted him with the "lovable aspects of the Mexican character. An obscure foreigner being invited to meet a cabinet minister … could happen only in Mexico" (61).

The minister knew many details of his activities in India and elsewhere, but he was, nevertheless, given a warm welcome and assured of complete safety in the country. Thus began a relatively peaceful life for the Indian freedom fighters in Mexico. Roy did not have to effectively wait long to get acquainted with more people with whom he was to have lasting friendships. Within a couple of days after his meeting with the minister, he received a letter from one of the leading dailies of Mexico City, known as the non-official mouthpiece of the government. The editor of the newspaper *El Pueblo* invited Roy. He readily accepted the invitation and reached his office. The editor was an elderly man who showed respect and affection to his new guest: "You are a guest in our country, and we Mexicans are hospitable people, although they say we are backward' he added with irony. I took up the cue and replied: Well, Sir, we are in the same boat; my country is stigmatized by the arrogant imperialism of the White race" (62). Thus, a friendly tone between the two set right in the first meeting led to many more constructive dialogues and activities. On one occasion, the editor asked Roy to write an article on India for his newspaper, which was published soon in the daily.

After spending several months in Mexico, Manabendra Nath learned enough Spanish to engage in regular conversation. In a short span of time, he observed that there were no political

parties in Mexico. Several groups used to struggle for power, but all centered around individual leaders or military men. He writes in his memoirs,

> The left-wing politics was equally amorphous and unorganized, dominated emotionally by anarchism and syndicalism … But on some enquiry, I came to know that there was a Socialist Party, distinct from the parliamentarians, who also called themselves "socialists." I decided to go to the headquarters of the Socialist Party … It was the modest home of Ignacio Santibanez, right there was the party office. After a while he asked me if I was the author of that excellent article on India in *El Pueblo*. That article served as a letter of introduction to the progressive people of the city. (74)

From then on, he was invited to all the party meetings. Their meetings would often go on well beyond midnight in a nearby café, El China, which would later effectively become the birthplace of the Communist Party of Mexico.

In those months, Mexico also faced a constant threat of invasion from the United States, and the Mexican people felt this tension daily. The dispute was on Article 17 of the Constitution, which declared that all underground resources were the property of the nation. A peaceful settlement of the dispute had become so evasive that the danger of American armed intervention looked imminent. Taking advantage of the situation, Roy drew up a plan of protest by organizing the working class to declare a general strike that would paralyze the petroleum industry. A mass demonstration was held in the capital as a runup to the strike. Those militant actions turned out to be so successful that it helped the party to extend its influence. All of this resulted in the Party convening its Congress. Roy presided over the Congress, which passed two historical resolutions: the first declared the decision to rename the Socialist Party as the Communist Party of Mexico, and the second suggested linking the Mexican Party to the international communist organization. This whole event is considered historical and of great importance because the Communist Party of Mexico was then the first communist party outside of Russia. It was a fundamental contribution to the political life of Mexico. For Manabendra Nath Roy, this fact brought great recognition because he was elected a member of the presiding committee of the Communist International, and he worked with Lenin in very close contact and confidence. Roy returned to India in 1930 and participated in the activities of the liberation movement, whose character, by then, had completely changed. He passed away in 1957.

Pandurang Khankhoje and Privileging of Indigenous Knowledge

I have, thus far, described the travel stories of the two Indian freedom fighters, as well as their life and work in Mexico. It is remarkable that both these men, who left their country with a specific purpose and destination in mind, achieved something totally different from what they had set out to do. From the perspective of travel writing, traditionally considered an amorphous, referential, transparent, and factual genre, these two cases are certainly peculiar. On the one hand, they are narrated as life stories, and on the other, they are travel stories. However, it is noteworthy that in both cases, the main objective was not so much to tell their life story or travel account as to narrate the story of the movement for the independence of India. Pandurang's daughter recounts her father's life in the third person, quoting extensively from his notes. She confirms that her father always wanted to write the history of the Ghadar Party because Indian historians had ignored this part of the freedom struggle. Roy could write about only eight years of his eventful life, and he did so at the insistence of his comrades. If that had not been the case, all this history would have been lost. His wife later compiled and published it. Therefore, a large part of the narrative is dedicated to the process of their transfers from one place to another, but always with details of their extraordinary courage and revolutionary zeal.

These stories are of utmost importance from the point of view of transcultural and transcontinental relations. The two cases cited here are living examples of the beginning of a conversation between our countries of the global south. Pandurang and Roy effectively created the possibility of intense interaction between India and Latin America and taught how people understand, speak to, and learn from each other through various epistemologies. Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Maria Paula Meneses, in their important collection of essays *Knowledges Born in the Struggle: Constructing the Epistemologies of Global South* (2020), have pointed out that the process of decolonization is a continuing emancipatory practice from where Global South emerges, more as an epistemological space, rather than a geographical territory. The diverse cognitive process that takes place is embedded in the resistance against oppression and exclusion, as much during the struggle for independence as during the period following it. These processes, in turn, weave together an alternative path to achieve cognitive justice through the relationship existing between people and the body of knowledge and the bringing together of different knowledges in different epistemes without marginalizing the specificity of any of these knowledges, i.e., through the ecology of knowledges and intercultural translation (Santos and Meneses xx).

Thus, the colonies had to find a common terrain on which a counter-cognitive system could be built and from this locally built common ground, the Western epistemological superiority could be questioned. In fact, as Enrique Dussel pointed out, the political or philosophical critique

of Western epistemic hegemony,[2] grounded in the local, would enable it to articulate its own concerns, be it geopolitical or epistemological. (Alfaisal 28) The Indian travelers to Mexico effectively found a local terrain, a kind of intersection from where to act and produce new knowledges. Conversation and cooperation between the two Indians and their Mexican counterparts were very much grounded in the resistance that shaped the emerging epistemologies. While debating the emergence of epistemologies in the South, we would, by necessity, allude to the concept of indigenous epistemologies or indigenous ways of knowing. In the context of Pandurang Khankhoje, his contribution to Mexican agriscience not only permitted a cross-cultural dialogue but showed the subversive potential posed to Western epistemology by the indigenous knowledges. Thus, using Raimundo Panikkar's term "diatopical hermeneutics," which underscores the "dialogue and processes of reciprocal learning" (Alfaisal 28), one can safely say that Khankhoje's work in the area of plant genetics that would lead to the cultivation of hybrid varieties of maize and improved quality of wheat and beans can be cited as an instance of construction of local/particular epistemology, as understood by the concept of diatopical hermeneutics. Haifa S. Alfaisal has rightly reminded us of Miguel Ángel Asturias's novel *Hombres de maiz* (1949), which foregrounds the spirit and logic of the indigenous worldview through the use of maize, both as a symbol and as basic dietary produce. Pandurang Khankhoje's research on new varieties of corn, in reality, proves its importance in Mexican life. Asturias says:

> The maize impoverishes the earth and makes no one rich. Neither the boss nor the men. Sown to be eaten it is the sacred sustenance of the men who were made of maize. Sown to make money, it means famine for the men who were made of maize. (Asturias and Martin 11)

Alfaisal, in her article "Indigenous Epistemology and the Decolonization of Postcolonialism" explains the above citation:

> From the vantage point of Enlightenment-based reason, it is hardly "rational" to accept Asturias' position that men are "made of maize." However, from the vantage point of Mayan epistemology, "men who are made of maize" is a lived way of knowing. (28)

Later in the novel, an old woman, Hilario Sacayón, reiterates:

> [We] can feed on maize, which is the flesh of our flesh on the cobs … but everything will end up impoverished and scorched by the sun, by the air, by the clearing fires, if we keep sowing maize to make a business of it, as though it weren't sacred, highly sacred. (Asturias and Martin 192)

Asturias's novel convincingly discusses the contradiction between the two ways of being and knowing. The indigenous view is embedded in their ancestral belief and cultural identity that considers maize an essential, therefore sacred food, while the others take it simply as a product for commercial gains. Outside planters deforested lands and acquired fields of the natives to cultivate high-yield crops for financial gain. The abuse of lands is not only a destructive act but also negates the religious practice of indigenous people who worship nature and who believe that "We are made of maize." This allegorical novel delves into the ontological and epistemic questions of the indigenous people of Guatemala; that is why it ends with a metaphor or a utopia: *because the people become ants to transport the maize they have harvested.* Maize, thus, is an integral part of their life and culture, and it defines them as a people.

The *maize story* (cited above) proves without doubt what Khankhoje discovered and produced through his research in Mexico was an extraordinary achievement for Mexican life. In August 1930, Mexican dailies carried the headlines "Marvels created by a Hindu Savan't:"

> Professor P. Khankhoje came to our country enraptured by the revolutionary dream and wrapped in the mantle of simplicity and science…The Hindu savant cultivates in Texcocoa simple bean plant that is also perennial, a plant that does not ever die. He is so interested in the Mexican Indians that he chooses to live with them like a native. He is in effect trying to give back to Mexican all knowledge he possesses to pay back the generous hospitality and friendship he has received. 'I have placed all my earnings in the hands of the Mexican Indians, who are after all 'Indians' like me'.
>
> 'Will you earn much money from this new discovery? He is asked by one of the reporters.
>
> 'I am not working in life for money, I am only looking for happiness. I am deeply convinced that I am just a simple traveler on this earth and must travel lightly.' (Sawhney 246-47)

The life and work of Pandurang Khankhoje during his stay in Mexico represent his profound understanding of the ethos and fundamental principles of a south-south relation. It is true that Pandurang studied a major part of agriscience at a North American University; however, he imbibed and perfectly adopted the Mexican way of living and knowing. He could do that because he had brought with himself from his own country, India, a wealth of experiences of similar ways of being and knowing. Being a colonial subject, he had observed the epistemological imperialism of the West, and his understanding was therefore embedded in acknowledging the sound contribution of indigenous knowledges. Hence, he insisted on upholding its ethical

purchase. He sensed that, like in his own country, Mexico, the physical closeness of our people to the land (physical groundedness) was almost like a spiritual relationship with the universe[3]. Thus, all that was indigenous had a privileged place in his discourse. In his discussions, we do not find Indigenous epistemology being dichotomized as against the Western one; rather, he has carefully chosen those aspects from both the knowledge systems that he found useful and compatible. Therefore, there is no total rejection of Western knowledge; there is a focus on indigenous concerns, constructively using their knowledge and further developing it.

Entanglement of Indigenous Epistemologies with Modernity/Coloniality in M. N. Roy

Khankhoje's entire project of cultivation of maize in Mexico was stirred up by the need for production of high quality and high yielding variety of corn as it was/is a staple food for the Mexican people. Apart from his study of agriscience in the U.S., he used indigenous methods and knowledge to achieve his goals. In this process, we find there occurs an epistemological rupture between indigenous and Western knowledge production. Manabendra Nath also made an immense contribution to Mexican polity and world politics by forming the first Communist party outside Russia at that time.

However, discussions on his involvement in Mexican life and his support to people there would be more complex, as he was deeply ensconced in Marxism, itself embedded in the Western episteme. Nevertheless, his understanding of colonialism and exploitation of the masses across continents compelled him to ceaselessly launch a criticism of capitalist modernity that had led to colonial projects. His declarations manifested certain ideological motives that converged with an anti-West, anti-modernist nationalism. Mostly, the networks of Indian anti-colonialists were nurtured by this idea. However, there are indications that the Mexican experience played a more specific ideological role in shaping and affirming his anti-imperialist line of thought. For example, while many Asian anti-colonialists, albeit soon disappointed, identified with the rhetoric of peoples' self-determination as a promising medium for their political goals, Roy, perhaps because of his proximity to the effects of US imperialism in Mexico, was very sceptical about it from the beginning. In his *Memoirs*, he writes:

> Mexico was the land of my rebirth. It is true that before coming there, I had begun to feel dissatisfied with the ideas of my earlier life. But it was during my stay in Mexico that the new vision became clear and the dissatisfaction with a sterile past was replaced by a conviction to guide me in a more promising future. (217)

Though his belief in Marxist thought guided him to envision a national liberation movement as an anti-capitalist, anti-colonialist, and materialist movement, it did not, however, impede his

exploration of modes of indigenous peoples' resistance. His engagement with the Mexican political class and, more importantly, with the Mexican people immediately after the 1910 peasant uprising and agrarian revolution made him notice the radical subversive potential of indigenous ways of knowing and being. In his memoirs, he mentioned that ninety per cent of people lived on land under feudal conditions in Mexico. The general poverty of the rural masses and the perennial unemployment of a large class of land laborers made the army an attractive profession (Roy 73). Thus, his clear understanding of anti-imperialism (and anti-colonialism) operated as a tool in transforming him from being a nationalist to a Marxist. He appreciated, in his memoirs, as in other frequent references, the economic anti-imperialism of the Mexican constitution of 1917; that was the reason why a constant concern about a widespread sense of threat to Mexican sovereignty from the United States is noted.[4] The evolution and strengthening of his ideological stances—emerging from these circumstances—compelled him to change his perspective on the manner in which the oppression was imposed by modernity in promoting anti-people policies in Mexico. He also understood that as long as there was no local epistemological import of people's intervention in resistance movements, the onslaught from the North would continue taking dangerous forms, such as unleashing violent/belligerent actions, as it used to happen in the times of colonial period. Cèsaire, for example, aptly describes this kind of violence in the Caribbean: "Millions of men torn from their gods, their land, their habits, their life, from life from their wisdom…" This almost amounted to genocide and epistemicide, as explained by Santos. (Santos and Meneses, xxiv)

Thus, Roy advocated the involvement of the subaltern, marginalized, and working people in building a movement against North American expansionist policy and executing it more localized. However, he was also clear that it could not be the usual old Mexican-style military rebellion led by the self-proclaimed generals. Those methods had not given any results as years and years of civil wars had degenerated into some banditry and had failed completely.

Manabendra Nath Roy's engagement with India's freedom struggle and his understanding of the colonial designs to occupy and dominate others' territories, thereby denying them access to their own spaces and exploiting resources to their benefit, had made him prudent enough to caution the Mexicans. The most developed country in the North would appropriate the resources through violence to reinforce its domination. The continuation of political and economic exploitation now through a neo-colonial system was very much in the offing. As per the neo-colonial arrangements (as capitalism has it), the profits are transferred to the North through unequal exchange, wherein their labor gets much higher value than the real owner of the resources. His political acumen made him foresee the danger of American intervention developing into a total war.

Roy addressed several mass meetings to bring this point home, which had a remarkable impact on the working people. The Mexican government had already threatened to ban oil export, declaring it a state property. The fear of a compromise by the ruling elite was looming large on people's minds. As the legality of petroleum being a state property was indisputable, anti-American sentiments ran high in Mexico City, and there was a perceived excitement about launching an anti-America protest. Roy was convinced that a massive protest by the working people would be an optimum action as a show of their determination to oppose any intervention in internal matters and their economic activity. Therefore, it was suggested that a general strike should be organized to paralyze the petroleum industry. Moreover, a mass demonstration should be held in the capital as a run-up to the strike. These actions resulted in massive participation by all sections of people, resulting in the withdrawal of the threat of intervention.

Roy became the main protagonist of the political movement, its trusted leader, and a successful strategist. Therefore, when he suggested renaming the Socialist Party of Mexico as the Mexican Communist Party, it was accepted without any opposition. He was even elected its first general secretary. Thus, for the first time in Mexico, Roy, in real terms, put into practice all that was only an idea learned as a theoretical concept. Though Socialist/Marxist/Communist politics emerged from the West, the implementation in Mexico was very local. This is evident from the mass mobilization against North's intervention. The collective knowledge emanated from the experiences of participation of different sections of the society, including the members of an indigenous community. The links and consensus they built among themselves were grounded in the social and political knowledge they obtained from the mobilizations, struggles, and, subsequently, their success. The socio-political situation that prevailed defined what Escobar (2000) had spoken about: the organizational and socio-political conditions that foreground knowledge, characterized by being contextual and specific, by being continuously reinterpreted and constructed along the way, by having a political strategy and being "ontologically obscure" - that which is developed in the rallies, the assemblies…[5] In my opinion, this knowledge underscores community action and serves as a necessary element for the construction of a movement and an organization. This way, people (Indigenous community and others) situate themselves as a crucial component of the social or political movements and become important players in their evolution[6].

Roy would have drawn some lessons from his observation and study of the peasants' protests and later used that knowledge to build the movement. Thus, political endeavors also become an epistemological project embedded in historical and cultural conditions and power relations. This is the reason why he was disappointed with the long years of civil wars (which had led to only converting the poor peasants into soldiers); therefore, movements like general strikes

or mass demonstrations not only generated new energy but foregrounded new knowledge, new paradigms for scrutiny, new thinking and articulated the local issues basically as a political and economic problem linked to capitalist hegemony. Once there was clarity about the main objective, the rest of the movement followed its course. In this context, we examined Roy's contribution to the Mexican political and epistemological projects. As early as the first decades of the twentieth century, a horizontal conversation between the two nations of the global south was taking place, resulting in the production of a new form and new knowledge of resistance.

Conclusion

In their collection of essays, Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Maria Paula Meneses have asked several questions. One of these is: Under what conditions can the historical experiences of the geographical South give rise to the epistemic South? (Santos and Meneses 241). The main concern of these thinkers is the emergence of the Global South as an epistemological subject that puts forward other forms of being and knowing. Therefore, the epistemologies of the South provide a range of diverse knowledges that is born out of struggles against colonialism and oppression. Santos laid stress on the main premises that distinguish the epistemologies of the South. He states:

> The diversity of the world is infinite, and no single general theory can account for it; alternatives are immense, and they are contextual, and what is indeed missing is an alternative thinking of alternatives; recognition and reinterpretation of the world is only possible within the context of struggles, and therefore it cannot be conducted as a separate task, disengaged from the struggles; since reinterpreting the world in order to transform it is a collective endeavor. (Santos and Meneses 241)

De Sousa Santos underscores that the knowledges born in or emerging from the South aim at the search for the epistemes and criteria that will validate these knowledges and will project them more visibly and credibly to foreground the cognitive practices of classes, peoples and social groups that have been victimized, exploited, and oppressed for centuries by colonialism and global capitalism.[7]

In this context, Meneses and Santos discuss the key concepts that facilitate defining the Southern epistemologies, such as the sociology of absences, the sociology of emergences, and the practice of intercultural translation. These concepts are significant because they reinforce the world's epistemological diversity and emphasize the need to recognize the existence of a plurality of other types of knowledge.

In their ways, Pandurang Khankhoje and M. N. Roy brought about far-reaching changes in Mexican life that led to transforming the erstwhile colonial subject and contributed towards decolonizing their knowledge system. Thus, Mexican people became writers of their historical accounts. These narratives are embedded in different understandings of the time, space, and emotions of this collective of people. Santos, while affirming this process of self-assertion, points out that these expressed experiences bear witness to a dense pluriverse encounter, confrontations, and cross-fertilization of knowledge, which confirms the presence of the ecologies of knowledges, where intercultural and inter-political translation unfold in practice. (Santos and Meneses 243)

As explained above, writing their historical narratives, as such, took much work, as their authors had to engage in intercultural and inter-political translation. This required a certain practice because these words/concepts and expressions originally came from the epistemic North. Therefore, through intercultural translation, a process of resignification takes place that aims at molding them according to their own Southern perspective. Santos describes how epistemologies of the South intend to occupy the concept of epistemology to resignify it and transform it into a tool capable of interrupting the domination policies legitimized by dominant knowledge: the epistemology of the North. (Santos and Meneses 242)

However, engaging in inter-political translation of the Northern knowledge does not mean that the South is heading towards a substitute for their knowledge. The South does not conform to the existing dichotomy because its real aim is to remove the hierarchies of power. Through its resistance and struggles, the Global South demands an alternative thinking of alternatives. Latin American philosophers and social scientists, like Leopoldo Zea, Walter Mignolo, and Enrique Dussel, among others, for half a century now, have been discussing the hierarchical patterns of epistemic discernment of colonialism. As Leopoldo Zea clearly explained, all that belonged to the peoples of the "New World" were "put on trial and judged by the jury of its conquerors" (Zea 36) because it was supposed that people here (in the "New World") were not able to present their epistemic capabilities, let alone to judge European knowledge.

Many of Walter Mignolo's writings attempt to put forth an alternative to Western epistemology to upset the cultural hierarchy that prevailed during colonialism. Because he understood that "the epistemic effects of colonialism were among its most damaging, far-reaching, and least understood."[8] Therefore, he engaged in critical projects that produced new concepts that would explain colonial knowledge practices and anti-colonial epistemic resistance. However, more than this, "subaltern reason," as he calls it, must aim to do the following:

> Rethink and reconceptualize the stories that have been told and the conceptualization put into place to divide the world between Christians and

> pagans, civilized and barbarians, modern and pre-modern, and developed and undeveloped regions and people. (Mignolo 98)

Especially so because, to some extent, such divisions are based on putative cognitive capacity.

Khankhoje and Roy are appropriate examples of putting forward the resignification of concepts and expressions that they had learned in the global North. Through their actions, they not only challenged the domination policies intending to eliminate the hierarchies of power but presented alternative thinking. M. N. Roy was deeply aware of the ground reality of that time, as much in Mexico as in its northern neighborhood. He understood the Mexican people's sufferings and thus got involved in the political discourse prevailing in Mexico in the first two decades of the twentieth century. His discussions with the leaders of the socialist party and the political context of that time gave him some idea about the specific actions that could be taken. His experience of India's independence movement significantly affected his strategic planning. Mexicans had some inkling about the North American political intention of appropriating their natural resources. Roy's ideological inclination and training in Marxist philosophy undoubtedly guided his actions, as he was very aware of the principles of class division and class struggle.

Nevertheless, his interactions with the Mexicans convinced him he would have to reinvent that mode of fighting the powerful neighbor. He knew he had to act against a new enemy, i.e., neo-colonialism. Roy, therefore, adapted to the new situation and redesigned the earlier mode of struggle by making it a fight of all Mexicans. Workers, peasants, women, youth, and all sections of society were asked to converge in a united fight. In doing so, he utilized the existing means available locally and combined them with his acquired knowledge of class struggle. With this aim in mind, he plunged into local Mexican politics by establishing contacts as much with the leaders of the ruling party as with the common masses and opposition leaders. Along with them, he evolved the future political action and convincingly addressed the organizational question.

On the other hand, the work carried out by Pandurang Khankhoje in the field of agriscience was considered a pathbreaking contribution to Mexican life. It was more of a practical solution for the problem of feeding people. As shown above, Khankhoje's inventive technique to produce a new variety of maize improved the indigenous way of cultivation. Thus, his involvement in Mexican day-to-day life and his learnings from the local people, combined with his studies in the agricultural sciences at North American universities, helped him to do an intercultural translation of the received knowledge and resignify it for the local needs. His endeavors were practical and gave immediate results. His role in creating and developing new knowledge in the production of maize cannot be ignored while writing the narrative of Mexican peasants.

The engagement of Indian freedom fighters with the Mexican people's struggle resulted in not only strengthening the existing knowledges but proposing new ways of knowing and being. These ontological and epistemological propositions were rooted in creating environments wherein diverse Global South social groups could represent their world according to their own perspectives. Thus, Mexican people's readiness and disposition to resist the Northern neighbor amounted to what, according to De Sousa Santos, was to "take risk so that the cognitive justice may mirror and enhance the cognitive diversity of the world." (Santos and Meneses 243)

Lastly, the fascinating life story of Pandurang Khankhoje and M. N. Roy, their adventurous journey to Mexico, and the remarkable work accomplished by them inspired me to read their accounts in the light of the postulates laid down by the authors in the notable collections edited by Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Maria Paula Meneses, entitled *Knowledges Born in the Struggles* (2020). Roy's and Khankhoje's contribution to enhancing southern knowledge at the beginning of the twentieth century called for global cognitive justice. Even today, so many years later, it challenges the idea of 'modern' 'Eurocentric' knowledge as being the only, and universal, knowledge system; thus, it ensures that "there is no more room for so-called margins and thus guaranteeing that the knowledges produced in the Global South become an integral part of a multifaceted world. (Santos and Meneses 244)

Notes

[1] Pandurang Khankhoje wrote Azad-e- Hind became a Ghadar Party in 1913. I objected vehemently to the name because ours was not a mutiny but a war pf independence (Sawhney 103).

[2] See for more on 'Liberating reason', alternate and counter epistemologies etc. Enrique Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, trans. Aquilina Martinez (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1985).

[3] Many Indigenist scholars have pointed out how indigenous knowledge foregrounds radically different ways of knowing and being. One of the most vehement critics of epistemological imperialism has been Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) who not only sought to decolonize research methods inherited from the colonial era, but almost resonating Miguel Angel Asturias stated that "Indigenous space has been colonized. Land, for example, was viewed as something to be tamed and brought under control. The landscape, the arrangement of nature, could be altered by 'Man' " However, Smith is most convincing when she examines indigenous spirituality and the physical and emotional relations between people and nature. Haifa s. Alfaisal in her article (cited elsewhere in this chapter) has referred to the very material way in which indigenous ways of knowing were crucial for survival. Smith underlines, "We had to predict, to learn and reflect, we had to preserve and protect, we had to defend and attack, we had to be mobile, we had to have social systems which enabled us to do these things" (Alfaisal, Haifa S. (2011) in "Indigenous Epistemology and the Decolonization of Postcolonialism" published in biannual journal *Studies in Social and Political Thought,* Volume 19 Summer 2011, School of History, Art and Philosophy, University of Sussex pp. 33-34).

[4] Tanto las memorias de Roy, con sus frecuentes referencias al antiimperialismo económico de la constitución mexicana de 1917 y las menciones de una sensación generalizada de la amenaza a la soberanía mexicana proveniente de Estados Unidos, como también la documentación de los primeros años del pcm, lo demostraron. la misma centralidad del tema antiimperialista se nota en sus "tesis suplementarias sobre las cuestiones nacional y colonial", presentadas en el congreso del Comintern en 1920, y en su libro *India in Transition*, escrito en 1922. (Goebel, Michael, (2013) Una biografía entre espacios: M. N. Roy. Del nacionalismo indio al comunismo mexicano Historia Mexicana, vol. LXII, no . 4, April-June , 2013, pp. 1459- 98, El Colegio de México, A.C. Me xico City)

[5] Escobar (2000) habla sobre las condiciones organizativas y sociopoliticas que facilitan un conocimiento coyuntural y puntual a la vez; es decir, un conocimiento que se caracteriza por ser contextual y specifico, por ser continuamente reinterpretado y construido sobre la marcha, por tener una estrategia política y ser "ontológicamente oscuro" – aquel que se desarrolla en los mítines, las asambleas, durante la preparación de documentos o en otros lugares 'no académicos.' Es este conocimiento, conjuntamente con otros anteriormente mencionados, que viene a subrayar laaccion colectiva y servir de componente necesario para la construcción de un proyecto político, un movimiento nacional y una organización. (Escobar, Arturo. Comentarios inéditos, Seminario sobre el Conocimiento y lo conocido, Duke University Nov. 2000).

[6] Entender y utilizar de esta manera el conocimiento, como hace el movimiento indígena, sugiere que su proyecto político no es simplemente político sino además epistemológico. Dentro de esta concepción y uso políticos del conocimiento se encuentra un sistema epistemológico que incorpora formas de saber y conocer, conceptos, lógicas e ideológicas culturales enraizados en una experiencia y condición histórico-cultural y las relaciones de poder que también se constituyen en ellas. (Walsh Catherine, (2001 ¿Que conocimientos? Reflexiones sobre las políticas de conocimiento, el campo académico, y el movimiento indígena ecuatoriano. Publicación del mensual Instituto Científico de Culturas Indígenas. Año 3. No. 25, April 2001).

[7] The knowledge born in the struggle is the knowledge that simultaneously sustains the struggle against oppression by providing it with intense and autochthonous meaning and guaranteeing that it will not be easily abandoned. It involves a deep awareness of unjust suffering, of arbitrariness of power, and of frustrated expectations. (*Knowledges Born in The Struggle: Construction the Epistemologies of the Global South*, Edited by Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Maria Maula Meneses (2020), Routledge pp. 241- 42)

[8] See also Alcoff Martín, Linda "Mignolo's Epistemology of Coloniality", Michigan State University Press. *CR: The New Centennial Review*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2007, pp. 79–101. issn 1532-687

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