Postcolonialism & Utopianism:

"Real" Indians in the New World

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Recently, in a course concerning "Literature of the Americas," some of my students were surprised and even shocked to read about the cruel mistreatment of non-Europeans described in letters written by Christopher Columbus. This led them to re-examine tales of bold exploration undertaken by a heroic underdog who succeeded where all others failed, in a seemingly classic example of the American Dream, of determination and perseverance being rewarded by triumph in the "New World" utopia. Students were fascinated that a historical figure had been latterly rendered heroic and worthy of a national holiday, despite mixed renown in his own era and epistolary evidence of his inhumane attitudes concerning those he often pejoratively called "natives." This pedagogical anecdote implicates multiple contemporary (trans)national narratives that can be tracked back to fifteenth century European sea voyages resulting in the colonization of North and South America. The problem with these narratives, however, is that often it can be difficult to separate fact from fiction, history from mythology, or actuality from wishful thinking. As we learned in my classroom, a failure to question dominant historical narratives results in misleading impressions of past events and people. Achieving a more credible understanding of cultural icons such as Columbus actually requires recognizing multiple narratives in dialogue rather than uncritically accepting a prevailing interpretation.

Herein lies a central preoccupation of both utopianism and postcolonialism, two *counter*-discourses of futurity that co-evolved with Western modernity and its historically shifting versions of imperialism and capitalism. In addition to theorizing about the utopian and the postcolonial independently of one another, as I do below, it is also useful to map the now-mutually influential relationship between these two (at first, perhaps seemingly unrelated) modes of analysis, for example by attending to

contemporary symbolism associated with the American Dream which has, over time, come to be most connected with the United States. Doing so exposes how very strongly visions of a New World continue to shape global possibilities, politics, and communities centuries after landfall in what we now call the Americas.

To demonstrate such a claim, this essay describes a recent neo-Americanization program that strikingly illuminates the shared ground of utopianism and postcolonialism. The case in point is a unique local initiative that began in the early 2000s in upstate New York called "GuyaneseOpportunities"[1]; the program targeted ethnic Indians who had emigrated from South America, revealing an unpredicted intersection of discourses about "natives." Indo-Guyanese identities are rather hard to categorize, resulting as they do from systems of indenture between the 1803s and the early 1900s in the colony the British called "Guiana." Due to limited familiarity with the particular postcolonial conjunctures and in unacknowledged reaction to certain myths about racial-ethnic minorities, GuyaneseOpportunities sought out ethnic Indians who emigrated from Guyana to the U.S., consequently reviving and reifying belief in America as a meritocratic utopia. GuyaneseOpportunities thereby exposed the ways in which immigration to the United States simultaneously represents on-going investment in the utopian American Dream *and* the return to earlier imperialist fantasies about new worlds, which engendered distinctive (post)colonial identities that are being re-defined once again in the U.S.

I. Imaginary Worlds: Utopias, Nations, (Post)Colonies

European voyages of so-called discovery from the late fifteenth century onward were symptoms of an emerging modernity and global capitalism that inspired significant epistemological reassessments when diverse groups of people first came into contact with one another in what would become the Americas. Not only were individuals motivated by curiosity, adventure, acquisitiveness, moral superiority, or conquest, but they also dreamt of *terra nova* or a *tabula rasa,* images of which were so prevalent in letters and other documents crafted by figures like Columbus. The opportunity to begin anew, to shrug off the seemingly implacable problems of corrupt Old World societies, to assert one's own will on the world—these were irresistible lures for all manner of people, including the rich and the poor, persecuted as well as proselytizing religions, those with intent violent or peaceful. The motivating

preoccupation with newness ushered in an age of conversion on many interrelated levels, including social, economic, religious, ideological, and agricultural. In this context of pervasive exploration and colonization, Thomas More's fictional representations of his society in *Utopia* contributed to a dynamic transcultural dialogue. As Antonis Balasopoulos describes it, the early modern utopia was one of "parallel encodings of political, ontological, and epistemological crisis at the beginning of the sixteenth century" revealing a "shift of perspective that radically transform[ed] the import of legible or visible signs" (Balasopoulos, 2006: 124, 128). Balasopoulos describes how, after explorers' started mapping new geographies, the symbolism of the New World accreted to such great dimensions that the possibility—even the necessity—of reinvention and rejuvenation became central values of the evolving hegemonic world order.

Utopia, or "no place," was a fictional conceit employed by More, following Plato and others before him, to populate an imaginary geography that can be read as a tool for critiquing his actual society. In his text that commingles fiction and fact (for instance, implying that the narrator Hythloday is a traveling companion to an actual European explorer, Vespucci, and fictionalizing the author himself), More depicted a supposedly "wise and good" (More, 1991: 40) place called Utopia, leaving future generations of readers around the world to puzzle out his neologism. Since More's publication of *Utopia,* many thinkers have joined him in theorizing about what "good place" humans might actually be able to create. And these stories always have the potential of altering the "real," since truly compelling utopias rarely stay contained between the covers of a book. In a prominent example, B. F. Skinner's *Walden Two* inspired dozens of intentional communities in the 1960s and 70s. Although most of these are no longer extant and the majority of Renaissance utopias have long been forgotten, More succeeded in providing a formal precedent for an author to propose a fictional community (either utopian or anti-utopian) that acts as a mirror in which a reflected society can discern facets of itself.

My working definition of utopianism—based on influential scholarship including Ruth Levitas's encyclopedic overviews and Peter Stillman's description of thought experiments—is a set of processes in varied forms that test previous practices and offer opportunities to speculate about a different future, just as New World imagery has long reflected. I argue that these utopian theories represent competing

historiographies with distinct variations that necessitate active, ongoing deconstruction. Utopianism can therefore aid in exposing how master narratives, even or especially those that bespeak authority and tradition, are often disastrously untrustworthy. A utopian strategy for confronting this is similar to what Jacque Derrida called "epistemological liberation" (Derrida, 1998: 83), which means learning from the unchangeable past while *re*-interpreting that past and imagining the future more creatively. Each version of utopianism responds to specificities of time and place, which define the parameters and possibilities for newness.

In conjunction with "nation," "utopia" thus represents a dominant narrative emerging from modernity that has had no less significant an impact on contemporary ideologies. Indeed, the same sets of phenomena inspired both the political form and the narrative genre. In *Utopia,* More entertained criticisms of sovereign and church, which had direct relevance to his own circumstances; he joined many of his contemporaries in thinking not only about alternative practices but also about potential new state forms for testing those alternatives. The novel anticipated some possibilities for sociopolitical collectivity that have since become normative since, from models of ideal communities like More's, new nations as well as national identities emerged. Utopianism thus allows for a clarification of defining logics of citizenship, or what Benedict Anderson describes as "narratives of identity" (Anderson, 1991: 205). This phrase is from Anderson's seminal *Imagined Communities,* in which he attends to the related projects of modernity and nation-building in terms of the motivations driving their formation as well as the imaginative work that contributes to their cultural persistence. In a related analysis influenced by Anderson's, in *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity,* literary scholar Phillip Wegner notes that the narrative utopia is "a uniquely modern literary genre" (Wegner, 2002: xv) that serves "as both a way of telling and of *making* modern history" because "there has been a continuous exchange of energies between the imaginary communities of the narrative utopia and the imagined communities of the nation-state" (*idem,* xvi, emphasis added), pointing out that the real world and our narratives about it are always in dynamic dialogue. As Wegner writes, for example, More's work envisioned "a radically new and deeply spatialized kind of political, social, and cultural formation: that of the modern nation-state" (*idem,* xxii). Indeed, not just nation-states but *nationalism* and utopianism have

been intimately connected and mutually informative ideals. Like utopias, nations are constructed through strategically plotted narratives and customs that enable particular politics of belonging, even though the nation has become "the increasingly naturalized expression of both the space and the subjectivity of modern history" (*idem,* xxii). Noting the similarities between national (or imagined) and utopian (or imaginary) worlds reminds us that, rather than being representations of essential group similarities of race, ethnicity, religion, origins, etc., nations are instead sets of stories that have been deemed meaningful and representative by some but which nonetheless often arouse earnest debates among citizens.

Always already contested spaces, the nations eventually established through European utopianism in the New World or elsewhere often proved unsustainable, in part because of resistance from colonized groups, leading to the contemporary postcolonial era. Without rehashing both productive and often frustrating debates about how best to parse the concept of postcolonialism, it is important to specify my usage in this analysis: "postcolonial" signifies historical moments after colonization ends (which are admittedly more suitably described as being "neo"- rather than "post"-colonial), heterogeneous anti-imperialist strategies, and the scholarly context in which interested parties continue to disagree about how to define terms such as subaltern, cosmopolitan, or progress. As with my definition of utopianism, my working definition of postcolonialism focuses on singular opportunities for unpacking binaristic logic and a commitment to being skeptical about inherited truths, thus possibly the epitome of critical thinking. For example, Henry Schwarz summarizes that postcolonialism "works to make [the politics of dominance and the] relation of unequal power more visible with the goal of ending it…in this sense [it] is the radical philosophy that interrogates both the past history and ongoing legacies of European colonialism in order to undo them" (Schwarz/Ray, 2000: 4). For scholars, postcolonialism has therefore named processes of *de*-centering the methodologies, assumptions, and superiority of empire, not only through anti-colonizing activism but also through focused critiques of colonial discourse.

Furthermore, postcolonialism's entanglement with utopianism seems to have been inevitable. As Bill Ashcroft writes, "a colonial utopia, in which civilization, prosperity, and amenity are established, a utopia regulated by the ordering power of a higher civilization, is absolutely fundamental to imperialism's discourse of self-

justification." If the motivation for colonization is cast as a "belief in a 'better' world," then this story of the relationships between diverse communities implies noble idealism. In response, competing narratives that serve a different "utopian function" (Ashcroft, 2007: 413) are represented by anti- and postcolonial (e.g., cultural) nationalisms which envision resistance to colonial rule as heroic idealism. A number of postcolonial studies scholars have contributed to an interdisciplinary dialogue about such narrative traditions and gestured to the mutually defining relationship between utopianism and (post)colonialism. For instance, Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge theorize that postcolonialism calls attention to the "impossible absent standard" represented by the imperial center, in response to which the peripheries seek out suitable narratives of their own construction (Mishra/Hodge, 1994: 276). And Padmini Mongia focuses on those ways in which postcolonial theory represents "a rethinking of the very terms by which knowledge has been construed" (Mongia, 1997: 5), just as I posit utopianism does.

Recently, reading postcolonialism and utopianism as anti-hegemonic counter-discourses, Ashcroft and Ralph Pordzik have focused on tracing other underlying correspondences between the two theoretical stances. For instance, Ashcroft identifies in postcolonial engagements with utopias and utopianism "a distinct form of cultural and political hope." He describes such postcolonialism as "a utopianism almost completely devoid of utopias" that "gesture[s] toward a resolution of utopian contradictions dialogically" (Ashcroft, 2009: 8). Ashcroft suggests here that the stereotypically static and ahistorical utopia associated with classical Western narrativity is replaced in the postcolonial context with an open-ended conversation about what hope means for specific groups as well as for larger (national) collectives. In *The Quest for Postcolonial Utopia: A Comparative Introduction to the Utopian Novel in the New English Literatures,* Pordzik focuses on allegories of national identity by postcolonial writers, tracing twofold effects: one, "faith in a progressive idea of history bringing about liberation" and two, the need for "an enabling cultural myth" that might afford paradigms for genuine belonging. Defining utopia as a "literary form that has always advocated for the best possible form of government" (Pordzik, 2001: 2), Pordzik portrays this imagined state not as a material construct but as a "program of interrogation and dehierarchization" that potentially enables a "quest" for a truly *post*colonial future. Invoking a number of classical literary genres,

Pordzik concentrates on how the utopian tradition is particularly relevant to postcolonialism.

Another important guide in mapping overlapping territory between utopianism and postcolonialism, Robert J. C. Young interprets a variety of political and intellectual positions in terms of their contestatory motivations. Rather than seeking a commonality of purpose or style, Young instead emphasizes the degree to which instantiations of postcolonialism in Africa, Asia, and Latin America are varied, even contradictory. He invokes the concept of montage to describe the layered histories of sites of long-term imperialist influence, describing representations that are made up of disparate parts irreversibly connected together to render a unique design in which the components nonetheless maintain a distinct presence. Young writes that "Postcolonialism claims the right of all people on this earth to the same material and cultural well-being" (Young, 2003: 2), citing what is a recognizably utopian theme in More's genre-inspiring text. Young emphasizes the types of critique affected by postcolonialism in specific when he further argues that it "names a politics and philosophy of activism" which, by challenging inequality, "continues in a new way the anti-colonial struggles of the past" (*idem,* 4). The most suggestive aspects of Young's analysis include his interpretations of postcolonialism as "turning the world upside down" (*idem,* 2), as intervention, and finally as a challenge to established privilege and power—all of which recall the dramatic transformations in worldview encoded in the early modern utopia, as described by Balasopoulos.

Partly because they potentially disrupt various binaries that pervade post-Enlightenment rationalist thinking, postcolonialism and utopianism therefore both represent active ideological problem-solving particularly in relation to shifting meanings of "nation." This is because the interplay between processes of naming a nation(s) and policing its boundaries, metaphorical and actual, results in a lack of certainty that both postcolonial and utopian stances have exploited in order to imagine a different, ideally better, future than dominant narratives might assume. Other parallels between postcolonialism and utopianism include an emphasis on deconstruction and rethinking the status quo, a history of contested definitions and seemingly ambiguous implications, as well as strong doubts about "on the ground" applicability. More correspondences between utopianism and postcolonialism are

made manifest upon closely reading recent trends in Indian immigration to the United States.

II. Who is "Indian" in America?

The ambiguity of the term "Indian" in the U.S. context reinforces how utopianism and postcolonialism—themselves dynamic and hybridized processes—are intractably conjoined by the palimpsestic histories associated with the New World. Among stories that have since been over-written but not without dramatic lasting consequences, Columbus infamously misnamed the inhabitants of the Americas whom he encountered on his voyages to what he presumed to be India. Late twentieth century immigration to the U.S. thus represents an arresting irony, such that India *is* located in America in the form of diasporic Asian communities taking advantage of imperial legacies in order to relocate to the alleged land of opportunities. And so travelers to the Americas today find "real" Indians inhabiting these realms, in that the geographical name has precedence, as compared to those groups often currently described as "Native Americans." The alleged jewel in the crown of the British Raj, the territories of the Indian subcontinent were historically attractive acquisitions, in terms of colonial resources and markets, but also because of some notions of "culture" that inhered to "Indianness" and which contribute to assumptions about model minorities in the U.S. In previous scholarship, I critiqued such stereotypes for being based on faulty assumptions of authenticity related to racial, ethnic, or national categories (jain, 2011: 204-10). We must acknowledge instead that shared historical origins in the subcontinent are now represented by a diversity of contemporary identities, inevitably rendering it unpredictable "how to be" South Asian[1] anywhere in the global diaspora, including in the United States. The elusiveness of so being and naming is further emphasized by the use of the term "Indian" in the United States to simultaneously reflect historically, geographically, and culturally distant groups of people in the Americas and in Asia.

(East) Indians in the U.S. today are very different kinds of "natives" than the groups encountered in the Americas by colonizers like Columbus. Subsequent to major immigration reform after World War II, about two million South Asian diasporans from the Indian subcontinent have settled in the United States. The hemisphere to which they relocated has been radically transformed, not least in terms

of information availability, technologies, and worldviews, from when early European voyagers communicated their utopian fantasies about the Americas to their contemporaries. However, echoes of those voices are still audible because, in the intervening centuries, different individuals and communities have revived New World the dream of plenty and possibility.

South Asians participate in this continuing story and there is much to be learned about what *they* have discovered in America at the turn of the twenty-first century. For instance, along with a shared history of having had to "gain" Independence (and Partition) from the British Empire, South Asians are counted as a minority in the U.S., a status that is arguably analogous to being colonized in terms of racialized hierarchies and assumptions about who truly belongs in America. This positionality is crucial to recognize even though, in contrast to other immigrant groups, South Asian cohorts relocating to the U.S. after 1965 are often characterized by high educational attainment, socioeconomic status, and "privileges" of being formerly colonized by the British, such as contemporary knowledge of the lingua franca (i.e., English) and some familiarity with the "West" given its indelible historical influence on South Asia. This degree of privilege is not common for South Asians in certain other sites of diaspora (including Guyana) and U.S. South Asians also differ from their predecessors who usually relocated as part of the Raj, both within and outside of systems of indentured servitude. Among diasporic communities throughout the world, from North America to Africa to the Caribbean, it must be acknowledged that South Asian professionals migrating from the subcontinent to the U.S. between the late 1960s and the 1990s are often considered to be the very "model" of good minorities.

In sharp contrast to these usually middle-class cohorts, Indo-Guyanese communities are descended from a labor force that was imported to South America by the British after the abolition of the slave trade but whose experiences of exploitation remained nearly identical to the slaves whose former quarters they sometimes came to occupy. Currently there are between two and three hundred thousand Guyanese residing in the U.S., descended from those Indians servants and African slaves. However, most Americans have little familiarity with Indo-Guyanese communities because of their simultaneous categorization as U.S. American, Indian, South American, and Caribbean. In the early 2000s, having become aware of this unique

community via a group of Indo-Guyanese residents from Queens, NY, who were potentially interested in relocation, Mayor Albert P. Jurczynski of upstate Schenectady envisioned reversing the economic downturns that had been affecting his small city for decades. In appeals to Indo-Guyanese families to tour the city, Jurczynski emphasized the supposedly higher quality of life and demonstrably cheaper real estate that Schenectady would assist hardworking newcomers in acquiring. His blandishments that his city could "make the American dream happen" (Personal interview) persuaded enough people that Schenectady soon experienced the migration of thousands more Indo-Guyanese immigrants. The implicit invitation was to relocate geographically in order to get more for one's money as well as to rise—at least symbolically—in social status, because they were *perceived* to be ideal immigrants since they were of Indian ethnic origin.

As counterpoint to many current calls to limit immigration in the U.S., GuyaneseOpportunities efforts were supportive of certain newcomers to Schenectady, even as they sometimes rested upon similarly problematic assumptions concerning cultural differences, work ethics, and what I call the "racial economics" of assimilation (jain, 2011: 108-16). Repeating the phrase "It's a free country," Mayor Jurczynski seemed genuinely convinced that "the system we have is good for everybody" but advised that "some people are better at making it work than others" (Personal interview). The Mayor appeared to judge suitability based on the model minority status he granted to Indo-Guyanese immigrants, who are in actuality quite distinct from South Asians who immigrated directly from the Indian subcontinent after 1965 often in response to professional recruitment and who may deem themselves to be assimilatory successes in the U.S. Jurczynski's "free" connotes not only the ready availability of abounding resources but also allegedly limitless latitude to make one's own decisions about how to thrive in a "salubrious" New World, as Columbus described it. However, just as Columbus's "discovery" of the Americas reflected willful neglect of previous or concurrent inhabitants, so did GuyaneseOpportunities seek alternative settlers to the already present ethnic minorities (such as other Asian, African, and Latina/o Americans) who were deemed by some in Schenectady to be incapable of "making it work." History might therefore be said to repeat itself but, this time around, the "Indians" were considered to be akin

to intrepid European explorers who would maximize New World possibility and create their own utopian society through hard work.

III. "American" Dreams in a Postcolonial World

Asian Indian communities descended from nineteenth century colonial "coolies" were locally cast as ideal twenty-first century immigrants *only* because the narrative of the American Dream speaks to global colonial legacies as well as to the utopianism long associated with the New World. Narratives about infinite opportunity in America date back to glowing praise such as that which Columbus conveyed in correspondence to his monarchs; he described a territory that was "very fertile, "green and flourishing" and, in fact, "thriving." He deemed it both a "victory" and a "gift" that he could claim this "great and salubrious" land with its abounding riches (Qtd. in Castillo and Schweitzer, 2001: 24-25). Such vocabulary foundationally informed enduring utopian themes in global imaginaries; for instance, the words emphasize growth and prosperity, expansive and opportune geographies, as well as readily accessible resources for those with the will to claim them. In one elaboration of this theme, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur famously advised in his late eighteenth century *Letters from an American Farmer* that Europeans would be awed that "we have no princes for whom we toil, starve, and bleed; we are the most perfect society now existing in the world. Here man is free as he ought to be (. . .) This is an American" (Qtd. in Castillo and Schweitzer, 2001: 498-500).

Two centuries later, confirming the influence of immigrant utopianism such as Crèvecoeur's, historian John Truslow Adams concluded that America was broadly believed to offer a uniquely "rich and full life" (Adams, 1937: 415). Giving new currency to the concept of "the American Dream," Adams described "unhampered" and "unrepressed" (*idem,* 416) immigrants from dystopian Old World origins relocating to a New World that they could fashion as they wished. Close to a century after Adams influentially imagined the United States in this way, all the "blank spaces on the earth" (Conrad, 2006: 70) seem to have been filled in and there are no new lands to discover. Rather than European nations staging long-standing competitions for dominance through imperial activities in the Americas and elsewhere, at the turn of the twenty-first century, they are (at least officially) a Union. Meanwhile, Empire today is perhaps best represented *by* the New World in the form of the United States,

which has co-opted many of the world's resources, including the moniker "America," and which often represents itself as leading "the free world." Anthropologist Sarah Mahler points out that there is a good deal of evidence to refute the optimistic rendering of America as utopian, but this does not seem to prevent each new group of immigrants from banking on the American Dream (Mahler, 1995: 83).

However, the land of opportunity has not forwarded credit to all groups equally and it must be remembered that welcoming Guyanese immigrants to Schenectady was never inevitable. In fact, collectively, South Asians relocating to the U.S. have found their relationship to the utopian dream of America shaped by an uneven history of hails to and tactics for being incorporated into the imagined nation, whether as East Indians or, latterly, Asian Americans. Many scholars have recently clarified that, although often rendered invisible by the dominant immigrant narrative associated with Ellis Island, Asian groups nonetheless encounter the same tropes associated with the New World as Europeans. For instance, noting that there are multiple "Americas" depicted in Asian American literature, Rachel C. Lee lists some of the most familiar of these visions, including "a utopian space of possibility," "a fantasy of wealth and privilege," an obsession with "consumption" (Lee, 1999: 3). Similarly, Patricia P. Chu glosses a familiar story as it affects Chinese American immigrants: "the immigrant passes from an old world defined as a dystopia of exhausted possibilities and tragic narrative outcomes to the utopian new world, where opportunity and happy endings beckon" (Chu, 2000: 146–7). In the South Asian diaspora, the old world is represented by myriad mixed legacies on the subcontinent including the effects of British reign in India. The ways in which varied versions of Asianness transform the American Dream highlight complicated politics of inclusion and exclusion that have plagued the Americas since the first settlers arrived. While the region represented expanded resources and freedoms for some, systems of dominance and oppression defined relationships between many groups of Anglo-Americans as well as between Europeans and New World Indians.

Far from the inviting welcome to America suggested by GuyaneseOpportunities, for many—including imported African slaves, European and Asian indentured workers, laborers from around the world with little political power, and others—the American Dream was more properly rendered as a nightmare of violence, poverty, and injustice. The local realities evolved in ways uniquely informed by the groups

and resources that interacted in particular contact zones. In a classic contribution to Critical Race Studies, Chela Sandoval theorizes about the types of oppositional consciousness associated with those positioned as "Third Worlders" within the U.S. Charting the relationships between ethnic and postcolonial studies, Sandoval hybridizes multiple vernaculars in order to analyze affiliative and ideological investments that surpass simplistic categories; her interest is in *de*-colonizing minority experience and so she understands the term postcolonial "in the most general sense as a utopian site located somewhere beyond authoritarianism and domination" (Sandoval, 2000: 186n6). In an example of related intellectual work with a focus on South Asians, Jenny Sharpe in contrast problematizes the term

> *postcolonial* [which] does not fully capture the history of a white settler colony that appropriated land from Native Americans, incorporated parts of Mexico, and imported slaves and indenture labor from African and Asia and whose foreign policy in East Asia, the Philippines, Latin America, and the Caribbean accounts, in part, for its new immigrants. (Sharpe, 2000: 106)

Synthesizing Sharpe's painstaking historicity with Sandoval's commitment to a radical semiology, one can better appreciate the nuances of differential possibilities for finding America to be utopian. This strategy illuminates that South Asian immigrant postcolonialism involves simultaneous negotiations with British Raj and hegemonic American epistemologies manifested symbolically as well materially. Furthermore, Sharpe argues that the two varieties of imperialism are mutually reinforcing rather than in tension, because, "the British colonization of India was a precondition for the post-1965 migration of South Asians to the United States" (*idem,* 114).

Due to this unique history, South Asians in the U.S. have been able, at times, to opportunistically (how different the connotations would have been had I written, "taken the opportunity to"!) manipulate immigrant versus diasporic identities. For example, differentiating themselves as a model minority in comparison to "problem" races opened up possibilities for leveraging social dispensations in order to achieve integration. Thus, their immigrant histories are best appreciated as paradoxically representing group privilege despite racial minoritization, at least for many in post-1965 communities, such that they actually "appeared to fulfill the American dream" (Purkayastha, 2005: 1). This history demonstrates that closely reading the American Dream as an example of utopianism requires constantly retheorizing power and how different groups are interpellated into the nation, which was also a central concern for

colonial discourse analysis, an important precursor to contemporary postcolonialism. Whether Americans are privileged or disempowered in their relative positionality influences how they might, and in fact choose to, conform to versions of nationalism or choose other means of responding to pervasive American utopianism.

GuyaneseOpportunities represents one unforeseen chapter in the broader history of South Asian migration and engagement with the American Dream. Postcolonialism as an added perspective to such utopianism does not guarantee, but perhaps encourages, a clearer recognition of complex systems of world-building. The tragic incongruity is apparent to (if under-analyzed by) most people that the grand explorations and expanded horizons that the Americas represented for dreamers such as Christopher Columbus were founded upon the erasure, actual as well as metaphorical, of Other lives defined very differently in terms of needs and desires. European explorers' settlement of the Americas augured hellish rather than heavenly outcomes for many already living in those locations. Nonetheless, New World imagery of idyllic Eden-like spaces, readily available resources, and endless opportunity motivated not only Europeans colonizers but continues to strongly impact continuing belief in the purported American "dream," now a global mythology that persists despite documented harsh truths about contemporary U.S. inequalities based on wealth, sexuality, race, religion, gender, and so forth. Contemporary South Asians have proven as receptive as any other immigrants to the allure of the New World as utopia and are among the latest of groups from around the globe to respond to it by immigrating to the United States. That these "real" Indians crossed bridges to utopia constructed by the machineries of the Raj—with its distinct but mutually reinforcing patterns of colonization in diverse geographies—confirms just how tightly the (post)colonizing and the utopian impulses continue to be wound together.

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