

# MAPPING THE FIELD OF ANTI-COLONIAL DISCOURSE TO UNDERSTAND ISSUES OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES: DECOLONIZING PRAXIS

RIYAD AHMED SHAHJAHAN *OISE/University of Toronto*

**ABSTRACT.** In this paper, I examine some of the past and current issues in anti-colonial discourse by briefly reviewing the ideas of thirteen anti-colonial scholars from different regions of the world. I relate these ideas to the discussion of knowledge production and indigenous knowledges. I also examine some critical areas that require more attention from future decolonizing scholarship and practice. With respect to scholarship, these critical areas include: the question of agency; the ambivalence towards Euro-American thought; recognizing the dynamism among knowledge systems; language accessibility; integrating indigenous ways of knowing, and dismantling the academic regime. In addition, I suggest that the questions of decolonizing one's spirit and recognizing the importance of spirituality, often ignored, are very important to integrate in decolonizing practice. This paper concludes by challenging anti-colonial scholars to open possibilities for ourselves and others by "walking the talk" in our scholarly endeavours and every day lives.

**FAIRE UNE CARTE DU CHAMP DU DISCOURS ANTICOLONIAL POUR COMPRENDRE  
LES THEMES DES CONNAISSANCES AUTOCHTONES : PRAXIS EN DÉCOLONISATION**

**RÉSUMÉ.** Dans ce document, j'examine certaines des thèmes du discours anti-colonial passés et présents en passant en revue rapidement les idées de treize penseurs anticoloniaux de différentes régions du monde. Je relie ces idées avec la discussion à propos de la production de connaissance et des connaissances autochtones. J'examine aussi certains espaces critiques qui requièrent plus d'attention pour les études ou des pratiques décolonisatrices. Ces espaces critiques comprennent: la question de l'agencement, l'ambivalence face aux pensées Euro-américaines, l'identification du dynamisme parmi les systèmes de connaissances, l'accessibilité au langage, comment intégrer les manières autochtones de savoir et comment démonter le régime universitaire. En plus, j'ajouterai que la question concernant la décolonisation de l'esprit et la reconnaissance de l'importance de la spiritualité, souvent ignorées, sont très important pour intégrer des pratiques décolonisatrices. Ce document finit par lancer un défi aux chercheurs anticoloniaux d'ouvrir des possibilités pour nous-mêmes et par les autres, et de « marcher comme ils parlent » (« walk the talk ») dans nos efforts scolaires et notre vie de tous les jours.

## INTRODUCTION

*Assalam Aleikum*, May Peace Be Upon You. I would like to begin by acknowledging all my relations who have made it possible for me to sit in front of my computer and write this paper. I can only do this because I stand on the shoulders of many: my ancestors who have come before me, my Abbu and Ammu who have sacrificed a lot for me to be at the point where I am, my Bangladeshi people who toil all around the world with little benefit, and finally, all of creation whose wisdom and strength have given me the physical and spiritual nourishment to write. It is by beginning with these sacred words that I acknowledge that I am foremost a spiritual being who considers everything around him as interconnected with the divine. Yet it is this belief, this ontology, that is ruptured and silenced in the academy. I began with these sacred words in order to evoke my own spiritual agency and rupture the dominant Euro-American conventional approaches to knowledge production. It is my spiritual amputation in the academy that brings me to the topics of this paper – anti-colonial discourse and indigenous knowledges.<sup>1</sup> My goal in this paper is to review some of the past and current issues in anti-colonial discourse, and, where I can, relate these ideas to the discussion of knowledge production and indigenous knowledges. By anti-colonial discourse, I mean the “theorization of issues, concerns and social practices emerging from colonial relations and their aftermath” (Dei, 2000a, p. 117). My second objective in this paper is to examine critical areas which require more attention from future anti-colonial scholarship and practices. I argue that as anti-colonial scholars we need to open possibilities for ourselves and others by “walking the talk” in our scholarly endeavours and every day lives.

But before I begin this theoretical journey, I would like to start the discussion by un/defining<sup>2</sup> “indigenous knowledges” (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Smith, 2001), situate myself in relation to them, and disclose further how and why I came to write this paper.

### WHAT ARE INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES?

The definition of indigenous knowledges has been a site of contestation. One falls into the colonial paradigm by trying to enclose it into a neat category. As Battiste and Henderson (2000) state:

Indigenous knowledge is not a uniform concept across all indigenous peoples; it is a diverse body of knowledge that is spread throughout different peoples in many layers. Those who are possessors of this knowledge often cannot categorize it in Eurocentric thought, partly because the processes of categorizations are not part of Indigenous thought. (p. 35)

Yet I will undergo the process of describing the contours of what I mean by indigenous knowledges by borrowing Dei, Hall and Rosenberg’s (2000) conceptualization of indigenous knowledge:

We conceptualize an 'indigenous knowledge' as a body of knowledge associated with the long-term occupancy of a certain place. This knowledge refers to traditional norms and social values, as well as to mental constructs that guide, organize, and regulate the people's ways of living and making sense of their world. It is the sum of the experience and knowledge of a given social group, and forms the basis of decision making in the face of challenges both familiar and unfamiliar. . . It is accumulated by the social group through both historical and current experience. This body of knowledge is diverse and complex given the histories, cultures, and lived realities of peoples. (p. 6)

Indigenous knowledges are considered to be the embodied experiences of the colonized, and as such they constitute a rich social depot, which can bring about social justice in a variety of cultural contexts (Semali and Kincheloe, 1999). Indigenous knowledges can be used as a means to resist colonial and postcolonial invasions by western industrial capital (Dei, Hall & Rosenberg, 2000). These knowledges are both dynamic and adaptive, have evolved over centuries, successfully adapting to continuous environmental and social changes (Millat-e-Mustafa, 2000, p. 27-28). Indigenous knowledge is not only embodied physically, but also metaphysically, as it resides in the spiritual realms of people's lives (Cajete, 1994; Mazama, 2002). It encapsulates multiple ways of knowing and consists of ways of knowing that are beyond the cognitive, including dreams, visions, intuition and feelings (Castellano, 2000; Rendon, 2000). Oral traditions, passed on through story telling, are an important mode of indigenous knowledge transmission from one generation to another (Iseke-Barnes, 2003). According to Castellano (2000), indigenous knowledges consist of traditional, empirical and revealed knowledges.

Indigenous knowledge has been useful in many different cultural contexts for different purposes around the world. It has been useful in social practices such as: healing and medicine (Ellerby, 2000; Hurdle, 2002), agroforestry (Quddus, 2000), food production and storage (Wane, 2002), and spirituality (Mazama, 2002; Some, 1994), to name a few. Recently, there has been much interest in indigenous knowledge in terms of sustainable development (see Dei, 2000b; Mayuzumi, 2004; Sillitoe, 2000).

The emergent academic interest in indigenous knowledges is partly a response to the growing commercial interest in indigenous knowledges and resources (see Awang, 2000; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Smith, 2000). Within academies around the world, a growing interest in indigenous knowledges also constitutes a means to resist the colonial practices of the academy (see Kwek, 2003; Thaman, 2003; Waterfall & Maiter, 2003). In universities, many scholars of colour and indigenous scholars are using indigenous knowledges as a means to challenge the conventional Eurocentric paradigms of teaching (Cajete, 1994; Graveline, 1998), research practices (Bishop, 1998; Shahjahan, 2005; Smith, 2001) and dissemination of knowledge (Graveline, 2000; Wane, Shahjahan & Wagner, 2004). This paper will contribute to

this latter body of literature. Yet, who am I and why am I interested in the topic of anti-colonial discourse and indigenous knowledges?

#### WHO AM I? RECLAIMING THE SELF

I am a South Asian-Canadian Muslim heterosexual able-bodied male who was born in the United Kingdom. I grew up and received my early schooling in Kuwait. My parents and my ancestral roots are from Bangladesh. I currently am a privileged doctoral student in a Western academy with opportunities to speak and be heard. I have encompassed a transnational life, yet I struggled with who I am. My spirituality, derived from Islam, has been essential in my navigation through life where I have encompassed multiple identities. Most of my life has been a tapestry of interactions with different bodies, worldviews, languages, ethnicities and religions. This has impacted my views on knowledge production. I have a hard time listening when people claim that they have the “Truth” and that what they know is universal. My transnational life has taught me otherwise. I learned that knowledge production is dynamic and is a derivative of its location. There are so many different ways of naming and acting in this world. Yet, I am also aware that there are some knowledge systems which, by claiming that they are universal, impose their own world view and negate other ways of knowing. The western academy is basically Euro-American. The following stories illustrate some of my struggles with the western academy. I share these two concrete experiences to provide a tapestry of insight to the inward journey that motivated me to write and engage with this topic.

It was mid-December, 2001, when I was in a social theory course studying all the different theorists to understand issues and questions of higher education. For four months I was engaged in studying different scholars who studied the social world and analyzed how human beings interacted with one another and developed different theories of social relations. For those four months I felt my spirit was being squashed as I studied theorists who were not aligned with my own reality. They seemed to analyze a world that was composed of only Europe and North America, where people were white and secular. As I became more critical of these theorists, I realized most of these theorists were mainly White, Euroamerican male scholars. One day, when I couldn't take it any more, I asked the professor teaching the course “Where are the authors from the rest of the world?” At first, she was taken aback by the question I posed, but understood where I came from. The professor asked me to take up the challenge that I posed to the class and find out more about non-western theorists. By that time, the course was nearly over. I decided to do an individual reading course with the same faculty member. I developed my own course and started to read books by Frantz Fanon, Keiji Nishitani, Yoshiharu Nakagawa, Mohandes K. Gandhi, Edward Said, Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Patricia Hill Collins. Funnily enough as I was reading

these books, I came across other faculty members of colour teaching courses with a similar reading list as my own, so I decided to take courses with them. The healing process began. I started to take courses in anti-colonial thought and indigenous knowledges, where I felt my social and spiritual reality gained some recognition.

Interestingly, as I was taking these courses, I received the following reviewer's comments, as a response to the first manuscript I had sent to a peer reviewed Canadian journal: "It is, in places, incoherently written. There are many grammatical errors. Paragraphs do not flow easily from one to the other. Acronyms are used without elaboration. *And the writing overall is primitive.*" When I received these comments from the editor of the journal, I was shocked and puzzled. I felt violated. The word "primitive" conjured up many images. I was rendered as the "inferior other." I felt I didn't belong in the academy, which used a colonial language that was not mine. I wanted to drop out of my doctoral studies. The feeling of failure overpowered me. Many questions emerged: Can I write a scholarly paper? Why does my paper have grammatical errors and fail to provide a nuanced argument? Do I belong in the western academy? These questions resurrected many memories of pain and frustration of my past in which I experienced much psychological violence due to my skin colour as I grew up in Kuwait and Bangladesh. The reviewer's comments reopened some of those internal wounds and they started to bleed again. It fragmented me. I wanted to piece myself together again and feel whole. To borrow Fanon's (1963) words, I felt I was "disfigured" and "destroyed" (p. 210). But coming from a Bangladeshi background, I was taught that we had to pick ourselves up and fight back when we felt downtrodden. We call this "Jidd" in Bengali. Jidd was the spiritual force within me that wanted to fight back, to heal myself from the violence of the reviewers' comments. I wanted to resurrect the scholar within me. I wrote back, and this paper is my response. I started to spend hours trying to tease out theoretical debates until I felt comfortable within the discourse of anti-colonial thought and indigenous knowledges. These bodies of literature affirmed who I was and where I came from. This paper is a means to make sense of that journey. Anti-colonial thought helped me to resurrect my dignity and understand that as the "other," colonized people have always enacted forms of resistance. Anti-colonial thought spoke to my bones and my spirit. It inspired me to act. Sometimes the theoretical paradigms we adhere to are there because they help to articulate our experiences (Mohanty, 2003). Anti-colonial thought was such a paradigm that helped me be inspired in the arena of knowledge production.

I am interested in the discourse of indigenous knowledges because of my interest in spirituality and knowledge production. I found the study of indigenous knowledge was an arena of knowledge production that acknowledged the spiritual. As mentioned earlier, spirituality was central to my life, yet it was

that aspect of me that was silenced in the academy, especially within the context of theorization and naming the world around me (see Shahjahan, 2004a). I found anti-colonial thought provided me with the permission to resist it. Indigenous knowledges helped me reclaim it. It was the source of inspiration through which I could question the academy that I was part of. It provided me with an interpretive paradigm to validate other ways of knowing. It helped me connect and map out many of the aspects of my life, which were transnational. Why say all this? Who cares? This is the way we can effect our own agency in our scholarship, by bringing in the personal, and dismantling the dominant narrative of neutrality that permeates the current academy. In short, this paper is more than an intellectual journey. It is a journey of self determination and spiritual healing. In the following sections I want to share what I have learned from the anti-colonial scholars (my teachers) and then provide my own reflections on what I thought of their ideas.

#### ANTI-COLONIAL DISCOURSE: SAILING AND MAPPING THE TERRAIN

Anti-colonial discourse has spanned the terrain of many issues. This terrain is made up of questions of class, gender, race, identity, language, body, nationalism, representation, feminism, ethnicity, history, education and knowledge production (see Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1995; Dei, 2000a; Loomba, 1998). My objective, in this section, is to briefly review some of this terrain that connects with the issues of knowledge production and indigenous knowledges.

Anti-colonial discourse has evolved with the changes in the decolonizing movement. Historically, the writings and thoughts of revolutionaries such as Frantz Fanon, Mohandas K. Gandhi, Ngugi wa Thiongo and Albert Memmi to name a few, started the anti-colonial discourse. These were individuals who wrote mostly during the fight for national independence following the break up of European empires at the end of the second world war. Anti-colonial discourse during this period was comprised mainly of liberatory and nationalist discourses. Fanon and Gandhi directed their attention at the violence of colonialism and argued for resisting against the “totalising political and cultural offensive of the colonial civilizing mission” (Gandhi, 1998, p. 19). While Gandhi generates a theology of non-violence as part of the decolonizing project (Gandhi, 2002), Fanon proposes a decolonizing framework that is based on collective violence (Fanon, 1963). Fanon’s anti-colonial thought was derived from his Marxist sensibilities and his experiences in the Algerian revolution, where the Algerians were trying to end French colonial rule. Violence is what Fanon saw as the necessary method to end colonialism. He states: “decolonization is always a violent phenomena. . . . decolonization is quite simply the replacing of a certain “species” of men by another “species” of men” (Fanon, 1963, p. 35). However, Gandhi’s anti-colonial thought was

distinct, as he fought with a different tactic for India's independence from British colonial rule. Gandhi used the concept of *satyagraha*, non-violent civil disobedience, as a potent weapon for anti-colonial resistance. In his own words, Gandhi (2002) defines *satyagraha* as follows:

Truth (Satya) implies Love, and Firmness (Agraha) engenders and therefore serves as a synonym for force. . . that is to say, the Force which is born of Truth and Love or Non-violence. . . Satyagraha postulates the conquest of the adversary by suffering in one's own person. . . Real suffering bravely born melts even a heart of stone. Such is the potency of suffering. . . there lies the key to Satyagraha. (pp. 77-79)

In short, while Fanon offers the colonized secular tools to resist through outward violent actions, Gandhi asked the colonized to resist and fight back through a spiritual revolution.

Conversely, Memmi (1991) analyzes the reciprocal relationship that binds the colonizer and the colonized together. According to Leela Gandhi (1998), Memmi argues that the colonial condition chains the colonizer and the colonized into a mutual dependence and ambivalence, where colonizer and colonized both hate and desire each other. Memmi writes: "could the colonised deny himself so cruelly. . . How could he hate the colonisers and yet admire them so passionately" (Memmi, cited in Gandhi, 1998, p. 11). There is no way out of this precarious relationship other than a complete end to colonization, hence revolution (Memmi, 1991). However, the remnants of colonization will only disappear if we recognize the reciprocity between the colonial partners. Memmi's argument poses a problem for oppositional anti-colonial resistance, which assumes an "implacable enmity between native and invader," and shows us that there is a psychological attachment between the native and the colonizer that must be taken into account (Parry, cited in Gandhi, 1998). Hence, Memmi provides a nationalist and liberatory discourse from a psychological point of view by revealing the reciprocal relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.

Thiongo (1986) radically situates the site of anti-colonial resistance in language. Thiongo argues for the self-determination and the restoration of his nation's identity through reclaiming his native language and centering on the lived experiences of his people. Thiongo refused to write in English, instead deciding to write in Gikuyu. His decision to write in his native language was to demonstrate the "multiple connections between language and culture" and argued that "colonialism made roads into the latter through control of the former" (Loomba, 1998, p. 92). Thiongo takes liberatory and nationalist anti-colonial discourse and fuses it with the issue of identity and language. Thiongo, to me, exemplifies the use of indigenous knowledge, here specifically language as a counter discourse to rupture the hegemony of colonial language and colonial forms of knowledge production. Thiongo's legacy continues to this day, in which indigenous languages are being reclaimed in

education to remove the colonial remnants within African schooling and make schooling more inclusive for diverse groups (see for example Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2004; Bunyi, 1999).

All these anti-colonial revolutionaries have analyzed the colonial situation from different sites and perspectives. However, what I believe they have in common is that they all advocate for active resistance against the colonial situation. In short, they add the important dimension of agency to anti-colonial discourse and provide us with certain conceptual tools to understand issues of oppression, colonial mentality, marginality, identity, ambivalence and language. Agency, to borrow Mazama's (1998) words, refers to "our capacity to project ourselves onto our own existence" (p. 14).

After the independence of some nation states from colonial powers, a new body of anti-colonial discourse emerged. Some of these ideas have been labeled as being part of postcolonial theory, postcoloniality or post-colonialism. According to this body of thought, all post-colonial societies continue to be subjects "in one way or another to overt or subtle forms of neo-colonial domination" (Ashcroft et al., 1995, p. 2). The core project of postcolonialism is to theorize on the nature of colonized subjectivity and tease out the different forms of colonized cultural and political resistances (Kirkham & Anderson, 2002, p. 3). Postcolonial thinkers such as Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak laid the foundations for "colonial discourse analysis" in postcolonial theory (Gandhi, 1998; Young, 1995). The objects of analysis for these thinkers are literary and historical texts. Here the issues of knowledge production (the production of literary texts) intersect with colonialism. To demonstrate this intersection, I will now discuss some of these theorists' ideas.

In his book *Orientalism*, Said (1978) directs attention to the discursive and textual production of colonial meaning and its usage for the consolidation of colonial hegemony. Said demonstrates how "Western"<sup>3</sup> knowledge production of the 'Other,' here the Orient, is ethnocentric, racist, manipulative, ideologically embedded, rationalized and a sign of imperial power. In addition, Said provides us with the concept of 'positional superiority,' "which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand" (Said, 1978, p. 7). In other words, "Western" knowledge production as a derivative of positional superiority always portrays the West to be superior to the 'Other.' In addition, Said enriches us with certain conceptual tools to unravel the biases in the portrayals of the 'Other' and in doing so, cautions us against misrepresentations and marginalization that go on in the "Western" knowledge production about the 'Other.'

For Homi Bhabha (1995), on the other hand, the English book, as a colonial text, "establishes both a measure of mimesis and a mode of civil authority"

over the experiences of the colonized, thereby controlling the imagination of the colonized (p. 32). At the same time, this authority forces the colonial presence to be ambivalent, as authority can only be developed once the images of the colonized are displaced by themselves. Here, Bhabha challenges the totalizing argument of Said's book *Orientalism* (Young, 1995). Unlike Said, who assumed that colonial discourse was unidirectional, Bhabha instead discovers a dynamic ambivalence at the core of colonial discourse. He states: "the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its original and authoritative [*sic*] and its articulation as repetition and difference" (Bhabha, 1995, p. 32). Through his analyses, Bhabha demonstrates that colonial discourse in some ways can be effectively removed from its position of power and authority. For instance, Bhabha uses the notion of hybridity as a mode of resistance on the part of the colonized. Hybridity refers to the notion that both the colonial and colonized cultures and languages can never be presented in their purest form (Kirkham & Anderson, 2002). As Bhabha (1995) states:

Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. . . It unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identification in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power. For the colonial hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire, making its objects at once disciplinary and disseminatory – or, in my mixed metaphor a negative transparency. (pp. 34-35)

Bhabha, using this notion of hybridity, finds that the representation of culture is not only a site of contestation, but an arena where resistance can be mobilized. Therefore, knowledge production can be a site where resistance is enacted through hybridity and mimicry. According to Parry (1995), for Bhabha, the natives resorted to strategies and ploys which destabilized the effectiveness of the English book. However, the natives still did not write an alternative text.

In contrast, Spivak (1995) struggles with the question whether or not it is possible to represent the "subaltern voice" or "oppressed voice" without falling under the rubric of essentialism. She poses the question: Can the subaltern speak? According to Spivak, "[t]he desire of today's anti-colonial historian is to receive a subaltern history that rewrites the received account both of the colonizing academics and of the native ruling elite, a history of the excluded, the voiceless, of those who were previously at best only the object of colonial knowledge and fantasy" (Young, 1995, p. 162). Spivak (1995) has a problem with those who unproblematically resurrect this subaltern "history" or "voice," as it fails to consider the fact that the "colonized subaltern subject is irretrievably heterogenous" (p. 26). In short, Spivak warns us against romanticizing and homogenizing the subaltern subject.

But does this heterogeneity lead to subaltern silence? According to Parry (1995), Spivak believes that imperialism's epistemic violence annihilated the old culture and left the colonized without the ground from which they could reply and confront the other.

In summary, Said, Bhabha and Spivak demonstrate the shift of anti-colonial discourse from agency and nationalist/liberatory discourses towards discursive analysis, and direct our attention to the intersection between "Western" knowledge production on the 'Other' and Western colonial power. As a result, the intersections between knowledge production and gender, race, power, desire, the concept and misrepresentation of the "Other," the concept of ambivalence and the problem of essentialism, become important in anti-colonial discourse. However, this body of thought has been subjected to many critiques (see for example Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001; Dirlik, 1994; Parry, 1995). One important critique that I need to note here is that, through their emphasis on discourse analysis, these thinkers take away the effective agency of the 'Other,' which negates the core idea among anti-colonial revolutionaries mentioned earlier (Parry, 1995). As Dirlik (1994) argues, postcolonial thinkers, such as Bhabha and Spivak, and their obsession with the question of binarism, essentialism, and identity, ignore the myriad forms of material oppression that underpin the colonial encounter and reduce material relations of colonial power to the rules of language. As a result, they downplay the importance of sites from which social action can be initiated (see also Dirlik, 1999; Figueira, 2000). In short, I believe that with the shift to the post-colonial discursive framework, anti-colonial discourse focused on the issues and debates of "Western" knowledge production about the 'Other.' Thus discourse analysis became important, while agency, or how the 'Other' resisted discursively and otherwise, was ignored.

This idea of non-agency continues among some "Southern postcolonial intellectuals" (Dei, 2000), who impose this non-agency on 'Other' or traditional knowledge systems. I will now move on to consider some of these scholars' ideas and how they contribute to the issues and debates of knowledge production in anti-colonial discourse. Indian scholars such as Vandana Shiva, Claude Alvares and Jatinder Bajaj come from a nation state, India, where the colonizers have formally left, but the people still face the consequences of the colonial aftermath (Nandy, 1998). These scholars have taken up the issue of "Western" worldviews, epistemologies and methodologies, especially in the context of modern science, to discuss the association of the western knowledge system with colonialism, violence and hegemony.

For example, Jatinder Bajaj (1991) examines the issue of violence and dominance as they are encoded in the worldview that gets infused into the culture of modern science. Bajaj provides a philosophical review of the scientific vision and values of Francis Bacon, popularly viewed as the father

of modern science. Bajaj argues that violence is written into Bacon's concept of true and useful knowledge, homogeneous vision of the natural world, and masculine perception of nature, including human nature (Bajaj, 1991).

Alvares (1991), on the other hand, provides a social and philosophical survey of the domain in which knowledge and power intersect in a politically hierarchized world, and examines the bond between science, colonialism and violence. According to Alvares, none of the structures of thinking such as Chinese, Indian, or tribal, "have hegemonic, global ambitions of the kind which western scientific rationality has" (Alvares, 1991, p. 72). Alvares argues that both science and technology are fundamentally violent forms of handling the world, and this violence is intrinsic to its methodology (Alvares, 1991). What's more, he states that:

Colonialism added a new burden on modern science: it was compelled to claim a monopoly in knowledge in order to retain its claimed superiority. This monopoly is based on the premise that all other forms of acquisition or accumulation of knowledge, all other epistemologies, are worthless, antiquated, magical, and must be eliminated. (Alvares, 1991, p. 91)

Continuing with the same line of thought, Alvares (1991) makes the important point that intellectuals who are usually from the upper class, under the thrust of modern science, take the mere existence of alternative knowledge systems and ways of life as an aggravation. To support this point, he states, "[i]t is as if the underprivileged have an offensive quality to their thinking that needs to be exorcised" (Alvares, 1991, p. 92). As a consequence, even though colonialism has formally left the third world, colonial science has still survived and remains "in the form of a Trojan Horse"<sup>4</sup> (Alvares, 1991, p. 92).

In contrast, Shiva (1991) conceives science as essentially reductionist, and therefore violent. According to her, "Western" knowledge systems are themselves colonizing as they emerge from a dominating and colonizing culture. Furthermore, Shiva (1995) points out that traditional or local knowledges are made to vanish through their interaction with the dominant "Western" knowledge, as they are simply ignored, which negates their very existence. Shiva (1995) asserts that in the past, the epistemological foundations of "Western" knowledge were imposed on non-western knowledge systems with the result that the latter were invalidated. She points out that the "Western" system of knowledge need not serve as the scientific yardstick for all systems, and that diverse systems need not conform to the language and logic of "Western" knowledge systems (Shiva, 1995). As a consequence of this Western gaze, a hierarchical system of knowledge will continue to project the scientific superiority of Western paradigms (Shiva, 2000). In addition, Shiva discusses the phenomena of commodification and appropriation of 'Other' ideas, whereby Western commercial interests steal products and innovations derived from indigenous traditions and transform them into their

intellectual property. She argues that this phenomenon of commodification and appropriation is a result of indigenous knowledge systems having been devalued and having not been afforded protection (Shiva, 2000).

These Indian scholars coming from the context of issues and questions of the colonial aftermath have taken the discussion on knowledge production and indigenous knowledges in anti-colonial discourse to a different level. They have highlighted the power nexus of “Western” knowledge through its association with colonialism and modern day capitalism, which gives rise to the hegemony of “Western” knowledges. They have also discerned the violence inherent in “Western” knowledge’s ontology, epistemology and methodology. In addition, they have highlighted the transformation and negation of ‘Other’ knowledge systems by dominant “Western” knowledge systems. Some of them advocate for removing the gaze of dominant paradigms on ‘Other’ ways of knowing. Moreover, they make the connection between knowledge production and issues of class and gender. And, last but not least, some of them have discussed the issue of commodification and protection of indigenous knowledges. I use these examples of Southern postcolonial intellectuals, such as these Indian scholars to demonstrate how anti-colonial discourse shifts to the discussion of “Western” knowledge systems, particularly in the context of modern science, and how such knowledge systems marginalized, appropriated, negated and even commodified ‘Other’ knowledge systems. However, I believe, the analyses of these theorists still fail to give agency to the ‘Other.’ Here we see indigenous knowledges are complacent and not agents of resistance against the dominance and hegemony of “Western” knowledge systems.

Zaheer Baber (1996) in his book *The Science of Empire: Scientific Knowledge, Civilization and Colonial Rule in India* has critiqued the thoughts of these Indian scholars. Although recognizing the positive aspects of these critical analyses, Baber in turn asserts that they run the risk of naively idealizing ideas like “ ‘traditional systems of knowledge. . . struggling against the hegemony of modern science,’ and the ‘purity of traditional systems of knowledge’ ” (Baber, 1996, p. 251). Baber contends that such categorizations “simply reinforce a simplistic tradition-modernity dichotomy” and subsequently imply the existence of “hermetically sealed cultures and societies frozen in time suddenly exposed to external and alien influences” (p. 251). Baber’s book indicates that neither ancient nor medieval India was ever isolated from other cultures and societies, and in fact, a number of Indian scientific ideas, concepts and techniques actively contributed to the development of modern “Western” science and technology. For example, “Indian contributions would include trigonometry, the concept of sines, the concept of zero and the modern numeral system, the concept of power technology, the cotton gin. . . the drill plough and crucible cast steel” (p. 95). Moreover, Baber asserts that any critique that ignores the grounding of modern science and

technology in wider social structures risks indulging in 'voluntarism', which assumes that a "non-reductionist," "holistic," or "non-western" model of science can be conceptualized and applied to societies at will (Baber, 1996, p. 252). In addition, he critiques some scholars who, by invoking characteristics such as "domination of nature," mechanistic worldview," and a "Eurocentric worldview", make these the exclusive reasons for the direction modern science and technology has taken. As a result of invoking such characteristics, according to Baber, these scholars ignore the social conditions that facilitated the dominance of such views and the fact that even in western Europe there were a multiplicity of discourses about nature and science.

Baber's argument cautions us about the many problems with essentializing "Western" knowledge systems and abstracting them from their social contexts. In addition, he warns us against reifying and romanticizing indigenous knowledges or imposing static contexts to indigenous knowledges. Baber's ideas also remind us of the interconnections between knowledge systems and agency among the 'Other' and their indigenous knowledges, interconnections that were not taken into consideration by scholars such as Said, Bhabha, Spivak, Shiva, Bajaj and Alvares. All these reminders contribute to our layers of thought in anti-colonial discourse. However, in my opinion, what Baber fails to provide is an alternative framework that can accord agency to indigenous knowledges in the contemporary context. It is at this juncture that Linda Tuhiwai Smith, living in a settler/invader society, provides us with a way towards achieving this goal by developing a methodology which, by using indigenous standpoints, can act as a counter framework to "Western" knowledge production. So far, I have engaged the discussion of scholars who come from obvious decolonizing states and regions; however, there are also scholars who come from 'settler/invader' societies (Ashcroft et al., 1995). These are scholars who come from 'indigenous peoples.' "Indigenous peoples represent the unfinished business of decolonization" (Smith, 2001, p. 7). Here I will turn to the ideas and thoughts of Linda Tuhiwai Smith.

Smith's book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (2001), is instrumental in the discussion of knowledge production in anti-colonial discourse. The book identifies knowledge production as a significant site of struggle between the interests and ways of knowing of the West and the interests and ways of resisting of the 'Other.' The 'Other' here refers to indigenous peoples. The pursuit of "Western" knowledge, according to her, is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of colonial and imperial practices. Smith draws the relationship between knowledge, research and imperialism, and the process by which this has become the structure of the ways of knowing the 'Other.' "Western" knowledge and science," claims Smith (2001), "are beneficiaries of the colonization of indigenous peoples" (p. 59). The instruments and technologies of knowledge production, according to Smith, were also instruments for legitimating various colonial practices. In addition,

like some of the Indian scholars, Smith points out the appropriation and commodification of indigenous knowledges:

[I]ndigenous Asian, American, Pacific and African forms of knowledge, systems of classification, technologies and codes of social life. . . began to be recorded as 'new discoveries of Western science.' These discoveries were commodified as property belonging to the cultural archive and body of knowledge of the West. (Smith, 2001, p. 61)

She points out that with the globalization of knowledge and Western culture, the West's view of itself as the center, the sole arbiter and source of legitimate and civilized knowledge, is constantly reiterated. Smith contends that the traditional disciplines of academic knowledges are grounded in cultural worldviews which are either antagonistic or have no methodology for dealing with other knowledge systems. She also discusses how indigenous ways of knowing were excluded and marginalized. Here, the colonizers used the tools of discipline to destroy every last remains of alternative ways of knowing and the effect of such discipline was to silence or suppress the ways of knowing, and the languages for knowing, of many different indigenous peoples (Smith, 2001). What Smith proposes and develops in this book is another methodology for knowing the world, which comes from the standpoint of the 'Other,' as a form of resistance to "Western" knowledge production. Therefore, Smith provides a counter framework and methodology to bring back agency to the 'Other' in the discussion of knowledge production in anti-colonial discourse.

Now, I would like to discuss a current African Canadian scholar whose work is very important in this discussion of indigenous knowledges and knowledge production in anti-colonial discourse. In his article *Rethinking the role of indigenous knowledges in the academy*, George Dei (2000a) sets the stage for anti-colonial resistance in the academy. According to him, 'academy' does not just mean universities but includes schools and colleges (Dei, 2000a, p. 112). He proposes the introduction and co-existence of indigenous knowledges in the academy as part of the academic decolonizing mission. His goal in discussing indigenous knowledges is to "rupture the sense of comfort and complacency in conventional approaches to knowledge production, validation and dissemination in Euro-American educational settings" (p. 111).

Dei (2000a) recognizes that the discussion of indigenous knowledges can be appropriately placed in the anti-colonial discursive framework. Anti-colonialism, according to Dei, can use indigenous knowledges as an important entry point, as it is a way of knowing of the colonized. In this approach, "discursive agency and power also reside" among the colonized such that the contact between the "imperial order" and the colonized "continues to involve creative encounters/resistances" (p. 118). For Dei, anti-colonial discourse, which requires a substitute set of questions, methods and strategies, can only be constructed by anti-colonial theorists working with alternative paradigms,

which are “based on the use of indigenous concepts and analytical systems and cultural frames of reference” (p. 118). According to Dei, it is important for us to be aware that different knowledges can coexist and be in conflict at the same time, in order for us to truly accommodate indigenous knowledges into Western academies.

Moreover, like Baber (1996), Dei (2000a) recognizes the vitality of all knowledge systems by asserting that different bodies of knowledge continually influence each other. He contends that indigenous knowledges are cumulative in that they are able to combine with the complexities and particularities of modern world systems. Subsequently he also acknowledges that “Western” scientific knowledge incorporates indigenous thoughts. However, in the tradition of individualized appropriation, Western researchers often integrated indigenous knowledges into theories as their own ideas, rather than “acknowledging the collectivity and ongoing collaborative nature of knowledge creation in dialectic exchange” (p. 120). While Dei does not want to deny intellectual agency to the indigenous peoples, he reminds us to be aware of “the historic inferiorization of Indigenous experience and the devaluation of rich Indigenous histories and cultures, or what may be called the ‘entrapment/enslavement of the mind’ ” (p. 121). Furthermore, he is careful not to treat indigenous knowledges as static, or to romanticize the past of indigenous peoples. He acknowledges that indigenous knowledges also contain sites and sources of cultural disempowerment. In short, Dei’s work teases out the intricacies and complexities of knowledge production and indigenous knowledges for anti-colonial discourse. In addition, he continues the tradition of recognizing agency of the ‘Other’ by contending that anti-colonial discourse requires a different set of epistemologies and methodologies that are based on indigenous concepts and analytical systems.

Next, I will discuss some of my thoughts on the theoretical overview that I have drawn out so far. Moreover, I will briefly point out some critical areas that require more attention from future anti-colonial scholarship on indigenous knowledges and knowledge production.

#### **A REFLECTIVE JOURNEY TOWARDS DECOLONIZING SCHOLARSHIP AND PRACTICE**

When a reviewer of this paper posed the question, “what are your own thoughts on anti-colonial discourse and the theoretical overview?” I felt bewildered. I didn’t have an answer to the question. However, while I was in the final stages of revising this manuscript, I had the good fortune to visit Bangladesh to be with family. One of the overriding concerns I heard and felt during this trip was a sense of hopelessness among the youth in Bangladesh. Every young person, whether poor or rich, wanted to leave the country and go to Japan, Canada, Australia, the United States, Middle East or Europe to

pursue his or her dreams of more education or money and come back later. I realized that capitalism, through global capital, has been so entrenched in Bangladeshi family life, that any kind of family exchange took place through material consumer goods. The values of community and social justice were being replaced by worries over how much money one can earn the fastest way. I was dismayed by what I saw. Big shopping malls were opening all over Dhaka, which forced many small stores to shut down. Meanwhile, streets were beginning to fill with BMWs and Mercedes, while people are getting poorer. Interestingly, people's homes, mostly those of the middle and upper classes, were surrounded with higher walls or grills to protect themselves from theft, burglary, to a greater extent than I had seen two years earlier. The discrepancy between rich and poor has been increasing. The country, in my opinion, is serving the elite 5 to 10 percent of the population. This story, I believe, is nothing new in this transnational era. I must say that through the duration of my stay, I started to feel a sense of hopelessness myself. I started to reflect on how this paper may help my people and their collective struggle against social injustices. Who cares about indigenous knowledges and anti-colonial discourse, when most people are just trying to live every day and trying to earn the bowl of rice they will eat at the end of the day? I hope the following suggestions will help answer these questions.

First and foremost, I realized the most important lesson to take away from my Bangladeshi trip was a sense of agency and the idea of possibilities. Therefore, I agree with Gandhi, Fanon, Thiongo and Memmi, that agency is very important and should continue to be an important component of anti-colonial discourse. This needs to be translated into knowledge practices as we try to understand issues of indigenous knowledges. Agency is not a trendy word and it should not fall into the rhetoric of idealism. Rather, agency is about theorizing and carrying our practices that have the idea of possibilities centered first and foremost. It is only through the doors that we open for ourselves and those around us that we can think of making changes. This agenda should be key in our discussions and practices of anti-colonial thought. Our scholarly endeavours, whether it is writing, teaching, or service, are about creating possibilities for ourselves, those around us and those who come after us. This is to ensure that the colonized are not objects of change, but are subjects of change, of their own history and material reality (Freire, 1998). It is when we lose a sense of hope and belief in ourselves that we truly become colonized to by other forces that make us conform to other people's vision of life. Some would argue that I am romanticizing resistance. This is not the case. What I am arguing – and I have learned this through my recent visit to Bangladesh – is that when we do not see ourselves as subjects of our own lives, we continue our dependency on others to solve our own problems. Therefore, it is imperative that we always think of possibilities and that our scholarship reflects that. Anti-oppressive work should always

consist of a victorious consciousness, or our scholarship will perpetuate the colonial prophecies, where the colonized are always dependent on the colonizers (N.Wane, personal communication, November 17, 2004). We need to reclaim agency of the colonized, of indigenous knowledges, through our scholarly endeavours. Agency is very important, because we need to move towards a consciousness of hope and survival. Agency is not just about resistance but the will to change and hope. Our analyses in our scholarship implicate the kind of action we wish to achieve in the world around us. If we come up with defeatist analyses, then we will perpetuate the colonial prophecies. I believe Linda Tuhiwai Smith and George Dei are scholars who are trying to open doors for those around them, so that we can believe in alternatives and other ways of doing things. Therefore this leads me to pose the following question: *how do we effect agency for indigenous knowledges in our analyses, without essentializing, misrepresenting, romanticizing and appropriating from indigenous knowledges, and continue to recognize the dynamism among knowledge systems?* One solution lies in presenting the voices of those who carry indigenous knowledges and using their concepts and standpoints as our analytical systems. I believe quite a few scholars have already moved in this direction and others should follow (see Bishop, 1998; Dei, Hall & Rosenberg, 2000; Graveline, 2000; Shahjahan, 2005). Agency does not necessarily have to take place in terms of accommodating voices, but it is also about employing one's indigenous ways of knowing and centring these in the process of knowledge production.

Another concern I have relates to Memmi's analysis of the reciprocal relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, and the sense of ambivalence that Bhabha discusses. These are valid concerns in scholarship. If we question the core of much anti-colonial discourse, we find that it is embedded in Eurocentric thought, such as those of Marx, Lacan, Althusser, Gramsci and Foucault (Loomba, 1998). Spivak argues that even the concept of "intellectual" or 'theory' as a discourse is by definition implicated in the europeanisation/hybridisation of all culture in the aftermath of imperialism" (Ashcroft et al, 1995, p. 10). We are transfixed on Eurocentric modes of thought, in that we have an ambivalence towards its ideas, even though we wish to decolonize the academy. I myself struggle with this constantly. I wonder whether I can break away from this shackle and bond. Yet I am a student of the western academy. We are stuck in using Euro-American scholars to make our arguments (see Dutton, Seth & Gandhi, 1999; Seth, Gandhi & Dutton, 1999). This is why it is important to integrate indigenous knowledges in the academy, in order to break those bonds of dependency. Yet, how can we resist the seductive forces of colonizing knowledges? Can we be like Ngugi Wa Thiongo and break away from colonial language and Euro-American modes of thought? Can we let go of the seductive force of the colonial academy that values Euro-American thought? Some people

would argue that we shouldn't throw the baby out with the bath water. Others would argue that any indigenous thought is not pure in itself and has undergone some form of hybridization with European thought because of imperialism. While I don't know how to get out of this predicament, it is important to continue to search for alternative analytical systems, such as George Dei's and Linda Tuhiwai Smith's arguments for using indigenous knowledges.

The other area of concern, related to the first, centers on recognizing the dynamism among knowledge systems in our academic work. I believe this issue intersects with acknowledging the fact that what we call "Western" knowledge or 'indigenous' knowledge has derived some their ideas from each other and also from other civilizations and cultures. For example, we fail to acknowledge, in our academic writing, the fact that "Western" knowledges have appropriated some of their ideas from indigenous cultures and this continues to be unacknowledged as we continue to use labels such as "Western," "Eurocentric" to codify groups of ideas, among which appropriated ideas are included. In addition, by using such labels we misrepresent the origins of the appropriated ideas and continue to ignore the heterogeneity and multiple discourses prevalent in "Western" knowledge systems and indigenous knowledges. I believe that what we urgently need is to begin the process of acknowledging the origins of ideas that have been appropriated in order to stop the process of misappropriation of 'Other' knowledges by "Western" knowledges, and vice versa, in our academic scholarship. How we achieve this in our academic writing and the academy is an important question open to debate. Here I am talking about moving beyond the question of ownership, and to start looking towards a consciousness that knowledge has been generated everywhere, and not solely in the West, and that what we call Western knowledge is actually a hybrid and mixture of knowledges from other cultures and societies. Baber (1996) and Hayhoe and Pan (2001) are some examples of books where we can learn of these interactions.

However, one of the fundamental problems I have with anti-colonial discourse is the issue of language. Who are we writing for? Who can read what we write? This is a dilemma I face as my students and colleagues who were first exposed to some of these readings could not decipher what someone like Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, and others said. It is ironic that many of these scholars are talking about equity and social justice issues especially in the context of knowledge production, yet the texts they produce can be quite exclusive to a certain readership. It seems to me that to access this discourse we need to be "initiated" (McKenna, 1991, p. 123). This is one of the challenges that we as those involved in anti-colonial thought have to overcome. I think Spivak's saying "can the subaltern speak" is a question we have to be cognizant of. Yet, this is symptomatic of the academic context that we are part of, which privileges certain types of

writing and devalues others (hooks, 1994). However as anti-colonial scholars, I believe it is imperative to make sure that our writing is decolonizing, not just in terms of the message we are proposing, but also in terms of the means by which we make the message available. I wish to borrow here Marshall McLuhan's famous quote: the "medium is the message." How can we have a message, when the medium is not accessible to so many? Are we just writing for an academic audience? How does this message get translated into practice within schooling? I have to admit, even while I was trying to write this paper, I was facing the challenge of trying to convey the work of such anti-colonial scholars in an accessible way. I am not even sure if I succeeded. I clearly remember when I presented this paper at a conference, one participant came to me after wondering what I had said in the paper, because he found the language I had employed to be inaccessible. So how do we expect our messages about anti-colonial thought and indigenous knowledges to be out there, when we are governed by the rules of linear, rational, and impersonal writing? I think we need to decolonize our own writing styles. Mohanty (2003) states that "theory is a deepening of the political, not a moving away from it: a distillation of experience, and an intensification of the personal. The best theory makes personal experience and individual stories communicable" (p. 191). Our theorization has to be communicable to our audience. I agree with bell hooks (1994) that our political project is to make sure that our message is accessible to as many people as possible. What we can learn from the study of indigenous knowledges is that it is community driven and not exclusive. Anti-colonial discourse can learn from that, and we need to make sure that our messages are inclusive as possible. If we do not keep the question of language in mind in our practice and in our scholarship, then anti-colonial discourse and the study of indigenous knowledges will be "reduced to merely another location in the academic institutionalized landscape" and "another mere invasive 'mapping' of the subdued and subjugated post-colonial world" (Ashcroft et al., 1995, p. 11).

Another irony in anti-colonial discourse, especially in the context of indigenous knowledges, is that even though many of these scholars critique western modes of knowledge production, they fail to use indigenous or multiple ways of knowing in their own writings (for instance, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, George Dei and Vandana Shiva, who specifically discuss indigenous knowledges). I find Graveline (1998), Jimenez (2005), Mayuzumi (2006) and Rendon (2000), are examples of those who employ their native language, poetry, or indigenous metaphors to help theorize issues of indigenous knowledges. What I am advocating here is that we need to "walk the talk." We do not employ these decolonizing methods of knowing, as a means to exoticize 'other' ways of knowing or treat them as token, but as a means to decolonize the writing methods we use to theorize about the world. In this way, we provide agency to our own indigeneity. Anti-colonial discourse has

become a cognitive discourse that sometimes does not speak to the hearts and bodies of the colonized. What do we do about this? I myself have found that my political project is to think about how my readers will feel inside after they read my papers. Will it be just another cognitive, intellectual exercise, where one's emotions and one's spirit are not tapped into? If this is the case, then we only perpetuate the rational modes of knowledge production that privilege the mind over other functions of our selves. Neither indigenous knowledges, nor the anti-colonial movements, have ever exclusively been a rationalistic exercise; rather, they involved the emotions, spirits, dreams, intuition, poetry, music, bodies of the colonized in order to resist the colonial encounter. Anti-colonial discourse has to embody these ways of knowing in our own writings and stories.

Another issue that we anti-colonial scholars need to interrogate and discuss, and that is related to all the issues mentioned above, is the following question: how do we dismantle the academic regime or other regimes of truth that regulates the process by which we can name and act in this world? Some anti-colonial scholars provide us with some strategies for confronting this issue (see Wane, Shahjahan & Wagner, 2004; Waterfall & Maiter, 2003). But we need more strategies to decolonize the academy. While there has been much discussion on what needs to be included in the academy in order to decolonize it, in terms of curricula, bodies of which it is comprised, we also need to understand further how academic systems and higher education systems work to regulate what knowledge is validated and what is excluded. Here I am talking about deconstructing and reconstructing issues around research funding mechanisms, tenure reviews, admission criteria, promotion criteria and journal/book publishing in order to truly integrate and legitimize indigenous knowledges in the academy (Fenelon, 2003; Shahjahan & Muzzin, 2005). These are some issues that we need to focus on more specifically in anti-colonial discourse on indigenous knowledges, so as to figure out strategies of how we can overcome the structural and systemic barriers that permeate the academy. This leaves us with an important overriding question: *can the discourse and practice of anti-colonial thought and the study of indigenous knowledges truly be housed in the academy?*

#### *Decolonizing practice and the spirit*

While I don't wish to separate practice from knowledge production, as knowledge production is a set of practices (see Fernandes, 2003), we do need to think of how what we say within anti-colonial discourse affects our practice outside the academy, especially in the context of equity and social justice issues. Anti-colonial discourse needs to move beyond texts and towards social action. Many have agreed upon this (see for example Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001; Young, 1999). However, one area that requires more attention is the critical task of implicating ourselves in our own work.

What do I mean by this? It is again a question of walking the talk not only in scholarship but in our everyday life. While many have discussed the question of privileges and ethics of researchers within the field (e.g. Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Smith, 2001), I believe we need to move these questions beyond the field research. Decolonizing is an act that is not part time; it is something that has to be embodied in ourselves. We may talk about social change, but we sometimes lose sight of our own responsibility in changing our personal selves (see Shahjahan, 2004b). What do I mean? I can think of numerous examples, in which I have come across activist scholars who have violated or oppressed their own students and other faculty through the way they act in every day life. We cannot remain silent about this behaviour, as this has deep ramifications towards whether equity and social justice is really attainable, when those who espouse it violate these same tenets in their every day life. Our decolonizing messages cannot take place through paper or what we say, but have to be embodied (Sheth & Dei, 1997). The project of decolonization needs to include decolonizing the spirit. This is where the question of spirituality is very important to examine in anti-colonial practice. We need to problematize the view that separates our personal spiritual transformation from social transformation because it unconsciously assumes that there are two different domains of transformation (Nakagawa, 2000). How do we heal and evoke social transformation, when we are the disease itself in our everyday life? These are questions to which anti-colonial discourse needs to pay more attention. Critical analysis needs to move beyond critiquing others and social structures. It also needs to critique our everyday thoughts/actions. We need to engrain emancipatory practices not just in our minds, but in our hearts. As Tisdell (2003) eloquently argues, “to teach for personal and social change also requires a way of engaging people’s hearts and spirits” (p. 18). If we wish to decolonize, we cannot do it without decolonizing ourselves first. Our behaviour towards ourselves and others is always intertwined with reproducing the hierarchies that permeate everyday life outside the academy. Gandhi is a good example, where he used his spiritual body, not just his words, to decolonize India. We need similar bodies in the academy and in social practice.

The study of indigenous knowledges is an important reminder for the colonized to reclaim our four faces (the personal face, the political face, the historical face, and the sacred face) (Abalos, 1998). Most of the time the sacred face is ignored in political praxis. With Marxist and Foucauldian sensibilities within anti-colonial discourse, many of the times the question of spirituality is ignored or considered irrelevant. Yet a lot of social change movements took place with the question of spirituality at the center (see Ferry, 2003; Magnusson, 2004). This is not to argue for religious fundamentalism in our practice. No, it is rather to understand the interconnections we have with each other and other beings that surround us (Kumar, 2003). Indigenous

knowledges in most cultures have always taught us about the interconnect-  
edness of life. It is this sacred ontological space that many of the people  
of the South come from, as they discuss issues of social justice and equity  
(see for example, Beek, 2000). Yet this kind of discussion of spirituality is  
silenced within emancipatory practices in the North American context.  
Even Vanadana Shiva admits that when the question of commodification  
of water was raised in India, it was not ownership that was most problem-  
atic for her people, but the question of access to a sacred space that was  
part of the everyday life of millions of Indian people (Shiva, 2004). It is  
this kind of ontology, the notion of the sacred, that has been paramount  
in the anti-colonial struggles, yet ignored in many of the theorists' ideas in  
anti-colonial discourse. Within the North American context, the question  
of the sacred or the divine is so silenced, that many of the emancipatory  
activities happen in a void or ignore the spiritual realm in political practices.  
This is quite problematic, when among many of the indigenous peoples and  
non-western people of the world, the sacred is central in their lives (Beek,  
2000). Yet when we talk about indigenous issues and knowledge production,  
we do not acknowledge this important component. And if it is included,  
it is misrepresented or silenced through the question of religion and issues  
of oppression, rather than seeing it in its mystical and emancipatory func-  
tions. *So how do we begin to integrate spirituality into our analyses and practices  
of anti-colonial discourse and the study of indigenous knowledges?*

#### FINAL THOUGHTS: A JOURNEY FROM THE MIND TO THE HEART

Indigenous knowledges have a rightful place in the academy. Not to incor-  
porate them is to spiritually amputate ourselves. This amputation is to the  
detriment of the academy. Indigenous knowledges should not be incorpo-  
rated as mere tokens to make the curriculum more multicultural. On the  
contrary, these paradigms need to permeate everything that is done within  
the academy in terms of administration, teaching and research. It is only  
in this way that indigenous knowledges can coexist with western modes of  
knowledge production. Indigenous knowledges should be viewed through  
a resource-based paradigm, rather than a tokenizing rights-based paradigm  
(Crawhall, 1999). It is by viewing it from a resource-based paradigm that  
the academy can see these forms of knowledge as adding something to the  
overall life of the academy, rather than just being an insignificant add on.  
Indigenous knowledges are a means to empower diverse bodies that make  
up the academy. They are a means to open up possibilities for those who  
come after us, to centre their own concerns. For instance, my objective in  
using the sacred words to start this paper was by no means to be narcissistic,  
but it was a way to be able not to live a divided life and instead come out  
with my own spiritual self in my writing. In a similar way, I believe that  
indigenous knowledges can open doors for many to make the academy more

inclusive of different ways of naming the world around us. It is this agenda that I hope to render visible as people read this text.

As this paper indicates, anti-colonial discourse has made many shifts in order to accommodate newer ways of thinking that can better understand the complex nature of the social and material world, and issues of knowledge production and indigenous knowledges. As a result, anti-colonial discourse on indigenous knowledges and knowledge production has developed many layers of interdependent thoughts. They are all threads that make up the single cloth of anti-colonial discourse. Each thread is derivative of its historical-social-political context. It has a purpose in either complementing or drawing our attention to the shortcoming in another thread of thought. Hence, anti-colonial discourse on indigenous knowledges and knowledge production is not a linear body of thought, but is filled with contradictions and vitality, just like the topic it tries to analyze and understand.

My dear readers, I want to leave you with the following message: What kind of doors are we opening and leaving open for those around us and for future generations that will occupy the space of the academy and the world around it? What are we leaving behind for them? I believe that to answer these questions we need to take the topic of indigenous knowledges into serious consideration. What are we losing by not incorporating it in the academy? Indigenous knowledges are a collective endeavor; they privilege community over the individual. We need to break out of the shells of our individuality and surrender to the collective endeavor. I hope this paper contributes to this task. The question still remains for me, how is this paper relevant to my Bangladeshi people and those who are colonized? I believe I don't have all the answers, but my hope and prayer is that this paper asks us to rethink many of our practices in the academy and in communities around the world. "Walking our talk" is one way of evoking social change, yet it is one of the most challenging things to bridge in our lives. One colleague of mine once shared the following saying: "the longest journey we will ever travel in our lives is from our heart to our mind and vice versa."<sup>5</sup> I pray that our anti-colonial scholarly endeavours and every day practices will make this journey easier for ourselves and others.

May peace be upon you.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper was first delivered at the Annual Meeting for the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association (CSAA), held under the auspices of the Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities, Halifax, Nova Scotia, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003. I would like to thank the participants of the conference for their comments on this paper. In addition, I would like to thank Linda Muzzin, Njoki Wane, George Dei and Elena

Basile for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper. I am also grateful to the anonymous readers of the journal and Ann Beer for their constructive comments.

#### NOTES

1. I sometimes use a plural form of indigenous knowledge in order to emphasize the nature of multiplicity in the notion. Since some authors use a singular form consistently (see for example Semali & Kincheloe, 1999), my inconsistent use of both forms does not imply any difference. Both “indigenous knowledge” and “indigenous knowledges” will be used interchangeably throughout the paper.
2. I use the term “un/defining” because I wish to problematize the Euro-centric idea of defining, reducing, codifying and classifying bodies of knowledge or ideas into a uniform concept. This codification results in ignoring the multiplicity and fluidity of different ideas that make up a certain body of knowledge. For further discussion on this point, please refer to Shiva (1995), Battiste & Henderson (2000) and Smith (2001).
3. I would like to acknowledge here that, throughout this paper, whenever I use the word “Western” to label worldviews, thought, knowledges and knowledge systems, I am acknowledging that some of these bodies of thought include appropriated ideas that were stolen or became incorporated as a result of dialectical exchange with ‘Other’ knowledges, cultures and civilization. In addition, I also want to acknowledge that this body of thought is not uniform, but consists of multiple discourses. I discuss the importance of acknowledging these points further on page 230 of this paper.
4. “Trojan horse” refers to a metaphor based on Greek history. The Trojan horse was used in the Trojan war. The Columbia Encyclopedia (2003), in reference to the Trojan war, states:

For nine years the Greeks ravaged Troy’s surrounding cities and countryside, but the city itself, well fortified and commanded by Hector and other sons of the royal household, held out. Finally the Greeks built a large hollow wooden horse in which a small group of warriors were concealed. The other Greeks appeared to sail for home, leaving behind only the horse and Sinon, who deceitfully persuaded the Trojans, despite the warnings of Cassandra and Laocoön, to take the horse within the city walls. At night the Greeks returned; their companions crept out of the horse and opened the city gates, and Troy was destroyed. (para. 1)
5. I wish to acknowledge Gale Cyr for sharing this powerful indigenous saying with me.

#### REFERENCES

- Abalos, D. (1998). *La Comunidad Latina in the United States*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Alvares, C. (1991). Science, colonialism and violence: a Luddite view. In A. Nandy (Ed.), *Science, hegemony and violence: A requiem of modernity* (pp. 68-112). Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (Eds.). (1995). *The post-colonial studies reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Awang, S. (2000). Indigenous nations and the human genome diversity project. In G.J.S. Dei, B. Hall & D. G. Rosenberg (Eds.), *Indigenous knowledges in the global contexts: Multiple readings of the world* (pp. 120-136). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Baber, Z. (1996). *The science of empire: Scientific knowledge, civilization and colonial rule in India*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Bajaj, J. (1991). Francis Bacon, the first philosopher of modern science: A non-western view. In A. Nandy (Ed.), *Science, hegemony and violence* (pp. 24-67). New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Battiste, M., & Henderson, J. (2000). *Protecting indigenous knowledge and heritage: A global challenge*. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Ltd.

## *Anti-colonial Discourse and Indigenous Knowledges*

- Beek, K. A. V. (2000). Spirituality: A development taboo. *Development in Practice*, 10(1), 31-43.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1995). Signs taken for wonders. In B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths & H. Tiffin (Eds.), *The post-colonial studies reader* (pp. 29-35). New York: Routledge.
- Bishop, R. (1998). Freeing ourselves from neo-colonial domination in research: A Maori approach to creating knowledge. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11(2), 199-219.
- Brock-Urte, B., & Holmarsdottir, H. B. (2004). Language policies and practices in Tanzania and South Africa: problems and challenges. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 24(1), 67-83.
- Bunyi, G. (1999). Rethinking the place of African indigenous languages in African education. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 19(4-5), 337-350.
- Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the mountain: An ecology of indigenous education*. Skyland: Kivaki Press.
- Castellano, M. B. (2000). Updating Aboriginal traditions of knowledge. In G. Dei, B. Hall & D. Rosenberg (Eds.), *Indigenous knowledges in global contexts: multiple readings of the world* (pp. 21-36). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Columbia Encyclopedia (2003). *Trojan War*. Retrieved January 9, 2003, from <http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/t/trojanw1a.asp>
- Crawhall, N. (1999). Going to a better life: perspectives on the future of language in education for San and Khoe South Africans. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 19(4-5), 323-335.
- Dei, G.J.S. (2000a). Rethinking the role of indigenous knowledges in the academy. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 4(2), 111-132.
- Dei, G. (2000b). African development: The relevance and implications of 'indigeneness'. In G. Dei, B. Hall & D. Rosenberg (Eds.), *Indigenous knowledges in global contexts: Multiple readings of our world* (pp. 70-86). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Dei, G.J.S., Hall, B., & Rosenberg, D.G. (2000). (Eds.). *Indigenous knowledges in the global contexts: Multiple readings of the world*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Dei, G.J.S., & Asgharzadeh, A. (2001). The power of social theory: The anti-colonial discursive framework. *Journal of Educational Thought*, 35(3), 297-323.
- Dirlik, A. (1994). The postcolonial aura: Third world criticism in the age of global capitalism. *Critical Inquiry*, 20(2), 328-356.
- Dirlik, A. (1999). How the grinch hijacked radicalism: further thoughts on the postcolonial. *Postcolonial Studies: Culture, Politics, Economy*, 2(2), 149 - 163.
- Dutton, M., Seth, S., & Gandhi, L. (1999). Postcolonial discernment or was that deceit? *Post-colonial Studies: Culture, Politics, Economy*, 2(1), 13-18.
- Ellerby, J. H. (2000). *Spirituality, holism and healing among the Lakota Sioux: Towards an understanding of indigenous medicine*. Unpublished Master of Arts Dissertation, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg.
- Fanon, F. (1963). *The wretched of the earth*. New York: Grove Press.
- Fenelon, J. (2003). Race, research, and tenure: Institutional credibility and the incorporation of African, Latino, and American Indian faculty. *Journal of Black Studies*, 34(1), 87-100.
- Fernandes, L. (2003). *Transforming feminist practice: Non-violence, social justice and the possibilities of a spiritualized feminism*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.
- Ferry, C. (1999). Liberation theology and liberatory pedagogy: Spiritual teachings in the real world. In R. P. Foehr & S. A. Schiller (Eds.), *The spiritual side of writing: Releasing the learner's whole potential* (pp. 148-156). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Figueira, D. (2000). The profits of postcolonialism. *Comparative Literature*, 52(3), 246-254.
- Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

- Gandhi, L. (1998). *Postcolonial theory: A critical introduction*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Gandhi, M. (2002). *The essential Gandhi: An anthology of his writings on his life, work and ideas*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Graveline, F. J. (1998). *Circle works: Transforming Eurocentric consciousness*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.
- Graveline, F. J. (2000). Circle as methodology: Enacting an Aboriginal paradigm. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 13(4), 361-370.
- Hayhoe, R., & Pan, J. (Eds.). (2001). *Knowledge across cultures: A contribution to dialogue among civilizations*. Hong Kong: Comparative Education Resource Centre, University of Hong Kong.
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as a practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge.
- Hurdle, D. E. (2002). Native Hawaiian traditional healing: Culturally based interventions for social work practice. *Social Work*, 47(2), 183-192.
- Iseke-Barnes, J. (2003). Living and writing indigenous spiritual resistance. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 24(3), 211-238.
- Jimenez, V. (2005). *The tree of life as a research methodology*. Unpublished manuscript, Department of Sociology and Equity Studies, OISE/UT.
- Kirkham, S. R., & Anderson, J. M. (2002). Postcolonial nursing scholarship: From epistemology to method. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 25(1), 1-17.
- Kwek, D. (2003, July). *We took them on, they took us over: Academic imperialism and intellectual bondage in Asia*. Paper presented at the Critical Management Studies: Critique and Inclusivity: Opening the Agenda, Lancaster University, England.
- Kumar, S. (2002). *You are therefore I am: A declaration of dependence*. Totnes, Devon: Green Books.
- Loomba, A. (1998). *Colonialism/postcolonialism*. London: Routledge.
- Magnusson, J. (2004). *Feminist martial arts: Embodying the politics of anti-violence*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, SIG: Applied Semiotics, San Diego.
- Mayuzumi, K. (2004). Rethinking literacy and women's health: A Bangladesh case study. *Health Care for Women International*, 25(6), 504-526.
- Mayuzumi, K. (2006). *The tea ceremony as a decolonizing epistemology: Healing and Japanese women*. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 4(1), 8-26.
- Mazama, A. (1998). The Eurocentric discourse on writing: An exercise in self-glorification. *Journal of Black Studies*, 29(1), 3-16.
- Mazama, M. A. (2002). Afrocentricity and African spirituality. *Journal of Black Studies*, 33(2), 218-234.
- McKenna, K. (1991). Subjects of discourse: Learning the language that counts. In H. Bannerji, L. Carty, K. Dehli, S. Helad & K. McKenna (Eds.), *Unsettling Relations: The University As a Site of Feminist Struggles* (pp. 109-128). Toronto: Women's Press Collective.
- Memmi, A. (1991). *The colonizer and the colonized*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Millat-e-Mustafa, M. (2000). Towards an understanding of indigenous knowledge. In P. Sillitoe (Ed.), *Indigenous knowledge development in Bangladesh: Present and future* (pp. 27-30). London: Intermediate Technology Publications Limited.
- Mohanty, C. T. (2003). *Feminism without borders: Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Nakagawa, Y. (2000). *Education for awakening: An eastern approach to holistic education*. Vermont: Foundation for Educational Renewal.
- Nandy, A. (1998). Colonization of the mind. In M. Rahnama & V. Bawtree (Eds.), *The post-development reader* (pp. 168-177). London: Zed Books.

## Anti-colonial Discourse and Indigenous Knowledges

- Parry, B. (1995). Problems in current theories of colonial discourse. In B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths & H. Tiffin (Eds.), *The post-colonial studies reader* (pp. 36-44). New York: Routledge.
- Quddus, M. A. (2000). Use of indigenous knowledge in the sustainable development of Bangladeshi farm forestry. In P. Sillitoe (Ed.), *Indigenous knowledge development in Bangladesh: Present and future* (pp. 57-64). London: Intermediate Technology Publications Limited.
- Rendon, L. (2000 Fall). Academics of the heart: Reconnecting the scientific mind with the spirit's artistry. *The Review of Higher Education*, 24(1), 1-13.
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Semali, L. M., & Kincheloe, J. L. (Eds.). (1999). *What is indigenous knowledge? Voices from the academy*. New York: Falmer Press.
- Seth, S., Gandhi, L., & Dutton, M. (1999). Postcolonial studies: A beginning. *Postcolonial Studies: Culture, Politics, Economy*, 1(1), 7-11.
- Sheth, A. & Dei, G. (1997). Limiting the academics of possibilities: A self-reflective exercise in Freiran politics, in P. Freire et al. (Eds.), *Mentoring the mentor: A critical dialogue with Paulo Freire* (pp. 143-173). New York: Peter Lang Publishers.
- Shahjahan, R. (2004a). Reclaiming and reconnecting to our spirituality in the academy. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 9(1), 81-95.
- Shahjahan, R. A. (2004b). Centering spirituality in the academy: Toward a transformative way of teaching and learning. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 2(4), 294-312.
- Shahjahan, R.A. (2005). Spirituality in the academy: Reclaiming from the margins and evoking a transformative way of knowing the world. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 18(6), 685-711.
- Shahjahan, R. A., & Muzzin, L. J. (2005). *Decolonizing research in universities: Reclaiming and centering subjugated knowledges*. Paper presented at the First International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, Urbana-Champaign.
- Shiva, V. (1991). Reductionist science as epistemological violence. In A. Nandy (Ed.), *Science, hegemony and violence* (pp. 232-256). New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Shiva, V. (1995). *Monocultures of the mind*. London: Zed Books.
- Shiva, V. (2000). Foreword: Cultural diversity and the politics of knowledge. In G.J.S. Dei, B. Hall & D.G. Rosenberg (Eds.), *Indigenous knowledges in the global contexts: Multiple readings of the world* (pp. vii-x). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Shiva, V. (2004). *Madan Handa Memorial Lecture: Sacred Commons, Sacred Earth*. Presented at the "Spirit Matters: Wisdom Traditions and the "Great Work"" conference, May 13, OISE/University of Toronto: Toronto.
- Sillitoe, P. (Ed.). (2000). *Indigenous knowledge development in Bangladesh: Present and future*. London: Intermediate Technology Publications Limited.
- Smith, G. (2000). Protecting and respecting indigenous knowledge. In M. Battiste (Ed.), *Reclaiming indigenous voice and vision* (pp. 209-224). Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Smith, L. T. (2001). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Some, M. (1994). *Of water and spirit: ritual, magic, and initiation in the life of an African shaman*. New York: Tarcher/Putnam Book.
- Spivak, G. C. (1995). Can the subaltern speak? In B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths & H. Tiffin (Eds.), *The post-colonial studies reader* (pp. 24-28). New York: Routledge.
- Thiongo, N. W. (1986). *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature*. London: James Currey.
- Tisdell, E. J. (2003). *Exploring spirituality and culture in adult and higher education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Wane, N. N. (2002). African women's technologies: Applauding the self, reclaiming indigenous space. *Journal of Postcolonial Education*, 1(1), 45-66.

Wane, N., Shahjahan, R. A., & Wagner, A. (2004). Walking the Talk: Decolonizing the politics of equity of knowledge and charting the course for an inclusive curriculum in higher education. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, XXV(3), 499-510.

Waterfall, B., & Maiter, S. (2003, May). *Resisting colonization in the academy: From indigenous/minoritized standpoints*. Paper presented at the Canadian Critical Race Conference, Vancouver, BC. Retrieved January 22, 2005 from: [http://edocs.lib.sfu.ca/ccrc/html/CCRC\\_PDF/ResistingColonizationInTheAcademy\(BarbaraWaterfall&SarahMaiter\).pdf](http://edocs.lib.sfu.ca/ccrc/html/CCRC_PDF/ResistingColonizationInTheAcademy(BarbaraWaterfall&SarahMaiter).pdf)

Young, J. C. R. (1995). *Colonial desire: Hybridity in theory, culture and race*. London: Routledge.

Young, R. J. C. (1999). Academic activism and knowledge formation in postcolonial critique. *Postcolonial Studies: Culture, Politics, Economy*, 2(1), 29 - 34.

RIYAD SHAHJAHAN is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). His areas of interest are in Equity and Diversity, Spirituality and Higher Education, Indigenous Knowledges and Anti-colonial thought. He is currently working on his dissertation which examines how a socially diverse group of spiritually minded activist scholars integrate their spirituality into their academic activities within the Canadian university context.

RIYAD SHAHJAHAN est un candidat au doctorat dans le département de théorie et d'études des politiques à l'Institut Ontarien des Études en Éducation de l'Université de Toronto. (OISE/UT). Ses domaines de recherche sont dans l'équité, la diversité, la spiritualité dans les hautes études, les connaissances autochtones et les pensées anticoloniales. Il travaille actuellement sur une dissertation qui examine la façon dont un groupe scolaire de diverses origines sociales engagé dans l'activisme à propos de la spiritualité intègre leur propre spiritualité dans leurs activités universitaires et dans le contexte des universités canadiennes.