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## The 'in-between' Experience in the Poetry of Imtiaz Dharker

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### **Abstract:**

The post 9/11 world has seen a new phenomenon rising- urban violence, threats of terrorism exterminating West, and the resultant prejudice against the Muslims as perpetrators of violence. Imtiaz Dharker, a documentary film maker, painter and poetess, portrays these uncertain times, which is fraught with insecurity and injustice. She asserts the right of the Muslims to preserve their cultural identity and political space, but in no uncertain terms does she voice her protest against the unending chain of violence, physical as well as cultural and political. In a world, where our life is always under threat from the perpetrators of violence, and there is suspicion at every corner, Dharker's poetry comes across as a narrative of protest, but there is the sub text of hope- hope that preserver all of us against psychological extermination. This paper proposes to read Dharker's poetry not only from its political or aesthetic point of view, but also to situate the text in the contemporary uncertain context of the time and hence analyses the poems as a cultural production of its times.

**Keywords: Islamophobia, Diaspora, Othering, Globalisation.**

Terrorism has been a global issue from time immemorial. The ideological standpoint to use violence as a means of gaining political capital has long been debated on the parameters of ethical behaviour, humanitarian issues and the larger question of the right to life. However terrorism as a global phenomenon and as an instrument of State policy has been an issue from the time when America and Russia had fought over territorial rights in Afghanistan during the 80's and 90's. India has raised the issue of State backed terrorism in Kashmir from the late 80's, but it has never drawn global attention since India was not a global market at that point of time. The issue of terrorism took an unprecedented turn when America was attacked on 9/11. In a post Cold War unipolar world dominated by American Capitalism and open market system of production, America came to image itself as the ruthless domineer of market driven free economy where the global south is marginalised as the passive reactor to forces of production. With the happenings of 9/11, America's State ego was hurt, along with the complete collapse of right to life and a crisis at the level of political dominance of the U.S over the rest of the world. The reaction to this incident was through a political imaging of 'us' and 'them' – America and the terrorists. America imaged itself as the champion of right to life and the protector of universal human values, even when it maintained non-interference State policy on issues of terrorism in Kashmir or in African nations like Ghana and Nigeria. The problem with this politics is that it leads to essentialisation and stereotyping, ultimately resulting in xenophobia. Terrorism, through a cynical politics of Othering, got equated with the Muslim population in totality, thereby

constructing the Muslims as a threat to Western ideals of democracy, human rights and freedom.

The politics of essentialisation involves the construction of the image and the Other. Sajid observes that:

Islamophobia is the fear and/or hatred of Islam, Muslims or Islamic culture. Islamophobia can be characterised by the belief that all or most Muslims are religious fanatic, have violent tendencies towards non-Muslims and reject as directly opposed to Islam such concepts as equality, tolerance and democracy. Islamophobia is a new form of racism whereby Muslims, an ethno-religious group, not a race, are nevertheless, constructed as a race. A set of negative assumptions are made of the entire group to the detriment of members of that group (Sajid 14-15)

Sajid's observation underscores the point that the construction of Muslims as agenda driven religious group that seeks violence and destruction of the Western world is a xenophobic ideology that brackets the Muslims as the Other. This perception is created through media narratives and popular culture, where Othering of Muslims is done through mass consumption of hatred politics. However Islamophobia is not a homogenous narrative, it is a complex mixture of multi-layered epistemes and discourses through which power is produced in order to label the Muslims as anti-modern and anti-democratic. Other literatures on Islamophobia include *Islamophobia: A Challenge for us all* (1997) by the Runnymede Trust in UK Dekker and Van der Noll's *Islamophobia and its origins* (2008). In the field of creative literature, there are many novels written on the theme of terrorism and Islamophobia like *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) by Mohsin Hamid, *The Kite Runner* (2003) by Khaled Hosseini, *Terrorist* (2006) by John Updike, *The Good Terrorist* (1985) by Dorris Lessing or *Framed as a Terrorist: My 14 Year Struggle to Prove my Innocence* (2016) by Mohammad Amir and Nandita Haksar. The list is by no means exhaustive. These literatures and field studies point to a growing sense of anxiety in a post 9/11 world where Muslims and Islamic Culture is being increasingly looked at with suspicion and with a sense of rejection. It is here that the poetry of Imtiaz Dharker becomes important in analysing the sense of Othering appropriated on the Muslims. Dharker's poetry questions the imaging of the Muslims as anti-modern agents and the paper will look at her art as a statement of resistance against the politics of hatred forced upon people following Islam.

When the then President of the United States, George W Bush, had declared from the hallowed portals of the White House that, "You're either with us or against us in the fight against terror" (Bush web), it started a new trend in the world of identity politics vis-a-vis terror that had rocked the US in 9/11. Separatism at the level of culture or nation has never been a new thing, in fact nations do exist out of a deep politics in identity formation, but what the President did was that he drew the fault lines on the basis of essentialism- either 'you' are with America or else 'you' are a terrorist, and therefore get ready for any American domination- from economic, to political and the most significant of all - military. Imtiaz Dharker seems to have been born out of these politically charged and volatile ambiances, when globalisation seems to have taken a different turn through American military action as

an aftermath of 9/11. Dharker was born in Lahore, but then she went over to Glasgow in order to pursue her career as an artist, where she has indeed become an established documentary film maker, a poet and a painter. The question really is not about the Diasporic intentions in Dharker's poetry, the question is her troubled voice that comes out through her poetry in terms of defining what a terrorist is and what should be the qualitative analysis, if any, in subjugating the act of terrorism. Dharker's problematic identity is made obvious by her own statement where she has described herself as the "Scottish Muslim Calvinist" (Dharker web). What is interesting in this particular identity politics is the way Dharker has intermixed nationality with religion, along with a particular sect of Christianity that not only started the Reformation of the Anglican Church but also positioned human subjectivity on the forefront of Renaissance humanism, or may be 'man-ism'. In the Western discourse of secularism, the State is a complete non active entity in the domain of religion, at least that has been the growing trend post Enlightenment, and to be a Scottish Muslim seems to be a kind of cultural oxymoron. Dharker refuses to let go off her Islamic roots, and as her poems would support, she is a proud Muslim without a shade of any dogmatism whatsoever. This is where Mr. President's remark becomes all the more significant. The cultural and the religious in-betweenness are always present, not everything can be measured through Alice's looking glass where everything essentially appears upside down. Terrorism is non-justifiable, but is terrorism always an act of brutality where violence is the only resultant outcome? Perhaps the point is that terrorism is not only manifested in the way the world knows post 9/11, terrorism as an act of subversion and violence is both historically and qualitatively more deep rooted than that. And this is the radical reading into the subject that Dharker presents in her poetry.

Dharker titles one of her anthologies as *The Terrorist at my Table* which in itself hints at a subversive politics, because a terrorist at 'my' table naturally makes 'me' a perpetrator of violence, or an ideological supporter of such acts. Dharker however creates an inversion of the essentiality that Mr. President had pronounced so loudly. In the poem by the same name as the anthology, Dharker creates a world of cynicism and a deep sense of faithlessness, as cutting onions seem to have become an act of devilish indifference, since the news blares out a similar content- a terrorist act:

At my back, the news is the same  
as usual. A train  
blown up, hostages taken (Dharker 22)

A binary opposition is created between the nonchalant domestic world and the outside space that is ripped apart by urban violence and terrorism. If the "news is the same", same monotony seems to grip the domestic life of the speaker, "go upstairs", "come down" and "go to the kitchen" (*ibid*) in the same routine manner as the terrorists blow up a train and take people as hostages. In a postmodern world of urban glamour, it seems that there is a huge gap that is growing between the urban centric development of the West and the global south that is teeming with millions of problems. Dharker constructs an undertone of irony when she says:

Here are the facts, fine,  
as onion rings (*ibid*)

The satire is against the word “facts” because that is a word that seems to be the favourite of the liberal press, that often sees itself as equal to the government. The free, liberal press, which is a product of the Western democracy, often presents “facts”, completely forgetting at times that there are many slippages and discontinuities that come between what is a ‘fact’ and what is being represented. What comes across as an encoding of information needs to be decoded with more penetrative analysis, or assertion of other facts, but the news that is blaring out from the speaker’s back is not the entire ‘fact’. The media discourse in the contemporary times have become viciously partisan and often it is projected as the ‘consciousness’ of the ‘people’, not however making it clear as to what consciousness and what people is the media referring to. One small illustration is perhaps apt over here, where Gilles Deleuze, in his book *Difference and Repetition* notes: “Underneath the large noisy events lie the small events of silence” (Deleuze 107). Silence here is epistemological, as Dharker, a few lines later asks a politically turbulent question “Who gave the gift of Palestine?” (*ibid*). Palestine is of course, a big political inferno which has become the site of conflicting ideologies, State power and economic battleground that has done nothing much but to flare up into a place where thousands die each year. Without going into the tumultuous history of the creation of the Arab state and the state of Israel, it can be said that the whole conflict between the Jewish population and the Arabs was a product of international politics, transmitting out of Britain’s resolution in the United Nations in the year 1947 and as a result, the whole dispute has given rise to an unending chain of violence. What Dharker’s point really is that it is the Western powers, out of their vested interests in the post War era, have exploited the Palestine region in the name of identity politics, which has resulted in subversive acts of violence that has been going on and still raging. Dharker writes:

Here is the food. I put it on the table.  
The tablecloth is fine cutwork,  
sent from home. Beneath it, Gaza  
is a spreading watermark (*ibid*)

If a strain of symbolism can be injected in the reading, then it can be said that the bourgeois aristocratic tablecloth, representing the stylised urban space of the West tries to hide away the shame called the Palestine. Identity politics suffer a humanistic disorientation in the speaker because just like the dissolving borders of the watermark, the identity of the Palestine space is constantly configured and refigured to meet the ends of the American or the NATO power. “Facts” therefore is neither unproblematic, nor linear as the Western powers would perhaps like to believe, or make the people believe through the mainstream media, but the lines of dissemination is as fluid as the watermarks beneath the tablecloth. There is a mood of anger in the speaker, not only because of stereotyping terrorism as a fact of Islamic violence on the part of the dominant ideologue, but also because there seems to be a callous insensitivity on their part to completely forget the need of identity as a necessary part in asserting the power of a community. The speaker reacts sharply to such politics of stereotyping, which turn her hand to knives and sets the tablecloth on fire. The last image is indeed a statement of

subversion and violence is taken as a concoction of the West's tendency to merge the interest of its power bloc with that of belittling the non-Western countries, as if their very existence, geographical or otherwise, is at the mercy of the global superpower.

In a rather incisive essay titled *Cultural Studies and Ethics*, Joanna Zylinska analyses the importance of the 9/11 events in constructing a new moral fabric in the order of international politics, which is of course, dominated by the US. Zylinska notes:

One of the significant features of the contemporary conjuncture 'post- 9/11' in both the United States and Britain is an explicit moralisation of the political agenda. In his address to the West Point Military Academy on 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2002... George Bush declared: 'We are in a conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name (Zylinska 72)

What is interesting over here is to not that not only America proposes to have an unquestionable right over determining what is moral and what is not, but by its military might and political clout, it can even pose itself as amoral. It is amoral, because it can create the definition of morality, and then can impose to the rest of the world and then it becomes the custodian of those moral principles, as it were, US then remains outside the time and space of moral deductions. Zylinska's politics may be entrenched in separatist assumptions but the totalitarian implications of America's foreign policy cannot be ignored. Dharker's poetry stems from this angle of protest, the kind of Islamphobia that America seems to have shown in the post 9/11 scenario, which trickled down to Britain as well. In a poem called *Tissue*, Dharker points out the cultural prejudice that the people of the Islam faith have gone through, as she says the thin papers, which have worn away with time, is the kind of paper that one finds in "the back of the Koran". Dharker perhaps hints at the ahistoricity of religious texts, which have intruded onto the separatism of politics with time, thereby losing the essential worth with which it was first written. A little later Dharker adds:

If buildings were paper, I might  
 feel their drift, see how easily  
 they fall away on a sigh, a shift  
 in the direction of the wind.

Maps too. (Dharker 14)

The simile in the first line creates the dramatic impact on the mind of the reader, stating the epistemological shift that the West has created in its perception of the people following the Koran. In Dharker's poetry, as also in her illustrations and paintings, there is a series of palimpsest that causes the boundary between the inner and the public domain to collapse. The domestic is politicised in lines with the public domain, so that the inner world becomes a site of tension, not in the traditional sense of the term, but in the sense that it manifests the breakdown of public order in a society where bombardments, suicide attacks, Islamphobia and counter strikes against the terrorists are a regular affair. What problematises her narrative even more is the self-directed criticism that she inflicts onto the cult of violence practised by

the terrorists. That violence is not a one sided affair is perhaps portrayed in the last lines of the poem, where she states:

... pride can make,  
find a way to trace a grand design  
  
with living tissue, raise a structure  
never meant to last... (*ibid* 15)

Dharker's aesthetics can be quite stylised, and as the above extract delineates, she can be ruthlessly hones in her protest against violence. Violence in Dharker has very little justification, since the images of fire, bombs and collapsing towers is at the core of the urban crisis of the modern existence, making an impact on the psyche of the people through the media. As Dharker herself observes:

The television set ... is a lodger in the living room. News images are as much a part of the landscape as the street or field outside the window.

At the psychological level, there is a mood of tiredness and exhaustion because the mainstream media goes on with the same news of destruction and violence, and the separatist politics continue to stereotype violence as an act of subversion without trying to understand what leads to such perpetration of law. In a poem symbolically titled as *Mine. Yours.*, Dharker talks of the same monotonous structuring of events that is represented through the media day in and day out, and the anger is evident in the phrase: "The same image comes/ with different words" (Dharker, 16).<sup>8</sup> In this particular poem, Dharker addresses the deeply separatist politics that is at work in the international community. The divide between the 'us' and 'them' is wreaking havoc on the lives of ordinary citizens, creating a hell in the modern civilisation, even that getting a religious name. There is angst at work in the speaker's voice regarding the issue of diaspora and cultural displacement. The traditional image of the mud symbolises a sense of belonging to the cultural space of Britain, and then post 9/11 reality comes to displace the Muslims as the Other in the pre-dominantly Christian space of the British isles. The speaker does claim that "this space" is her "grandmother, grandfather, mother father", but in a post 9/11 reality, Diaspora seems to have a new meaning altogether. The 'in betweenness' of existence that Homi Bhabha had once famously said about the Diaspora is no longer as fluid or culturally hybrid as it was before the attack on the twin towers, or the attack in the London tube on July 7, 2005. Trans nationality that was once the watchword of the Diaspora now is wrought with a sense of mistrust and misdirected abuses, and the undercurrents of Islamophobia is all over, even though it might not be a part of the observable social fabric. There is a binary opposition being constructed between the White Christian population of Britain and the non-White Muslim population, who according to Dharker, is handed down into the sub-strata of second class citizenship (albeit unofficially). The words 'us' and 'you' reflect the cultural, religious and political tussle going on in Britain and in the rest of the West, leading to moral displacement of the Diaspora. Dharker takes the White population to task by questioning their tendency to stereotype the non-Whites as the natural perpetrators of violence or even supporters of terrorist acts. The last line of the poem

“who we killed today” is extremely ironic, as the speaker takes it upon her race to be the terrorist who killed people on a particular day, albeit meaning that that is the cultural violence that they are facing on each day of their existence. It would not be perhaps too irrelevant to refer to a Bollywood blockbuster, *My Name is Khan*, directed by Karan Johar and having Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol in the lead, as a film that plays out against the backdrop of the 9/11, and the racial/religious prejudices the couple face due to their surname ‘Khan’. Rizwan, played by Shah Rukh has to assert that he is not a terrorist, even though he is a ‘Khan’. There is a moment of crisis in the film, and an image is of special relevance here. The camera pans on a Muslim woman character who is walking down the aisle of her office, and someone from the back (presumably a non-Muslim White man) comes an attack her. The way Johar handles this scene constructs a symbol, as the attacker is never shown in person, thereby conveying the point that displacement of trust and belief seems to be at a very large, almost universal scale where the Islamphobia strikes at the very value system of Western democracy. Dharker’s point is exactly that, when she asks through her poetry:

When did a handful of mud  
turn to god?  
When did sod?  
turn to promised land? (*ibid*)

Dharker’s poetry is wrought with a supremely humanistic touch over here, as she says that it is the politics of religion that has brought about a cultural shame in the larger human family, because by using religion as a divisive force, Man has learnt to perpetrate violence onto himself, not only physically or by using the State apparatus, but also psycho-pathologically.

It is perhaps noteworthy to say that Othering of the Islamic world have never been a very recent phenomena, it is a historically documented event. Edward Said notes in one of his essays:

Throughout the classical period of European culture Turkey was the Orient, Islam its most redoubtable and aggressive representative... The Orient and Islam also stood for the ultimate alienation from the opposition to Europe, the European tradition of Christian Latinity, as well as to the putative authority of ecclesia, humanistic learning and cultural community (Said 6).

Said’s point of view constructs his object of study- Western literature- as the critical oeuvre that directs the ideological apparatus towards the marginalisation of the Islamic culture as the negative binary to the Christian discourse. Dharker’s poetry is more incisive than the critical conjectures of Said in the sense that she is able to look through the politics of separation as not only a cultural or political mishap, but also something that invades in the private domain of one’s consciousness and understanding of the world around him. In a world which is slipping into more uncertainty every day, the very act of staying alive seems to be a lucky principle. Dharker writes in *Translations*:

Today I am alive. Today  
we are still here.



Today my children  
have eaten. Today there was  
water. Praise God (Dharker 19)

Without going into the obvious pedantry of the symbolism associated with food and water, what strikes the reader is the use of capital G in the word 'God' in the last line. In the poem *Tissue*, she had used small g for 'god' and so the question arises, is she being ironic about the divisiveness in divinity? God as a signifier in English language identifies with the Christian God, and so the irony lies in the fact perhaps that within the religious and cultural contours of Britain, God is the only Saviour, and it is at His mercy that the life of the non-believers exists. By extension it would imply that the Muslims will live on as long as the 'natives' would propose and would simply be exterminated and politically displaced once they feel that the Muslims have become a 'threat' to their text of nation. Nation therefore becomes a site of ideological, religious, racial and cultural tensions that ultimately leads to the complete marginalisation of the minorities. In an extremely poignant piece, with deeply political ramifications called *The right word*, Dharker introspects as to what name can be assigned to a perpetrator of violence. She assigns the names like "a terrorist", "a freedom-fighter", "a hostile militant" and "a guerrilla warrior". (Dharker 25). The identities that the speaker in the poem assigns to the man who is waiting outside in the shadow seems inadequate. In fact the question really is, is the man all of the above mentioned identities, or is he none of it? Leading terrorism researcher Professor Martin Rudner, director of the Canadian Centre of Intelligence and Security Studies at Ottawa's Carleton University, defines 'terrorist acts' as attacks against civilians for political or other ideological goals, and said:

There is the famous statement: 'One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter.' But that is grossly misleading. It assesses the validity of the cause when terrorism is an act. One can have a perfectly beautiful cause and yet if one commits terrorist acts, it is terrorism regardless (Rudner web)

In fact in the wake of 9/11, the Western world now increasingly refuses to see any essential difference that might exist between a freedom fighter and a terrorist. Justification of violence under any clause has been forbidden by the International charter on human rights, which has made the issue even more problematic. The problem really arises from the fact, as to what then is the question about accountability. As Dharker puts in her poem:

No words can help me now.  
Just outside the door,  
lost in shadows,  
is a child who looks like mine (*ibid*)

And in the last line she adds that the shadowy figure "is a boy who looks like your son too". Hence, Dharker's interrogative stance problematises the politics of assigning a fixed identity, which more often than not, is a product of cultural and political hegemony, perpetrated by the dominant class. Is that not violence too in another form? For example, the former secretary of State of U.S.A, Condoleeza Rice once was quoted as following:

The people of the Middle East share the desire for freedom. We have an opportunity - and an obligation - to help them turn this desire into reality (Rice web)

If we put this remark into perspective, what comes out is the West's hegemony over deciding the identity of all forms of violence, including the ones which are perpetrated under NATO. So, US can attack the Middle East because the image it constructs is of a fight for freedom and democracy (even if it leads to the establishment of a puppet government under US), and it has the right, along with Britain, to condemn any violence that is directed against it. Dharker's humanism is an answer to such deeply exclusivist proposition of International relations. Who has at all given America, or the NATO power, to decide what should be their responsibility vis-à-vis the people of Middle East? And why should they intervene in their decisions regarding internal matters of their nation? And why is there a counter offence from the side of Islamic radicals, leading to a cycle of devastating violence? These are the questions that the readers face while analysing the poetry of Dharker. So it doesn't matter whose son is getting killed in the war, the issue is someone's son is getting killed, and the international community turns the killing fields into their site of ego battle, that ultimately endangers the very continuity of the human species.

In Dharker, there is a repeated motif of critiquing the fascist nature of politics, that encourages constructing of the notion of purity of culture. European enlightenment, post Hegel, has been dominated by the idea of superiority of the White race, but then a sub text of that has been the spreading of the idea that White culture is denominated by the Christian ethics. In the post 9/11 scenario, the West has been gripped by Islamophobia, but the deep rooted prejudice was already there, as Said has pointed it out. The problem is faced by people like Dharker, who are caught up in a world of deep prejudice and bias, and getting caught up in the cross fire makes them vulnerable to the ethico-religious politics of the West. Like in Johar's *My Name is Khan*, Dharker faces a deep sense of violence, as she writes in *Its face*:

This cloth belongs to my face.  
Who pulled it off? (Dharker 21)

This is a question of political as well as religious identity, because according to the Holy Quran, the women should cover their head and face with a Burqa or a Hijab in order to protect themselves from the male gaze. The liberation of women's body, equated to women's rights is a deeply Eurocentric phenomenon but that should not necessarily extend to the conclusion that all the women around the globe should have the same standard for liberation. In fact that would be almost laughable. The deeper threat is the fact that how the cloth, which is a mark of identity to the women of Dharker's community, religious or otherwise, is taken to be a threat to Western democracy, statehood or even secularism. Surely, no one has forgotten the French President's dictat to the Muslim women living in France to not to wear Hijab, because it was apparently compromising with the 'freedom of women'. The politics of identity therefore, instead of syncretic, is very much separatist from the perspective of the Muslims staying in Europe or the US as Diaspora. In fact, in a famous statement in her essay

titled *Can the Sub-altern Speak?* Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak notes: "White men are saving brown women from the brown men" (Spivak web)

^ In such a scenario, Dharker's poetry cannot be seen as a simple Western feminist discourse; rather, it problematises the position of non-European women within the geographical and cultural contours of Europe. What comes across very strikingly in Dharker is her apparent nonchalant tone in her poetry, and that creates the room for dramatic interventions. Her poetry indeed seems to be written in the Imagist pattern, where a series of images captures the snapshots of contemporary reality, fraught with mistrust, violence and urban emptiness. The political subject of her poems is itself dislocated, not only in terms of empirical reality, but also in the consciousness of the people. In the poem *Platform* for example, she writes that in the opposite platform, three men and one woman are sitting, and as the snapshots of reality passes by, suddenly the speaker finds that one person is missing:

Now only four on phones.  
Where did that man  
go, carrying his fragile cargo? (Dharker 27)

The gaze of the Europeans is protracted in such manner that it is almost impossible to find who is under the security scanner and who is not; and those who are, are by the virtue of their religious or cultural background leading to political dislocation. The political map therefore is shaped more by the cult of violence and counter violence. The urban space becomes the site of such pressures of 'civilisation' as in a poem like *Almost*, the poetess points to the various contours of city life, the parks, the roads, the city square- all culminating in a public gaze of suspicion. Dharker uses the word 'fabric' in this poem which discerns the dislocated nature of the speaker's identity, because people of her community have never been a part of the national fabric. A larger question therefore comes up in our mind. Is Dharker disillusioned by the very concept of the nation? Is she fed up with identity that pounces upon itself through nationalistic jingoism or the artificiality of constructing nation on the lines of a loose community that co-exist by its own will. Otherwise, why in her poems anthologised under *The Terrorist at my Table*, there is a constant reference to cultural signifiers both from the Asian and European spaces? It seems therefore, that in Dharker, somewhere deep within, there is a deep discomfiture about 'belonging' which inevitably leads to coercion, violence, stereotyping, dislocation and resulting in annihilation. In the poems *Campsie Fells* and *Azaan*, she talks about the life in Scotland- going to school, working and then going out for picnics, but the apparent sense of unity is disrupted by nostalgia when one uncle Hanif recites an Urdu *shayari* 'Tum bhi kho gaye, hum bhi kho gaye' and spurts out "Our families are scattered".<sup>17</sup> In the poem *Azaan* there seems a deep rooted sense of insecurity in the speaker's voice because the small boy called Azaan only speaks in monosyllables, which is not the case in the Urdu language. So on one hand, there is a sense of fear of losing the identity of being a Muslim, but on the other hand there is very little acceptance for separatist ideology wreaking havoc in contemporary politics. Certainly there is sense of security in being among the members of the community:

I just felt stronger  
with my friend around  
On solid ground (Dharker 33)

At the same time there is a tremendous hatred for all the perpetrators of violence, who for their relations of power, thrust innocent people into violence. In a poem written in anger almost, titled *Who made me?*, Dharker asks some tough questions on accountability:

Who put a gun in my hand  
and took away my land?  
Who made me? (Dharker 34)

Dharker, who was born in Lahore, brought up in Glasgow, and now settled in Mumbai, seems to be asking the core question that many of us perhaps ask today- What makes us who we are? There is tone of existential angst in her last question "Who made me?" In one of her interviews Dharker says:

For me identity has nothing to do with nationality, or religion or gender. It has to do with beliefs and states of mind (Dharker web)

Thus, at the end of it all, everything boils down to the politics of representation. Imtiaz Dharker therefore seems to be a firm believer in the fluidity of identity and experience, but her poetry do tend to become statements of asserting identity as well, as we have seen in many of her works. The blemishes of the modern world are many, and its plurality of hypocrisy is perhaps even more. In a postmodern world, plurality of experiences should never have been a problem, but the question that has come up is whose plurality, and who at all gives the permission of being plural. Dharker's point is that the project of plurality was and still is a discourse dominated by the majority of the West and to what extent is plurality accepted is also decided by their perspective. Democracy, equality, freedom, gender tolerance or nation; everything is perspectivised by the ideologue of the West, and the moment it is challenged, the ideation vaporises as fast as it came, and we are all back at square one, debating what are the paradigms of equality and tolerance. For a world where cosmopolitanism seems to be the next big project, Dharker's poetry discerns the pitfalls of such grand narratives that we can expect to face, and are facing in an ever-changing world of cybernetics.

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