

GlobalSouth: A Sambandha

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A virus that is said to have emerged from China infects an Indian through his contact with an Italian who then undertakes a journey to the US to get treated by the best American doctors: which border has the virus broken into? Where is the virus capital that a NorthSouth dialogue or failure of dialogue can locate? Where is the local in virustravel? What breaks in and how is not always a determinable category. GlobalSouth is viral, virus-infected, virus-broken, virus-bashed – its febrility and chirality demand living with the “virus” of the local and the noise of the local-global. This is the virusmiddle.

Russel Pavlov qualifies Global South as a “protean term” and considers it “a shifter not merely because it is a mobile term with variously inflected meanings but because it works like a deictic marker, linking discourses, places, and speakers in such a way as to generate new subject positions, fields of agency, and possibilities of action”.¹ It is both in its ramifications and possibilities that Global South survives; it exists to promote alternatives and appropriations across epistemological borders, “searching for new answers” – an order that knows its forms of stability, contexts, locality without losing its meaning-making potencies. Pavlov observes that “its subjective-actantial multiplicity is a function of its discursive excess which, in turn, is an index of its geopolitical polyvalence. The ‘Global South’ does not give us access to ‘subalterns’ who cannot speak, so much as it opens up spaces in which speech can be invented. It does not reveal or recover; rather, it triggers processes of creative renewal”.² Global South, for me, is another hermeneutic circle of understanding, a molecularity of thinking that unhinges settled patterns of colonial, Cold War, postcolonial, new colonial, political-polarity – “a new spirit that animates connections and networks of artists who work with an egalitarian impulse”, as Dilip Menon argues. I cannot disagree with Menon when he writes that

the idea of the Global South has acquired a degree of normalization in Euro-American theory thereby rendering that idea either detritus or pious hope. There is the burden of

the past contained in the notion of the Global South: of erstwhile projects of imagined affinities contained in redolent words and phrases like Bandung, the Non-Aligned movement, Afro-Asian solidarity, and so on. At the same time, the notion is a gesture of prolepsis: an act of conceiving of something as existing before it actually does. It is a gathering together of past memories into a map for the future.³

It is certainly not a “mere geographical agglomeration i.e., Asia+Africa+Latin America+Caribbean or a reframing of the decolonized world”. Like Menon, I challenge the enframing of the Global South within Euro-American theoretical bounds. There is an atopic force, steresis, coming from Global South itself that has gone amiss.

The Global South is not a category, but a *sambandha* (संबन्ध, “relation”). It is used both in the sense of context and relation; in the Nyaya school, *sambandha* is instrumental in the generation of knowledge. Among the seven *padārtha*, the Vaiśeṣikas considers *samavāya* as relation.⁴ This is about relation among entities – all existence function as a relation – and relationality that involves “conjunction, disjunction, number and separateness” also. All are in a system and are systems themselves. Hence, there is identity and difference-in-identity. Annambhaṭṭa, in the *Dīpikā*, mentions two types of *saṁyoga-karmaja* and *saṁyogaja*.

The *karmaja saṁyoga* arises when a book comes in contact with the hand because of the activity of the hand in taking a book. The *saṁyogaja saṁyoga* arises when as a result of the contact of the book with the hand, there is contact of the book with the body. *Karmajasamāyoga* is again divided into two kinds – *anyatarakarmaja* and *ubhayakarmaja*. The example of the *anyatarakarmaja* is that the conjunction of the bird with the mountain. In this example, only the bird moves but the mountain remains static. The example of the *ubhayakarmaja* is that the conjunction of the flying birds. In this example both birds move. Viśvanātha defines *saṁyoga* as the contact of two things which were first removed or separated from each other. That means conjunction is the relation between two separable (*yutasiddha*) things. Hence, there cannot be any conjunction between two all-pervading things which are never separate from each other. Thus, conjunction is the relation of two *relata* which can exist separately when they are not related.⁵

Discussing the North at the expense of the South or talking of the South by being oblivious of the North does not speak of the *saṁyoga* that the Global tries to build. The dialectical totality in comradeship that the Global builds is the *sambandha* of flying birds in forms of North, far North, less South, more South, South, deep North or the book in hand where the book is in a *sambandha* with the body or the immanent *sambandha* that a bird and the mountain build in their own forms of co-occurrence and relationship. *Saṁyoga* or conjunction, can also be in the effect that resides in its cause and “between a substance and a non-substance as in the case of qualities, actions, universals or particulars residing in a substance”. If “inherence is a relation between two nonsubstances as in the case of a universal residing in qualities and actions”, conjunction is

considered a separable relation.⁶ *Sambandha* occurs in completion, in the continuous and can also be complete in parts: parts of the South can stay connected with the North and can also stay separated (issues that are integrally incidental to the local and the situational like population, ethnicity and health and hygiene or moral behavior, racism, social attitude and consciousness). However, the disconnection is also a part of the *sambandha* that builds outside the self-conscious understanding of the South in the projective formation of the Global: here is the “more” in the Global.⁷ *Sambandha* is occurrence, an event, an intimacy that is not always built in proximity; it is both about contact and the impact of the contact or no contact. Where is the *samyoga* between the right and the left hand? Is there a middle to understand and inhabit? Raising the right hand is not about expecting the raising of the left one; empowering the right is not underestimating the potencies of the left. Ambidextrous, then, is a suspect word. Symmetry can often be a reality to deceive. It is in symmetry as well as disparity that the left and the right hands work. This is not the middle-ground; it is where sinistrality depends on dextrality, and dextrality knows its performance without being conscious of supposed inferiority in comparison to the other hand. The arc and the arrangement of the right and the left are different, separable and yet inseparable – often opposite without being opposed. The alterity, thus, has its *sambandha* – “neither one nor the other” nor “both one and the other” Michel Serres points out:

The left-hander lives in a physically and socially dextrogyrous world, that is to say, turning to the right, like a maladroit paralytic who at every moment has to accept the choice that's converse to his own. Most often, he even writes with his bad hand. Hence a body that's strangely unstable, but stable nonetheless, in that freedom. Always thwarted, or more or less, if he takes the right he makes a good choice, but if he decides on the left he also makes a good choice. Ever since his birth, by his posture and gestures, he has introduced tolerance: he comprehends everything and cannot reject anything. You will never make a thwarted left-hander a fanatic, a militant, a dogmatic or a philosopher of antithesis.⁸

The philosophy of “good choice” and the dynamics of tolerance (the *sambandha*) configure our tryst with the Global South – a consciousness that is enantiomorphic; being with (the West, the North, the Third World) is parity in disparity. Global South has its sinistrality and knows many things that dextrality allows and enacts. This does not make it function as “ambidextrous or enacts a Hegelian sublation of dextral sameness and sinistral alterity”.⁹ Denying ambidextrality, hence, is realizing the conative potential of the “minor” – the possibility that the South can establish the vexatious North South *sambandha* without the hyphen. It is making the *happening* come to life and gain the visibility not merely through communication as established through protocols and principles and prescriptions. The *happening* was ignored though it was there, always in place, “taking place”. There are indisputable reasons for the North and the South to function and perform differently. However, the reason is plastic – not always the relata – which is about making critical thinking *happen*

not in the simple equation of being together but in the power of the “despite”, the “dangerous perhaps”. It is Global South despite North; whatever is thinking about and around North is possible despite South; one can be differential despite being oneself.

The Global South has its own inbuilt significance and extensions; it establishes itself and surprises itself too. The global thinks not merely through hemispheric and zonal apportionment of abilities and deliverance. This Global of the South is the hermaphroditic plenitude. The global is the *sambandha*, mostly unrecuperative, harvested in the remainder, the deficit and the desire. The global here is not endless processuality, always in the making, without a contour to define or comprehend; it, however, inheres in a “more”. What I have theorized elsewhere as “more than global” is a dynamics of reading and experience which is both epistemological and empirical – an experience in a poetics of relation that redirects us to the “middle” of all understanding political, cultural, social and religious. Serres points out the “excluded middle” in *Le Parasite* while discussing the “eponymous reptile”¹⁰ cut into three pieces:

Which is the third part? Or who or what is the third, in this logic of the trenchant decision? Is the third excluded or not? Here we have a trivalent logic where we expected only a bivalent one. The same at the head, the other at the tail, or being at the head and nonbeing at the tail, and this middle trunk that is both same and other, being and nonbeing, and so forth.¹¹

Thinking Global South is thinking through the excluded middle as much as the inexcludable middle; it is often the indeterminable middle too. In its ways of understanding the local, the laminarity and the crystalline structures, the Global South speaks of a “more” – the unbidden and the missed handshakes within the South and the Global. The Global “more” South then is not thinking beyond but again sitting on the imponderables (the deficit in understanding is more) for all encounters leave behind some incompetencies that might spring into our attention through studious reflection or chance. The conceptual performativity charts two forms of understanding: one, where a typically non-West, non-North concept is projected into an analytic and enucleative role and second, how this concept fails and falls away from “traditionality” (Ricoerian sense) and paradigmatic quarantinity of a certain discourse of cultural-epistemological understanding. This need not signal a lame collapse into the *dvandva* of *videshi-sudheshivad*; but, presumably, through the third moment of Hegelian pure recognition, this enables “freedom” – a sort of self-consciousness that makes one re-turn to itself for greater alternatives of thinking. Performativity comes from the asymmetry that the middle of a critical engagement produces. Recognition is not in knowing where the right and the left hand are: it is in discovering what the hands have failed to recognize in their normality and ordinality. The Global South has its traditions of history, societal formations and aesthetic persuasions and dispensations. However, such discourses and representations fail when viewed in their polarity and conceited

confinements of self-recognition. It is deeply affective and meshed in formations that are not categorically Global South, urging, hence, a “categorical” *sambandha* that persistently believes in its incompleteness of understanding and “veering”.¹² The Global South, in its politics, socio-cultural conditions and other epistemological forms finds itself in the Serrean “slope”, building on a vocabulary that cannot be fixated on either poles (Euro-American or non-Euro-American) and allowed to exist within conceptual exclusionism. The *here* and the *there* have a “more” to pursue and perform: a becoming to recognize alongside a being to identify and isolate. This “more” is the global that both the North and the South need to “recognise” for greater plasticity of thinking. Menon is right: Global South is a “knowledge project” both in its fragility and affinity.

Critical thinking is rhythmical: it emerges from the rhythm of life-geography and has a pattern in “noise”. Global South makes noise; it has a noise specific to it, and a noise that most often eludes the obsessive practitioners of “ism-studies”. Serres sees noise, nausea, nautical and navy as having the same etymology. There is “agitation” everywhere, for “white noise never stops, it is limitless, continuous, perpetual, unchangeable. It has no grounding [fond] itself, no opposite”.¹³ Serres resonantly observes that noise “is set up in subjects as well as in objects, in hearing and in space itself, in observers and observed, it passes through the means and tools of observation, be they material or logical, be they channels that were constructed or languages, it is in both the in-itself and the for-itself”.¹⁴ Noise is somewhere between the known and the unknown, as Serres has distinguished between work (*oeuvre*) and masterwork (*chef d’oeuvre*) to point out that a work can only work into form when caught in a continuous flow. Hence, noise is the “opening”; it is possibility itself – a geometricization that is “anarchic, clamoring, mottled, striped, streaked, variegated, mixed, crossed”.¹⁵ Noise produces the “philosopher” who then watches over the “unforeseeable and fragile states” where “his site is unstable, mobile, suspended”; he “seeks to keep the branch-ings and forkings open, as opposed to those who close and unite them. He goes back up the thalweg, up the chreod, he will seek pasture where the branch-ings multiply, where the torrents are turbulent, where the new flowers bloom in the high prairies”.¹⁶ So thinking through noise is understanding both the “form” and the breaking down of form: class, race, community and *communitas* emerge from noise and are noise. The Global South is a kind of turbulence which is life, life-affect and life-philosophy. Understanding life as processual, as a way of ordering and coding, is fury in the sense of form-ability. The Global South may have its own vocabulary but not without the “noise” that empowers it to restructure and represent, reinventing its own domain and status.

The middle is “noisy”; it is an entanglement. It is predominantly about thinking the order-disorder syndrome in all forms of emergence – cultural, socio-religious and political. Here is not to deny that the Global South does not have an ‘order’ of its own and own making. But order is not simplistically law.

Edgar Morin and Frank Coppay see constraints, invariances, constancies, regularities with chance and random coming into forming an event of their own. Having an order in thinking or evolution is not accepting determinism as an abiding reality; “it is neither absolute, nor eternal, nor unconditional”.¹⁷ And disorder is not mere randomness or chance either. All happenings cannot be algorithmically compressible. Morin and Coppay argue that “one can consider, and especially at the level of human phenomena which are at once physical, biological, social, cultural, and historical, that many chance occurrences are oftentimes nothing more than the encounter of deterministic causal chains of different orders; but that amounts to recognizing that the encounter between these determinisms is brought about in disorder”.¹⁸ Chance then is the uncertainty of critical thinking, limits of thinking when evolutive determinism fails to find its way. Apparently, a disorder, chance is more a process in possibilities and limitations. Noise holds chance and is neither order nor disorder in an undifferentiated sense. As we try to configure the Global South, the *sambandha* with noise becomes increasingly important and with it the reflection and rigour about how we can factor chance and disorder into the seemingly restive discourses that surround it.

Here I am drawn to Serres’s idea of the “local”. Serres proposes three models in *The Birth of Physics*. “The first model”, Serres points out “is local and original. It simply simulates the look of a fluid. Atoms cascade in a laminar flow down an infinite channel without banks”.¹⁹ Serres considers that every “object is initially a vortex”, and the world or universe comes to be described in “spirals, angles and cones, differential calculation, the axiom, sand and floating bodies”. Serres’s second model is “global”: “it takes the whole path into account”. It invests in the “slope”, the “descent”: “the law of formation, the law of the duration of things and of the world and the correlative law of the flow of perception are expressed as the law of the greatest slope”.²⁰ And as to his third model every object, naturally, emerges like Aphrodite from a flux of elements. By the previously mentioned models, Born from this and, as soon as it is born, complex, twined, twisting its long thick hair, it begins to transmit, in floods and in all directions, a star of flow: its wear and its time. It radiates waves of different kinds: heat, odours, sounds, simulacra, subtle atoms. In the same way or inversely, it receives the flow emitted around it, from nearby and from the edges of the open universe alike, whether it be rock, harvest, horse or woman. The world, in total, flows in itself and for itself, exchanging its rivers at the maximal thalweg, to the point where they are consumed and return to the cataract. At birth, the singular atomic cascade is transformed: no longer here and there, in and for some local object, but integrally and for its global flow, in a multiplicity of rivers, streaming by all paths, transverse, diagonal, intersected, complex. The sum of the dispersed inclinations in space and time in the cataract produces, in the maximal descent, a complex weave of flows that begins from the unified nappe. The world is a vortex of vortices, interlacings, a maze of waves.²¹

Entanglement, then, is potentially invested in the “local”, “enveloped by an infinity of adherences” and in “differential robes”.²² The South is the turbulent local. It is a complex experience that engenders the “global” without making the global look like an aggregation of locals: an interlacings of experiences that conceals collision and an absence of relations because, as Serres notes, this absence is what builds the potency for greater relations. Global South as *GlobalSouth* (my conceptual motor) is the entanglement that houses the order and the disorder. The local “solid” points of thought and knowledge are “turbulences”, moving fluids: “homeostasis is a local exception to global homeorrhesis”. It is well-argued that the clinamen “by definition concealed beneath the lowest possible threshold not only of direct perception but also of measurement. Its angle of deviation is indiscernible. In the same way, as an event that occurs over a time span shorter than can be detected, it eludes any attempt to identify it as having taken place at a given time. Indeed, given the continual variation of form, even in relatively stable systems, there is no reason to suppose that it is a rare event at all”.²³ This does not allow the local to be “localised”. *GlobalSouth*, in fact, need not be localized. And clinamen is no chance or simple random but an “expression of an irreducible complexity in the order of events”.²⁴ It is an event in the sense of a happening, an accident and something “to come”. The local is an order and a dislocation is a short-lived order.

GlobalSouth has its chiral alterity where the local and the global “are co-implicated in the inclination and orientation that characterize all existence”.²⁵ Strictly not a unitotality, it is about the “figure” that the *GlobalSouth* makes: a figure contoured, culturally conditioned and acknowledged, politically molecular, and yet something that drifts off and falls away failing to stay within a conceptual and interpretive enframing. *GlobalSouth* is “more than global” with its motifs and motivations, parameters and persuasions, and genotextual engagement with the local and the global. Understanding *GlobalSouth* is a rupture of symmetry – the clinamen that serves the double purpose to consider South in its locality and also as an event that “hungers” within the plastic global.²⁶ The South in the Global and the Global in the South are both intersective and missed encounters: not radical alterity or incommensurability but events in socio-political imaginary that have gone missed strategically and ignorantly in discourses of globalization and in erasures of micro-understandings of community-culture and other issues of serious local potential and pertinence.

Quite rightly, “the nodes of the global are neither absolute nor impervious”, writes Bhaskar Sarkar. He points out that the “global effectively materializes from the mobile encounters between mutating nodes—as networks of shifting relations between entities that are themselves in process of becoming”.²⁷ Constellative and trans-dialectical, the *GlobalSouth* is about making “sense” of drifts, angles and turns in our understanding of issues that profoundly affect us: climatological, institutional discrimination coming in the

form of trade and tradeoffs, capital distribution and flow, security and militarization. It is about sense-making, about world-formations, having a “sense of slope”. The “S” within the GlobalSouth has a complex organization where a rotation around its centre makes “its two halves coincide in such a way” that it can be seen “as symmetrical and asymmetrical at the same time”: “in Lewis Carroll’s sense, S draws the other path of Z, or S and Z together make each other, like dance partners, the figure eight, or as the Greeks wrote, the chi of chimera. Left-handed S reflects right-handed Z”.²⁸ This shows how S turns to itself to re-turn to the other selves, the Zs – a complicated understanding of both the dancers, the dance and the dancing. The metastable “S” in the GlobalSouth comes to manifest a “kaleidoscopic dialectic”²⁹ – a relational approach built through “temporalities, similarity, attraction, generation or domination”. As overlapping realms in politics, commerce, health, security and ethics, GlobalSouth is plastic – the “framework-preserving routine and framework-transforming conflict”.³⁰ Drawing on Roberto Unger, we see the “S-event” as minimizing “the difference between acting upon and acting within a social structure” and “softening the distinction between quotidian revision within a context and revolutionary revision of the context itself”.³¹ GlobalSouth is about rethinking its own “content” and the “instruments of challenge” and about “expanding the opportunities to transcend and change formative contexts” – the “creative polyvalence” (in the words of Pavlov). So the “quotidian” (in line with Unger) in its constellative context – both political and socio-cultural – is under a “revenge aesthetics”, plastifying “occasions and instruments of its own revision” and projections. In its speed and identity, slowness and slope, formal and informal processes (in the words of Pavlov) thinking GlobalSouth is slipping in,³² finding oneself always in the middle. The anti-aesthetics of GlobalSouth is a “book in the middle of bookends”.³³

Notes

1. West-Pavlov, Russel (ed.) 2018. *The Global South and Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2.
2. Ibid., 7-8.
3. Menon, Dilip. 2018. “Thinking about the Global South Affinity and Knowledge”. In *The Global South and Literature* edited by Russel West-Pavlov. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 36.
4. See Basu, B. D., 2008. *The Vaiśeṣika Sūtras of Kaṇāda*. New Delhi: Cosmo Publications.
5. https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/64250/13/13_chapter%206.pdf; also see, Annambhaṭṭa, *Tarkasamgraha-Dīpikā*. 1994 *on Tarkasamgraha* (tran.) Gopinath Bhattacharya Calcutta: Progressive Publishers.
6. Lakra, Rajen. 2017. “The Doctrine of Samavāya in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika System”. *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science* 22 (11): Ver. 9.
7. See my “More than Global” with J Hillis Miller. 2016. In *Thinking Literature across Continents*. Durham; London: Duke University Press.
8. Serres, Michel. 1989. *L’Hermaphrodite* (translated by Randolph Burks. Paris: Flammarion, 5.

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9. Watkin, Chris. 2019. "Not More of the Same: Michel Serres's Challenge to the Ethics of Alterity". *Philosophy Today* 63 (2): 519.
 10. *Ibid.*, 522.
 11. See Serres, Michel. 1982. *The Parasite* (translated by) Lawrence R. Schehr, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 23.
 12. See Royle, Nicholas 2011. *Veering: A Theory of Literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
 13. Serres Michel and Lawrence R. Schehr. 1983. "Noise". *SubStance* 12 (3) Issue 40: 50
 14. *Ibid.*, 51.
 15. *Ibid.*, 56.
 16. *Ibid.*, 57.
 17. Morin, Edgar and Coppay, Frank. 1983. "Beyond Determinism: The Dialogue of Order and Disorder". *SubStance* 12 (3) Issue 40: 25.
 18. *Ibid.*, 26.
 19. Serres, Michel. 2018. *The Birth of Physics*, translated by David Webb and William Ross. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield. 70-71.
 20. *Ibid.*, 66.
 21. *Ibid.*, 71.
 22. *Ibid.*, 128.
 23. *Ibid.*, 6.
 24. *Ibid.*
 25. Watkin, "Not More of the Same: Michel Serres's Challenge to the Ethics of Alterity", 523.
 26. See Ghosh, Ranjan "Aesthetics of Hunger: (In)fusion Approach, Literature, and the Other" 2011. *Symploke* Volume 19 (1-2): 143-157.
 27. Sarkar, Bhaskar. 2015. "Plasticity and the Global" *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media* 56 (2): 453.
 28. Serres, *Hermaphrodite*, 6.
 29. Rehbein, Boike. 2018. "Critical Theory After the Rise of the Global South" In *Social Theory and Asian Dialogues Cultivating Planetary Conversations* (ed.) Ananta Kumar Giri. London: Palgrave, 63.
 30. See Unger, R. 2001. *False Necessity: Anti-necessitarian Social Theory in the Service of Radical Democracy*. London: Verso, 362.
 31. Lessing, Lawrence. 1989. "Plastics: Unger and Ackerman on Transformation" *The Yale Law Journal* 98 (6): 1179.
 32. Deleuze, Gilles. 1988. *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (translated by Robert Hurley). San Francisco: City Lights Books, 123.
 33. Serres, *Hermaphrodite*, 47.