

Tribhuvan University

Critique of Western Modernity in Yan's *Change*

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## Abstract

This research looks into Mo Yan's *Change* from the perspective of nonwestern modernity. From the time of communist takeover till now, China attempts to develop its own unique mode of modernity. With the time span of a decade, China succeeds in bringing plenty of reform and progressive transformation. In Mo Yan's *Change*, thousands of schools are opened within a decade after the communist takeover. Even the youths from poor economic background get opportunities to go to universities. The narrator's brother once used to think that university is above his reach. But he not only completed university education but got a job too. As China appeared as the self-sufficient country, many western forces like political liberalism and individualism, China witnesses various examples of violence. Tiananmen Square tragedy is the worst case of disaster that has ever occurred on the soil of China. The communist dictatorship of China does not allow its citizens to ask for human rights, democracy and individual's right to properties. In Tiananmen Square, youths mount protest for democracy. The one party regime launches heavy crackdown on them. The tragedy of Tiananmen Square is an instant of how the penetration of western modernity like political liberalism throws country into the turmoil and chaos.

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## Chapter I: An Introduction to Mo Yan's Writing

Mo Yan's works are epic historical novels characterized by hallucinatory realism and containing elements of black humor. Kakutani argues that “A major theme in Yan's works is the constancy of human greed and corruption, despite the influence of ideology. Using dazzling, complex, and often graphically violent images, he sets many of his stories near his hometown in Shandong province” (141). Yan satirizes the genre of socialist realism by placing workers and bureaucrats into absurd situations. Yan's writing is “characterized by the blurring of distinctions between past and present, dead and living, as well as good and bad. He appears in his novels as a semi-autobiographical character that retells and modifies the author's other stories” (Reeves 76). Yan's female characters often fail to observe traditional gender roles.

Male power is also portrayed cynically in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, and there is only one male hero in the novel. Megan contends that *Red Sorghum* consists of five stories that unfold and interweave in Gaomi in several turbulent decades in the 20th century. It depicts depictions of bandit culture, the Japanese occupation and the harsh conditions endured by poor farm workers” (67). *The Garlic Ballads* and his *The Republic of Wine* have been judged subversive because of their sharp criticism of contemporary Chinese society. *The Republic of Wine* is “a broad historical fresco portraying 20th-century China through the microcosm of a single family. The novel, *Life and Death are Wearing Me Out*, uses black humor to describe everyday life and the violent transmogrifications in the young People's Republic. *Sandalwood Death* is a story of human cruelty in the crumbling Empire”, *Variations in the Chinese History* (51).

Most of Yan's novels illuminate the consequences of China's imposition of a single-child policy. Jessica Langer holds the view that “Through a mixture of fantasy

and reality, historical and social perspectives, Yan has created a world of reminiscent in its complexity. It finds a departure point in old Chinese literature and in oral tradition” (77). Yan has also written many short stories and essays on various topics, and despite his social criticism is seen in his homeland as one of the foremost contemporary authors.

### **History of China from the End of Monarchy**

Frustrated by the Qing court's resistance to reform, young officials, military officers, and students began to advocate “the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and the creation of a republic. They were inspired by the revolutionary ideas of Sun Yat-Sen. A revolutionary military uprising, the Wuchang Uprising, began on 10 October 1911, in Wuhan” (Francois Richard 93). The provisional government of the Republic of China was formed in “Nanjing on 12 March 1912. The Xinhai Revolution ended 2,000 years of dynastic rule in China. After the success of the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty, Sun Yat-Sen was declared president but Sun was forced to turn power over to Yuan Shikai” (Richard 88). He commanded the New Army and was Prime Minister under the Qing government, as part of the agreement to let the last Qing.

Over the next few years, Yuan proceeded to abolish, what Capetti says, “the national and provincial assemblies, and declared himself emperor in late 1915. Yuan's imperial ambitions were fiercely opposed by his subordinates; faced with the prospect of rebellion, he abdicated in March 1916, and died in June of that year. Yuan's death in 1916 left a power vacuum in China” (135). The republican government was all but shattered. This ushered in the Warlord Era during which much of the country was ruled by shifting coalitions of competing provincial military leaders. In this regard, Culik makes the following remarks about the evolution of Chinese history:

In 1919, the May Fourth Movement began as a response to the terms imposed on China by the Treaty of Versailles ending World War I, but quickly became a nationwide protest movement about the domestic situation in China. The protests were a moral success as the cabinet fell and China refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles, which had awarded German holdings to Japan. (43)

The New Culture Movement stimulated by the May Fourth Movement waxed strong throughout the 1920s and 1930s. This created the seeds for the irreconcilable conflict between the left and right in China that would dominate Chinese history for the rest of the century.

Having defeated the warlords in south and central China by military force, Chiang was able to secure the nominal allegiance of the warlords in the North. In this regard Obrey opines:

Nationalism, patriotism, progress, science, democracy, and freedom were the goals; imperialism, feudalism, warlordism, autocracy, patriarchy, and blind adherence to tradition were the enemies. Intellectuals struggled with how to be strong and modern and yet Chinese, how to preserve China as a political entity in the world of competing nations. The discrediting of liberal Western philosophy amongst leftist Chinese intellectuals led to more radical lines of thought inspired by the Russian Revolution, and supported by agents of the Committee sent to China by Moscow. (152)

Sun Yat-Sen established a revolutionary base in south China, and set out to unite the fragmented nation. With assistance from the Soviet Union, he entered into an

alliance with the fledgling communist party of China. Hynes goes on to add that “After Sun's death from cancer in 1925, one of his protégés, Chian Kai-Shek, seized control of the Kuomintang. Then he succeeded in bringing most of south and central China under its rule in a military campaign known as the Northern Expedition” (173).

Hynes adds, “In 1927, Chiang turned on the communist party of China and relentlessly chased the communist party of China armies and its leaders from their bases in southern and eastern China” (137). In 1934, driven from their mountain bases such as the Chinese Soviet Republic, the communist party of China forces embarked on the Long “March across China's most desolate terrain to the northwest, where they established a guerrilla base at Yan’ n in Shaanxi Province. During the Long March, the communists reorganized under a new leader, Mao Zedong” (114).

Following the defeat of Japan in 1945, the war between the Nationalist government forces and the communist party of China resumed after failed attempts at reconciliation and a negotiated settlement. Hynes makes the following view:

By 1949, the communist party of China had established control over most of the country. Westad says the Communists won the Civil War because they made fewer military mistakes than Chiang, and because in his search for a powerful centralized government, Chiang antagonized too many interest groups in China. Furthermore, his party was weakened in the war against Japanese. Meanwhile the Communists told different groups, such as peasants, exactly what they

wanted to hear, and cloaked themselves in the cover of Chinese Nationalism. (38)

During the civil war both the Nationalist and Communists carried out mass atrocities with millions of non-combatants killed by both sides during the civil war. Atrocities include deaths from forced conscription and massacres. Major combat in the Chinese Civil War ended in 1949 with Kuomintang pulling out of the mainland, with the government relocating to Taipei and maintaining control only over a few islands. The communist party of China was left in control of mainland China. On 1 October 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed the People's Republic of China. Communist China and Red China were two common names for the people's republic of China. (Hynes, 64)

Chairman Mao Zedong proclaims the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949. The People's Republic of China was shaped by a series of campaigns and five-year plans. The economic and social plan known as the Great Leap Forward caused an estimated 45 million deaths. Mao's government carried out mass executions of landowners, instituted collectivization and implemented the Laogai camp system. Execution, deaths from forced labor and other atrocities resulted in millions of deaths under Mao. Anderson gives expression to his view regarding to the formation of modern Chinese history in the following extract:

In 1966 Mao and his allies launched the Cultural Revolution, which continued until Mao's death a decade later. The Cultural Revolution, motivated by power struggles within the Party and a fear of the Soviet Union, led to a major upheaval in Chinese society. In 1972, at the peak of the Sino-Soviet split, Mao and Zhou Enlai met US president Richard Nixon in Beijing to establish relations with the United States. (141)

In the same year, the people's republic of China was admitted to the United Nations in place of the Republic of China, with permanent membership of the Security Council. A power struggle followed Mao's death in 1976. The Gang of Four were arrested and blamed for the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, marking the end of a turbulent political era in China. Deng Xiaoping outmaneuvered Mao's anointed successor chairman HuaGuofeng , and gradually emerged as the de facto leader over the next few years.

Anderson asserts that “Deng Xiaoping was the Paramount Leader of China from 1978 to 1992, although he never became the head of the party or state, and his influence within the Party led the country to significant economic reforms” (73). The Communist Party subsequently loosened governmental control over citizens' personal lives and the communes were disbanded with many peasants receiving multiple land leases, which greatly increased incentives and agricultural production. This turn of events marked China's transition from a planned economy to a mixed economy with an increasingly open market environment, a system termed by some as market socialism and officially by the Communist Party of China as socialism with Chinese Characteristics. The PRC adopted its current constitution on 4 December 1982.

In 1989, the death of former general secretary Hu Yaobang “helped to spark the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 during which students and others campaigned for several months, speaking out against corruption and in favor of greater political reform, including democratic rights and freedom of speech”(101). However, they were eventually put down on 4 June when people's liberation army troops and vehicles entered and forcibly cleared the square, with many fatalities. This event was widely reported and brought worldwide condemnation and sanctions against the government.

A filmed incident involving the tank man was seen worldwide. Although the people's need of economic growth to spur its development, the government began to "worry that rapid economic growth was degrading the country's resources and environment. Another concern is that certain sectors of society are not sufficiently benefiting from People's Republic of China's economic development; one example of this is the wide gap between urban and rural areas" (Anderson 171).

### **Cultural Revolution: A Glimpse**

The Cultural Revolution was a social-political movement that took place in the people's republic of China from "1966 until 1976. Set into motion by Mao Zedong, then Chairman of the communist party of China its stated goal was to preserve true Communist ideology in the country by purging remnants of capitalist and traditional elements from Chinese society, and to re-impose Maoist thought as the dominant ideology within the Party"( *History of Modern China* 213). The Revolution marked the return of Mao Zedong to a position of power after the Great Leap Forward. The movement paralyzed China politically and significantly affected the country economically and socially.

The Revolution was "launched in May 1966. Mao alleged that bourgeois elements had infiltrated the government and society at large, aiming to restore capitalism. He insisted that these revisionists be removed through violent class struggle" (Lehman 312). China's youth responded to Mao's appeal by forming Red Guard groups around the country. The movement spread into the military, urban workers, and the Communist Party leadership itself. It resulted in widespread factional struggles in all walks of life. In the top leadership, it led to a mass purge of senior officials, most notably Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. During the same period Mao's personality cult grew to immense proportions.

Millions of people were persecuted in the violent struggles that ensued across the country, and “suffered a wide range of abuses including public humiliation, arbitrary imprisonment, torture, sustained harassment, and seizure of property. A large segment of the population was forcibly displaced, most notably the transfer of urban youth to rural regions during the Down to the Countryside Movement” (Lehman 148). Historical relics and artifacts were destroyed. Cultural and religious sites were ransacked.

Mao officially declared the “Cultural Revolution to have ended in 1969, but its active phase lasted until the death of the military leader Lin Biao in 1971. After Mao's death and the arrest of the Gang of Four in 1976, reformers led by Deng Xiaoping gradually began to dismantle the Maoist policies associated with the Cultural Revolution” (Lehman 271). In 1981, the Party declared that the Cultural Revolution was responsible for the most severe setback and the heaviest losses suffered by the Party, the country, and the people since the founding of the People's Republic.

Although the bourgeoisie has been overthrown, it is still trying to use the old ideas, culture, customs, and habits of the exploiting classes to corrupt the masses, capture their minds, and stage a comeback. The proletariat must do just the opposite: It must meet head-on every challenge of the bourgeois to change the outlook of society. Currently, our objective is to struggle against and crush those people in authority who are taking the capitalist road, to criticize and repudiate the reactionary bourgeois academic authorities and the ideology of the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes and to transform education, literature and art, and all other parts of the superstructure that do not correspond to the socialist economic base, so as to facilitate the consolidation and development of the socialist system.

Chinese youths increasingly castigate those things which remind them the painful historical past. Zhang drives soviet truck, which China got as a gift from Russia during Korean War. Things that remind Russian or Japanese aggression and hegemony are mocked by the emerging youths of China. Youths like to forget the past and affirm their commitment to making the future robust and secure. In the novel, the narrator tells that it was a far-fetched dream to go to university. But within a decade, he and various other youths get chance to get the higher education. Access to education, employment opportunity, disciplined and rational administration of society, liberal mindset of people at large, establishment of music and architecture are some of the change that unfold in the Chinese society since the rise of communist dictatorship. Society is properly urbanized. Industrialization gains foot in slow pace. The urbanization of Xidan Bazaar and mechanization of agriculture are symptoms of how technology brings within its boundary the essential sectors of society.

The political and social condition of China remains confused and influenced by the western cultural practices. The teacher always wears the army colored Jacket but the boy wants the teacher wears various colorful Jackets. This change is the need of the time. It is the effect of mimicry. The native indigenous cultural environment of China categorically rejects the sovereignty and the unique supremacy of western ideals like universal human rights and democracy, modern secularism, political liberalism, gender equality and individual freedom. The strange atmosphere of China renders even the universally accepted pragmatic ideals of the west obsolete and counter-productive.

The callous phenomena like ethnic cleansing and cultural clash weakened the foundation of the Chinese society. If western norms and values are imposed in nonwestern countries uncritically, the nonwestern societies fall into chaotic situation.

There can be unrest and communal conflict due to the direct tussle between imitated western values and the native trends and culture. Yan demonstrates how social unrest affects the lives of Chinese people. The obsessive search for the western cultural model in China resulted in crisis, conflict and perpetual unrest.

Yan is a great Chinese writer who has won the noble prize. He is such a writer who is selective in what he presents in his most of the texts. He gives focus on the transitional period of China when China's cultural and social aura is about to be lost because of the western modern concept of modernity. He has written many books that are directly and indirectly linked with the cultural aspect of china which has developed its own kind of culture later on. Yan employs a terse style in the novel that is characterized by brevity and non-chronological storytelling written in the first-person. His works have rudiments of folk-tale that blend into legend and false notion, insertion it in the magic-realist kind. Yan offers insights into communist ideology and predatory capitalism that we ignore at our threat.

### **China's Opening for Western Modernity and the Responses**

The European brand of modernization that was introduced to China by the force of arms in the 19th 20th centuries had some of its most basic origins in aspects of the traditional Chinese imperial system. Kakutani says that "This same system impeded China's ability to resist the imperialist aggressions of modernized Western powers and Japan, until the end of the 20th century" (42). Contemporary Chinese culture studies and political, social and economic thought reexamine the Western model of modernity from a critical point of view and propose a new postcolonial, postmodern form of modernization with Chinese characteristics. The Chinese critique of modernity is both a product of Chinese history and an alternative to Western paradigms.

In traditional Chinese political thought, the establishment of an official discourse that could order society was a major concern of both thinkers and policy-makers alike. The Chinese imperial examinations are designed to select the bureaucrats necessary for the administration of the government. Pickering adds that “It created a system that combined intellectual and literary competence with the administration of power, creating a situation of complicity between intellectuals and policy-makers that continues to be important today” (93). The construction of the modern discourse of power at the national and international level is being carried out both in government and in academic circles. In the absence of a highly developed and independent civil society, it is still incipient in China today, modernization and the translation or recreation of Western modernity in the Chinese context. It is to a large extent the result of debates among intellectuals who are also advisers, such as Yu Keping, on politics, or Hu Angang, on economics, or Wang Hui. He takes a more historical and philosophical approach to the discourse of modernity, both Western and Chinese. Such members of the Chinese intelligentsia constitute a kind of default civil society.

Over the last two centuries the discourse of modernity that had been developed in the West has confronted the Chinese tradition, with traumatic and unequal results that still play a major role in China’s perception of the EU and of the United States as well as Japan. As a result, an analysis of the genealogy of the discourse of modernity that came from the West is a necessary first step in the process of making a comparative analysis of contemporary Chinese civic and political discourse.

Modernity in the Western context is a product of the historical and cultural forces that produced the Enlightenment, forces of European histories and cultures that were different from those of China. Capetti affirms that “This European modernity

was introduced into China's history and culture by the force of arms, provoking a traumatic experience that has lasted for more than a century and half, and it would be impossible to understand the Chinese reaction to modernization and modernity without bearing this fact in mind"(88). Something very similar happened in the case of Japan. Resistance to accepting the paradigms of European modernities being universal is one of the consequences of Asia's colonized past.

From the Asian point of view, the universality bestowed upon Enlightenment values by their authors became a justification of imperialism and its catastrophic consequences. As a result, a critical stance toward Enlightenment values has become a standard component of current Asian thinking. For many contemporary Chinese thinkers, China should modernize without repeating the process of modernity, "should leap over the system of values established by the Enlightenment that seemed to justify imperialism, and develop an economy and institutions that would serve to create wealth and to raise the standard of living of the population, without imposing values that are advantageous to a West that is already wealthy" (Lehman181)). They have identified a cultural dissidence within developed societies that advocates the values of post-modernity as a way of rejecting the values of modernity. In this context, they advocate the possibility of modernizing their society without having to accept the imposition of values that originated in societies that have already begun to question them.

China could reach post-modernity in a relatively short period of history without having to pass through the traumas that characterized the development of modernity in the West over a period of centuries. China's image in Europe was totally positive. Once the bridge of cross-cultural transfer that the Jesuits had established was cut off, different actors came to the fore, such as the East India Company, which would

conquer India and force the traffic of drugs on China with the support of the British and French governments, through war. One extremely important consequence of this change of affairs was its effect on the discourse applied to China in Europe and on the very image of China.

Far from being the great model that had inspired Enlightenment thinkers like Voltaire, a new metaphor was applied to China: the sick man of Asia. The major thinkers of the later Enlightenment period, such as Hegel or Kant or Marx portrayed China as a completely negative model, without History, new process of the social construction of reality had begun that World justify military aggression and partial colonization throughout the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century by the European imperialist powers, as well as the USA and Japan. Even though the Chinese tradition includes a series of elements that inspired the Enlightenment that modernized Europe, these very same elements impeded the modernization of China.

The traditional culture, socio-economic and political structures, and social psychology that constituted the traditional system of values and ideology impeded an adequate response to the ambitions of the modernized imperialist powers when the time came. As a result, China suffered an interminable series of disasters that have lasted right up to the end of the 20th century. In the mid-19th century, China lost two Opium Wars to the United Kingdom and France, with the resulting humiliation caused by the imposition of extraterritoriality and the progressive loss of territorial sovereignty and of the management of the large infrastructures of transport and customs.

The Taiping Rebellion controlled the southern half of China for almost fifteen years until it was put down by an international expeditionary force at the request of the imperial government of a Qing dynasty in full decay. The foreign powers

intervened out of self-interest. As Manchus, the Qing was considered to be foreigners by the majority of the Chinese population. Their very weakness in government favored the interests of the foreign powers.

During the half of the 19th century there were a series of popular uprisings, many of them inspired by ethnic conflict, especially in the northwest. In 1895, China suffered a humiliating loss in a war with Japan. At the end of the century the Boxer Rebellion broke out as a xenophobic reaction to the privileges that extraterritoriality had granted to the Christian missions and the foreign concessions, as well as the inability of the Qing dynasty to prevent foreign exploitation. This rebellion provoked yet another intervention by an international military expedition, and further humiliating and economically disastrous conditions were imposed on China as a result.

In the early 20th century, a republican revolution led by Sun Yat-Sen brought down the last dynasty in 1912. The lack of a democratic tradition made it impossible for the newly implanted parliamentary and electoral system to work before the country disintegrated into a series of interprovincial skirmishes between competing warlords with their own private militias. In the mid-1920's a civil war broke out between the Nationalist Party that Chiang Kaishek had inherited from Sun Yat-Sen, and the newly formed Communist Party that would eventually be led by Mao Zedong, a civil war that would last until 1949. In the early 1930's Japan invaded China, occupying Manchuria and eventually conquering the entire eastern region of the country.

From the external, sociological perspective, the anti-Western trend is closely connected to a series of changes in the environment at home and abroad. Following the sudden takeoff of the Chinese economy, the national strength of China grew

enormously; and the first reaction of a disfavored people that is emerging from its disfavored status is to say "no" to those privileged peoples it has long been attempting to overtake. In the 1980s, China's contacts with the west were limited, conflicts of interest were rare, and intellectuals had a flattering image of the West, so that Westernization had a suitable psychological support.

From the beginning of the 1990s, China began to enter into the international political-economic system, and conflicts between China and the West became more and more direct: the opposition of the Western countries, particularly the United States, to China's joining the WTO and hosting the Olympic Games, trade frictions, the Yinhua incident, and a series of other events caused Chinese intellectuals to lose a great part of their faith in the West. Behind their beautiful Western discourse, they discovered ugly relationships of power, and an unequal power relationship that the Western countries were determined to force onto China. Thus the nationalistic feeling of Chinese intellectuals was greatly awakened, so that anti-Westernism had a deep psychological foundation.

Various writers have commented about the works of Yan. Here in this context *Change* has also got several acclaim from the critics. Many critics commented it as a work which has lost its mainstream tradition from the Chinese literary tradition and some has commented as being selective while choosing the subject matter. Yan is the prominent author of the contemporary China. The bulk of his literary accomplishment is so magnificent that he is awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 2012. Mo Yan is largely considered as the novelist with vigorous longing for politico-cultural realism. He has criticized several social and ideological bigotries. He always stands for the progressive transformation of Chinese society. *Change* is the distinct novella of Yan. Li makes the following remarks about the novella, *Change*:

In *Change*, Mo Yan, the 2012 Nobel Laureate in Literature, personalizes the political and social changes in his country over the past few decades in this novella disguised as autobiography-or vice-versa. Unlike most historical narratives from China, which are pegged to political events, *Change* is a representative of people's history, a bottom-up rather than top-down view of a country in flux. By moving back and forth in time and focusing on small events and everyday people, Mo Yan breathes life into history by describing the effects of larger-than-life events on the average citizen. (12)

According to Li, the political and social issues are merged and modified in the novella, *Change*. In a sense, Yan tends to reflect upon the history of modern China. Modern China has come a long way since the last few decades. Yet it still has to face countless number of challenges and troubles. Yan is of the opinion that contemplation upon history gives profound insight to those who want to alter the course of history of modern China.

Goldblatt is another critic of Yan. He is critically aware of Yan's limitations as a novelist. He enumerates how Yan has injected his own anecdotal experience to portrayal of village. Goldblatt argues thus:

One cannot say that Mo Yan has not criticized China in his portrayal of the village. Rather than exploring the darker undercurrents of society or the depths of the characters, he seems to make it his goal to stay on the surface. Much of the energy of the novel is spent on long and sensuous descriptions of butchering, cooking, eating and other bodily functions. There are too many episodes when the reader has to witness

this or that character urinating, and to endure long descriptions of the urine. (27)

Whether Yan has been successful in portraying the characters in their organic form or not, it is not clear. But one thing is undoubtedly clear that daily activities are described in a vivid and vigorous way. The real charm of Yan's literary oeuvre is that he is skillful in describing the common incidents of life.

Arnott is celebrated critic and author as well. She looks Yan's literary representation from the western eyes. She maintains that *Change* is characterized more by the features of memoir and less by the striking characteristic of novel. She reveals the following quality in the novel:

*Change* is barely a work of fiction. This is essentially a memoir. In contrast to Mo Yan's often expensive novel it is also a very slim volume barely over a hundred pages. But it describes events spanning four decades from 1969 to 2009. While amounting to a memoir, Mo is selective in what he presents. Much of the focus is on the transitional years after Mao's death in the late 1970. (37)

By writing this novel in the form of memoir, Yan launches frontal attack on the transitional politics of China. The constantly shifting scenario of China has affected the common pattern of villagers. The modernization of China is both subversive and uplifting as well. Both the rosy and seamy side of modernizing China is brought to the focal point.

East-West dualism exists at the heart of Yan's *Change*. Through the interpenetration of eastern and western value, the dualism gets the proper momentum. To some extent, Yan addresses this sort of paradoxical issue in *Change*. Jianqi concentrates upon this issue as follows:

The novella *Change* projects the decisive distinction between the western literary taste and the literary taste of China. While literature in the West enjoyed steady growth with multiple voices, in China its progress followed a roundabout course. Having a long history, traditional Chinese literature was known for its maturity, richness, and sophistication; hence, it had for many years been rather self-centered and self-sufficient, showing no interest in or any need for interaction with the literature of other countries. At the turn of the twentieth century, however, with the introduction of foreign cultures and the translation of foreign literary works. (37)

Chinese literature is to some extent totalitarian, according to Huo. To this view of Huo, Yan also agrees with. The literature of China hardly makes room for creative inspiration external to it. It is simply seduced by its own literary parochialism and perfidy. The first target of Yan is to demolish this sort of literary egocentrism and eccentricity. To tell the truth, Yan is successful in his mission fairly.

Freely traces the similarity between Yan modernist liberalism and the literary modernism of Jack Kerouac and Franz Kafka. Freely makes the following observation about Yan's *Change*:

Mo Yan's stream of consciousness writing style is reminiscent of Jack Kerouac's *On The Road*. His agitated, phantasmagorical prose style has been compared to Franz Kafka's body of work, too. The plot centers on a young narrator who joins people's liberation army and achieves moderate level of progress. The narrator is attracted by the likelihood that he will get promoted once he joins the liberation army. The narrator brings his own anecdotic experiences in his narrative account. (14)

The main motto of Maureen is that Yan's modernism is not wholly genuine and pure. It is derivative. Whatever brand of modernism represents it is derivative. It appears to have been inspired and induced by the works of Kerouac and Kafka. The darker modernist vision of Yan's related to the dwindling prospect of Chinese Culture. The clash between emerging secularism and the nativism of China lays the foundation of Yan's modernist liberalism.

Gunn is the popular critic of Yan. Her criticism of Yan is highly insightful. Yan is in her view comprehensive in handling the complex and equally delicate issue. Gunn's view is quoted below:

With its fusion of literary elegance and incisive political commentary, Mo Yan's *Change* drew comparisons to the works of Salman Rushdie and Don DeLillo. Here, he confirms that talent, brilliantly chronicling his hapless hero's search for love, revenge and life beyond the postmodern novel. The narrator's brother, a university student in Nankin, lays a spell on the reader with the opening words. Like a liberating enchantment, the social reform opens doors in his mind that allow him to glimpse both international attention and the possibility of solidarity. (27)

There is the fusion between experimental vigor and incisive political commentary in Yan's *Change*. The use of magical realism and subversive ethos of literary experimentation are the distinguishing features of Yan. Gunn furthermore argues that Yan has unique talent to project his political commentary in the veil of subtlety and sarcasm. The persistent use of magical realism and surrealistic technique bring Yan to the same footing of Salman Rushdie and other postcolonial giants.

Thomas is adept in exploring in-depth insight by comparing two different novels written by two different novelists. In the last phase of his career, Yan's literary postmodernism is highly derivative. Thomas makes the following revelation concerning *Change*:

Wen Li and Zhang go on a surreal journey, seeking change in not only in personal life but in the lives of youths belonging to his generation. Zhang had been gazing frustrated at the expansion of transportation. After the social revolution, he becomes aware of the most unexpected coincidence or impeccable fortune. Tragedy of Tiananmen Square and the isolation of China from international happenings are the most serious events that need proper deliberation. (37)

As affirmed by Thomas, *Change* is brimful of events and happenings that carry almost cultural as well as social implications. This literary newness has the functional purpose. To reflect the double brand of realities pertaining to the hybrid culture of China, Yan has depicted the shifting landscape which is puzzling to the readers. It is very confounding to explore this issue.

Macey detects the fusion of both optimism and pessimism in this novel. The pessimistic condition generated by the growing existentialist thinking and postmodernism is at the center of this novel. Yet it can also be said that certain ray of optimism lies in the corner of pessimistic world. Macey demonstrates his ideas in the following ways:

It has been called a novel without hope. I think actually it is a novel with a great deal of hope. It finds that even in man's corruption and sickness there are yearnings and inarticulate strivings for a better world, a life with more dignity. This statement is a remarkable

example of how erroneous an artist can be about his creation. The yearnings and inarticulate strivings of men for a better world of which Mailer speaks are shown in *Change* with a sense of hopelessness. (19)

According to Macey, *Change* projects underlying optimistic sense in the midst of pessimism. There lies the true vision of the emancipation of people. The postmodern sense of liberation is displayed fantastically in the novel. That is why it is good to give credit to Mailer, according to Macey. In the normal condition, people do have yearning and longing. But in this kind of longing, the decency and dignity of human ambition is not reflected. Only in the critical moment of his life that people continue to suffer and then they develop vision.

In the fictitious world of *Change* the much vaunted western thoughts like political liberalism, egalitarianism, welfare economics, universal democracy and universal human rights as well as gender equality are portrayed as enfeebled and counterproductive. In the peculiar world of China, the western thoughts turn out to be the source of despair. The native soil of China does not allow the seed of western concepts germinate and fructify easily. Hence, the issue of the critique of Eurocentric thought is really justifiable and pertinent from the research viewpoint.

This thesis would have four chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic, elaborates the hypothesis and then quotes views of different critics and reviewers. In addition, the first chapter makes the mention of writer, his style of writing, some of his works and then point of departure. The second chapter discusses about the theory of Nonwestern Modernity. The third chapter consists of the thorough analysis of text from Dirlik's notion of Nonwestern Modernity other perspectives which expose inconsistencies and contradictions of western culture that neglects an individual's

responsibility to the other. Nonwestern Modernity is also used as the methodological basis of this research. The last chapter projects the conclusive findings of research.

## **Chapter II: Chinese and Western Modernity: A Glimpse**

Modernization is understood as a world-historical process resulting in the entire world crossing the threshold of this shared experience. After crossing this point, all that remains is an affirmation of the potential of modernity. This should not be misconstrued as an entirely utopian projection. Modernization can be exploitative, but he deems the continual chaos of modernity as a perfect forum for the process of a potentially unlimited self-development. The process of modernization, even as it exploits and torments us, brings our energies and imaginations to life, drives us to grasp and confront the world that modernization makes, and to strive to make it our own.

### **Tenets of Western Modernity**

Habermas's theory of modernity also attempts a rejuvenation of modernity. For Habermas, the crisis of modernity is not indicative of the final collapse of the Enlightenment project, but instead reveals the deficiencies of what has heretofore been a one-sided and inadequate modernity. Thus, modernity is an incomplete project, and the question of modernization becomes central to completing modernity. Habermas argues that our contemporary experience of modernity has been unduly dominated by a single type of rationality, specifically by purposive or instrumental rationality.

The discontents of modernity, then, are not rooted in rationalization or modernization as such, but in the failure to develop and institutionalize all the different dimensions of reason in a balanced way. This (re)opening of modernity to different means of rationalizing the life world has led John Tomilson to suggest that Habermas's vision denies an inevitable path of modernization. The sort of modernity that the West has developed and passed on to the 'developing world' is not the only

possible historical route out of the chains of tradition. However, Habermas makes this opening while retaining a commitment to the Enlightenment project of universal modernity. His modernization of modernity would re-route towards a model of communicative action, and a more open rationality of ideal speech acts.

While philosophers have examined this theme from many angles, several basic questions have become the focus of ongoing debate and discussion. As claimed by Macey, “The key to effectively addressing contemporary problems lies in reclaiming and revitalizing indigenous traditions that have been degraded and suppressed in the wake of colonialism”(85). Colonialism violently disrupted western cultural traditions and imposed, with varying degrees of success, European forms of thought and social organization upon colonized peoples. Having achieved political independence, postcolonial countries must now pursue a more decisive liberation, a decolonization of nonwestern minds and societies.

The inside/out distinction here is not intended to privilege one perspective over the other, but rather to point to an important difference that detailed examination yields: diversity, which reveals the selectivity involved in generalization. The China specialists whose works I discuss are some of them products of growing up in contemporary China, but their own status as “insiders” is quite problematic when set against scholars and intellectuals living in China. The latter themselves are difficult to discuss as insiders without qualification, given the intensification in recent years of intellectual exchange and interaction across borders. As should be evident from the discussion below, my concern is not with the accuracy of what one or another of these groups may state about modernity, but with the intellectual and ideological implications of the choices that they make. In fact, it is interesting if not quite accidental that there is a coincidence between the assumptions of contemporary

sociological generalizations about modernity, and the more conservative Chinese positions on the durability of civilizational traits, which may claim the greatest “Chineseness” by virtue of loyalty to tradition.

The term “alternative modernities” is used most prominently with reference to nations and civilizations. It inherently embodies the implied suggestion of cultural homogeneity within their boundaries. It is at odds with simultaneous claims to the cultural complexity of the contexts of modernity. The idea of alternative modernity is anything but self-evident. Modernization has not led to the cloning of societies after a Western model. Claims to alternative modernity are highly problematic to the extent that they fail to address fundamental structural questions of modernity. Alternative modernity counters the all-encompassing, universalizing hegemonic essence of westernized modernity. The thoughts of Chatterjee, Dirlik, Lennox and many other theorists appear to be relevant for this work. Dirlik comments:

It is not clear whether globalization is the final chapter in the history of capitalist modernity as globalized by European power, or the beginning of something else that is yet to appear with any kind of concreteness.

What is clear, however, is that globalization discourse is a response both to changing configurations in global relations- new unities as well as new fractures- and the need for a new epistemology to grasp those changes. (6)

Dirlik argues that coming years will demand new ways of thinking our way out of the burdens of not only the past, but, more importantly, of the present. While significant in challenging Euro/American-centered conceptualizations of modernity, the idea of alternative modernities is open to criticism. It is open to criticism because it has acquired currency in academic and political circles. The historical experience of Asian

societies suggests that the search for alternatives long has been a feature of responses to the challenges of Euro-Modernity. Alternative was conceived earlier in systemic terms. In its most recent version since the 1980s, cultural difference has become its most important marker.

Adding the adjective alternative to modernity has important counter-hegemonic cultural implications. It also obscures the entrapment of most of the alternatives claimed-products of the reconfigurations of global power. Culturally conceived notions of alternatives ignore the common structural context of a globalized capitalism. Cultural change is held as the prime locomotive behind the emergence of alternative modernity. In this respect, Dirlik makes the following responses:

The seeming obsession with cultural difference, a defining feature of contemporary global modernity, distracts attention from urgent structural questions of social inequality and political injustice that have been globalized with the globalization of the regime of neoliberal capitalism. Interestingly, the cultural turn in the problematic of modernity since the 1980s has accompanied this turn in the global political economy during the same period. (78)

As claimed by Dirlik, arguments for alternative modernities need to re-articulate issues of cultural difference. While significant in challenging Euro/American-centered conceptualizations of modernity, the idea of alternative modernity is open to criticism. It has acquired currency in recent years in academic and political circles. Adding the adjective alternative to it has significant counter-hegemonic intentions. But it ignores that these new alternatives remain entrapped within the hegemonic assumptions of an earlier modernity.

Qualifying modern with an adjective distracts attention from fundamental questions of modern history. Furthermore Dirlik adds that “What is needed instead is confronting modernity as historical concept, not necessarily to abandon it, but to rethink it so as to accommodate our changing understanding of its present and its past”(97). The fundamental problem with the notion of alternative modernities is that it is not quite clear what modernity they are alternatives to. In recent usage, the idea of alternative modernities appears more often than not in a cultural guise. The particular cultural legacies of these societies call for different trajectories of modernity than those of Europe and North America. Lennox puts forward the following view in this regard:

Cultural turn in the understanding of modernity demands closer critical scrutiny than it is usually given either by its advocates, who partake of a tendency in contemporary culture to fetish difference, or by its critics who simply dismiss it for its evacuation of modernity of any substantial content. Like the kindred term, multiple modernities, alternative modernities as concept is symptomatic of another crisis in modernity, this time occasioned by its globalization. Whether these terms help account for this crisis, or render it more elusive and obscure is an important question. (159)

The search for an alternative modernity is of the utmost urgency. The fundamental question is whether this search responds to the demands of identity politics or problems thrown up by a global capitalism. Foremost among these problems are ecological destruction and the concentration of wealth in ever fewer hands across the globe.

## Chinese Modernity and Its Ingredients

The most characteristic alternative modernities are those that are called hybridized forms. It appropriates and transforms global cultural forms to local needs, beliefs and conditions. This does not make them extensions of modernity, but “new culturally-situated forms of modernization. Modernity is not so much adopted as adapted and re-created, and increasingly, modernities may adapt other alternative modernities”(Gaonkar 72). Alternative modernities introduce the plurality of modernity, and the agency multiplying its forms. According to Ong, alternative modernity follows the following locus of evolution:

Alternative modernities emerge firstly through the redeployment of modern Western cultural forms: material, discursive, social and even ethical. Yet political modernity has been appropriated and enculturated by post-colonies. Nowhere is this more dramatic than in India. Modernity is not simply a function of historical development but of cultural differences. (65)

Cultures are not necessarily engulfed by modernity, but creatively adapt it to local needs. It always unfolds within a specific cultural or civilizational context and different starting points for the transition to modernity lead to different outcome.

Regarding to the necessity to adapt the spirit and ethos of modernity to the local cultural scenario of the third world country, Gaonkar says:

Creative adaptation is not simply a matter of adjusting the form or recoding the practice to soften the impact of modernity. Rather, it is the site where a people make them modern, as opposed to being made modern by alien and impersonal forces, and where they give themselves an identity and a destiny. (18)

In the wake of the flow of diverse cultural practices, an atmosphere can arise in which different sorts of norms coexist harmoniously. Such a harmonious coexistence is likely to pave the way for the enrichment and enhancement of lingering vestige of culture that hovers on the verge of extinction. Certain forms of Nonwestern Modernity engage with the material realities of colonized and the inhabitants of the Nonwestern Modernity world.

Although greatly exceeding its brief, a post-colonial-inspired language became the language of globalization studies in the 1990s. Varied as the discourses of post-colonialism and globalization might be, Gikandi opines the following:

They have at least two important things in common: they are concerned with explaining forms of social and cultural organization whose ambition is to transcend the boundaries of the nation-state, and they seek to provide new vistas for understanding cultural flows that can no longer be explained by a homogenous Eurocentric narrative of development and social change. (627)

What made post-colonial theory so useful was its ability to comprehend the postmodern movement of culture beyond the nation state at the same time as it addresses the particularity of the (largely non-western) local. This represented not just an appropriation of the language of the post-colonial but also an unprecedented dominance of the Humanities in the descriptions of global culture. Modernities are a theme of contemporary time.

Recognizing that modernities are multiple and diverse acknowledges the multi-polar realities of twenty-first century globalization and the rise of the rest. Real-existing modernities are mixed social formations in that they straddle past and present and import and translate styles and customs from other cultures. In addition,

modernities are layered. Some components are shared among all modern societies. The significance of claims to alternative modernity lies elsewhere in the assertion of the right of different societies to define modernity. Western scholars believe that modernization must follow the course of Westernization. This belief has been questioned. The important question is why this question is expressed presently in culturally-inflected claims to alternative modernities. More than the ambiguous evidence of cultural difference, it is the empowerment of claims to alternatives that are in the process of transforming modernity.

The conceptual premises of alternative modernity are relatively straightforward. According to Lennox, “the first premise is the acknowledgment of modernity as a global presence with universal claims. To think in terms of alternative modernities is to admit that modernity is inescapable”(121). Modernity is now everywhere. It does not follow from its ubiquitous status. Modernity means the same thing or displays identical features everywhere. “Modernity has assumed different form and content in different historical and cultural contexts, where it is assimilated or translated to the very conditions being transformed under its impact”(Lennox 147). It ceaselessly generates new modernities out of the past, present and future.

Modernity is compatible with different cultural practices. Modernity is cultureless, and can be deployed in service of different cultural legacies. As Pletsch argued “three decades ago, this was the case with modernization discourse which perceived modernization as progress from tradition (culture) to a modernity ruled by technological rationality and, therefore, implicitly cultureless”(153). It has been echoed in the instrumentalization of modernity as techniques. While there is a culture of modernity, it is at all times part of a complex cultural environment. Pletsch makes the following remarks:

Rather than the culture of modernity driving its competitors into oblivion, new cultural modernities are generated out of the interactions between different cultures. This has been the common theme in postcolonial criticism in the insistence on hybridization as cultural process, as well as in kindred notions of cultural translation or translated cultures. (80)

The relationships between the spaces of modernity are moreover riddled with contradictions. Alterity is the product of the processes of modernity in particular historical contexts. The argument is directed against the binary opposition between modernity and tradition in modernization discourse. Such line of thinking conceives of modernity as a functionally integrated whole. It views the relationship between the two as a zero-sum relationship. This argument captures modernity in a native space where modernity is comprehensible only in its service to tradition.

To think in terms of alternative modernities is to recognize the need to revise the distinction between societal modernization and cultural modernity. That distinction is implicated in the irresistible but somewhat misleading narrative about the two types of modernities. Societal modernization which involves a set of cognitive and social transformations is both good and inevitable. It is again relevant to quote Gaonkar:

On this account, the cognitive transformations include or imply the growth of scientific consciousness, the development of a secular outlook, the doctrine of progress, the primacy of instrumental rationality, the fact-value split, individualistic understandings of the self, contractualist understandings of society, and so on. The social transformations refer to the emergence and institutionalization of

market-driven industrial economies. It consists of bureaucratically administered states, modes of popular government, rule of law, mass-media, and increased mobility, literacy, and urbanization. (175)

Two opposing sets of transformations are seen as constituting a relatively harmonious and healthy package. This is the idealized self-understanding of bourgeois modernity historically associated with the development of capitalism in the West. That questioning takes the form of proclaiming the end of modernity. Modernity has traveled from the West to the rest of the world not only in terms of cultural forms, social practices, and institutional arrangements but also as a form of discourse that interrogates the present. That questioning of the present cannot escape the legacy of Western discourse on modernity.

### **Limits of Modernity**

The safe and fruitful way to bring modernity in country is to allow the movement of westernization. Westernization is the threshold whereby modernity comes. But as time passed by, westernization took the aggressive forms. The concept of multiple modernities is a refutation of the triumphalist theories of modernization of the 1950s. The so-called classical theories of modernization all posited a cultural program of modernity. And yet, the progress of modernization showed that modernity and Westernization were not identical. The temptation to equate modernity with a capitalist economy quickly runs aground. Pieterse clarifies the point further:

To think of alternative modernities, and to accept that modernity is not synonymous with Westernization, is not to abandon the fact that emerged in the West. Modernity is plural, and it confirms the fact that the historical trajectory of Western modernity was not simply a sign of temporal progress but a culturally situated phenomenon. Arguments

for alternative modernities confirm the need for cultural theories of modernity. (142)

Alternative or Non-Western modernities emerge by the development of hybridized cultural forms through the appropriation of those of Western modernity. Its pace of expansion is facilitated by the introduction of innovative. They emerge out of a relation to other modernities. The processes of appropriation, adaptation, and transformation have been their characteristic features. Westernization has been undertaken by Non-Western elites the cultural transformation of Western models has been almost unavoidable.

Chatterjee maintains that “The discourse on alternative modernities has little to say on the future that may lie in store for modernity. Its suggestion of alternative futures against the teleology of modernization discourse is at odds with its simultaneous reaffirmation of globality”(186). Its cultural and historical claims to the future suffer from the same uncertainties as modernity itself. Chatterjee, furthermore, adds that “Given the intensification of the mixing of peoples and cultures that characterizes the contemporary world, there is good reason to think that differences as understood in the present day are likely to be re-configured, and give rise to new unities and divisions”(197). Alternative modernities are closer to those to whom they are alternatives. The globalized scholars of current times share a far more common cultural space than scholars did only a generation ago.

Alternative modernity is best grasped as a product of modernity that itself is likely to generate still new modernities. Chatterjee says “Its alterity consists most importantly of perceived differences from an imagined model of Euro/American modernity that has been upheld in the past as a universal model of modernity”(218). The model exists only as an ideological project. Euro/American modernities are

historical as well. Alternatives have not always been conceived of cultural terms. In these earlier movements, the search for cultural identity appeared as part of a broader program of social and political transformation. It was beginning with the cultural turn of the 1980s that alternatives came to be conceived in cultural rather than systemic terms.

Cultural reassertion against Euro/American hegemony was one source. The appearance of new centers of global capitalism was another. But there was also a failure of nerve in the pursuit of alternatives to the rule of capital. Appadurai exemplifies the concept in association with this aspect of the dynamics of alternative modernity. His view is cited below:

The ceaseless production of alternatives is a defining characteristic of modernity. Modern, like contemporary, is a moving target, and cannot represent a periodization or a style, except in a fleeting and ambiguous sense.” Whether modernity is appropriate or desirable as a periodizing concept is a controversial idea to which I will return below. Suffice it to say here that alternative modernity is a very modern idea not just in its affirmation of modernity but in the aspiration to an alternative form of it. (164)

Cultures that alternative modernities draw upon as evidence of difference are themselves in many cases products of modernity. Modernity does not arise out of the vacuum. It arises out of the underlying norms and cultural ethos. The cultural basis out of which alternative modernity arises is drastically different from that of the cultural basis of westernized modernity.

Modernization is the quest for human dignity in the face of competition from a rival civilization. The choice of holding on to sacred traditions despite hostile

challenges may in lead to political subjugation and indignity. On the other hand, the success of a cultural change program is at best piecemeal, and the adoption of the ways and means of another civilization, in order to counter its dominance, is undignified and possibly redundant. In this vein, Zhang forewarns youths of modern Chinese and other moderates who are prone to encounter a growing demand for stylistic change and cultural adaptation. The failure of the programs of cultural adaptation leads to dystopia and disillusionment.

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The relationship between capitalism and the culture of modernity demands serious scrutiny. As capitalism has shaped modernity, it itself bears upon it the marks of its cultural environments. If capitalism, like modernity, assumes the characteristics of its cultural environment, then capitalism in Europe was no different from elsewhere. It sounds relevant to quote Appadurai in this context:

The historical entanglement of capitalism and Euro/American modernities means that as those modernities have been shaped and propelled by capitalism, capitalism bears upon it the cultural legacies of the Euro/American societies that provided the context for its rise to global hegemony. (175)

Claims to alternative modernities, unavoidably present contradictions with the cultural actualities. They may even represent responses to problems thrown up by these contradictions. These competing values draw upon different historical legacies and experiences to claim alternative modernities. They now acquire their serviceability from goal. These goals are often at odds with the social and political ideals.

Assumptions of cultural homogeneity may be appealing to states, hegemonic groups in society, or to nationalists in general. Such assumptions are contradicted by pervasive disagreements over modernity globally. If modernity is indeed everywhere, then conflicts over modernity are not restricted to conflicts between nations and civilizations. Focus on these political specializations blurs deep disagreements within them over the prospects of modernity. It entails questions of ideological orientation and political power. Alternative modernities refer just as easily to different responses to modernity of different groups in society. With respect to this aspect of alternative modernity, Gaonkar remarks:

Conflicts over modernity and the search for alternatives are integral to the history of modernity. Presently, there is the universalization of the contradictions of modernity. It can be perceived as a clash not of modernity and tradition. Where this modernity will lead depends on the outcome of the competition. But it is not likely on the basis of contemporary evidence. To think in terms of alternative modernities is to admit that modernity is inescapable and to desist from speculations about modernity's end. (81)

Modernity today is global and multiple. As claimed by Gaonkar, it does not have a western governing center to accompany it. The dilemma concerning to the origin of alternative modernity can be approached from transnational and transcultural perspective. The idea of alternative modernities holds that modernity always unfolds within specific cultures or civilizations. Modernity is, in truth, a richly multiplicitous concept. Believing that the language and lessons of western modernity must be submitted to comparative study of its global receptions, they focus on Asian cultural sites.

### **Chapter III: Critique of Western Modernity in Mo Yan's *Change***

This research is concerned with how the western notion of modernity fails to generate the expected level of change and transformation in Yan's novella, *Change*. In this novel, different phase of Chinese society from communist takeover to the first decade of the twentieth century are described. Technological modernity of the west and modernist attitude penetrate the fabric of Chinese society. But western notion of modernity hardly generates the expected level of change. The narrator of this novel says that people feel secure to abide by their own traditional model of survival and method of productive struggle. The first person narrator of this novel narrates an incident which brings into light the limitations of westernized modernity. One day the narrator makes a visit to Tiananmen Square.

The disaster that takes place in this square is the greatest disaster in the history of people's struggle for human rights and democracy. In Tiananmen Square, the critical mass of the Chinese youths comes on a rampage demanding human rights and democracy. The then government of China imposes a heavy crack down. As a result, thousands of demonstrators and rebels died on the spot. The narrator does not lament that the catastrophe in Tiananmen Square pushes the possibility of China's development back. Rather the narrator hardly recollects the tragic episode. On the contrary, he proudly stands before the statue of Mao and glorifies him as the initiator and harbinger of progressive change and transformation in society.

Actually, Tiananmen Square demonstration takes place to bring human rights and democracy in China. Democracy, human rights, and individual freedom are some of the component of western modernity. Chinese youths attempt to bring it in China. But the dictatorial ruler of China heedlessly imposed crackdown on their collective attempt to bring modernity. Western modernity is portrayed in the novel as the

breeding ground of conflict and unrest. Those youths who are increasingly conscious of thoughts like political liberalism, individual freedom, human rights and the rational administration of society are responsible for bringing the disaster of Tiananmen Square in the novel. The society of China categorically rejects the conflict-generating western thoughts. China brings progress and change on the basis of its own internal power and native technology. That is why the narrator fails to look into the positive sides of the tragedy of Tiananmen Square. He is driven by the grandeur of Mao's statue. The following extract brings into light how the narrator is heedlessly dismissive of any possibility of change via importation of western modernity:

Even if it was only one day, at least we could have our picture taken in front of Tiananmen Square- that alone would make the trip worth the trouble. The very accommodating man in charge gave us a three day pass to see the city and contacted our organization's guesthouse to put us up. Since none of us had a resident's card or a military ID-required by all hotels and guesthouse in the city-we need a letter of introduction. He gave each of us a letter, with an official red seal, which we could use for lodging along the way. (51)

The narrator joins the people's liberation army. He gets an opportunity to visit Beijing and many other cities of China. He sees the prospect of change. He closely observes Tiananmen Square. He is of the opinion that the importation and successive utilization of western notions of human rights, democratic dispensation, and rational administration of society, individual freedom and access to private rights breed chaos and conflict. The narrator is acutely aware of the negative sides of western thoughts and visions of social transformation. The narrator is proud that his country is making progress gradually in its own terms and technology.

He Zhiwu is a good friend of the narrator. He is jobless even after completing his higher secondary level education. He decides to go to the nearest city and seek a job. But he does not have money to go to this city. So he comes to meet the narrator who gets a job in cotton processing plant. He asks for Ten Yuan. In response, the narrator asks what happens to your family if you go to the city to seek a job. He proudly says that my parents would not die of hunger because the communist party will not let them starve. Like the narrator, many youths express trust in the power of one party regime to save people from hunger and other daily problems. Youths have belief that country can be changed with the help of its own internal power, resources and technology. They are opposed to the importation and implementation of western notion of progress and transformation. The following extract reveals how youths like He Zhiwu and the narrator envision the development of country on its own basis:

What about your family, what will they do after you leave? The communist party won't let them starve, he said. What will you do up there? Do not know. But it is better than hanging around here till I die, do not you think? Look at me, I am damn near thirty and I do not even have a wife. I have to get out of here. Moving kills trees, but it keeps people alive. To tell the truth, I did not want to lend him the ten Yuan, tidy sum in those days. How is this? He said. If I make good I will not pay you back. (24)

Youths like the narrator and He Zhiwu expect change. They seek job so that they can convert their idle time into money and help their families survive. In the early decades of the communist takeover, the conditions of China are not satisfactory. The country does not achieve substantial level of economic takeoff. But to improve its worst economic conditions, it does not depend upon alien cultural aids, western model of

progress and technology transfer. Chinese society tries to thrive by exploiting its own available productive methods. It is averse to adopt western technological model. On the contrary, it tends to create its own model of technological breakthrough without taking resort to western modernity.

Zhang is another character who tends to drive recklessly without caring for the fallout of his reckless driving. New roads are constructed in China soon after the communist takeover. The new road marks the possibility of social mobility. It boosts economic activities. People are excited to see the possibility of visiting different places and carrying goods from one place to the other. Construction of wide roads paves the way for the gradual transformation of society. Zhang's reckless driving is expressive of thrill and hope that people are confident of emerging social transformation and progress. The following extract illustrates this situation:

Zhang's many deficiencies as a soldier were obvious to all: he wore his cap at a jaunty angle, would not button his jacket and looked like a typical movie bandit with his breezy way of winking. He was fond of drinking but it looked little to get him drunk, at which time he would hum the salty ditty second sister Misses Her Husband. One of his favorite pastimes was flirting with the city girls sent down to the countryside, and he took some of the older village girls with him whenever he drove our truck into town. (38)

Construction of wide roads brings mobility of people from one place to the other. Goods and commodities flow from one section of geography to the other. Social change is felt and seen by people. Following the communist takeover, China undergoes gradual socio-economic change. Though cultural rigidity looms as the hindrance on China's way to development, it never welcomes western model of

modernity. People are determined to judge things on the basis of their own viewpoint and cultural habit. For them, the security and expected level of progress are two objects of concern.

The active and assertive encroachment of western powers like America breeds conflict in the Korean peninsula. America's active interest in the resolution of conflict in Korean peninsula is the medium to intervene into the culture of China. But China succeeds in averting to the compulsion to give an entry to western cultural influences. The following extract exemplifies how China manages to avert and evade the impending western interest and cultural influences:

That bullet-riddled Gaz 51 of ours, a veteran of the Korean War would have been rusting on a junk heap if Technician Zhang had not taken such good care of it. For some reason, Zhang seemed to like me. I was always the one he asked to help him wash or fix up the truck on Saturdays, and my fellow recruits assumed that he was training me to take over from him one day. I figured they were probably right. Thanks to him, I learned a great deal about the workings of the engine, including how a truck could move so fast. (39)

Though China practiced totalitarian rule prior to 1990, it is customary for it to pursue the policy of seclusion. It brings forth change in most of the crucial sectors of society. Its educational sectors, social sectors, cultural sectors and technological sectors expand progressively on its own terms. In a dictatorial society, it is natural to suppress rebellious voices and voices of dissent. But progress and cultural mobility take place noticeably. The split of Korean peninsula is a strategy to inject the poisonous effect of westernized modernity.

In art and music, considerable change is found. Without imitating any style and design of western art and music, Chinese music connoisseurs invent lovely and admirable arts. As communication and transportation expand, skilled persons and trainers move from one place to the other. As a result, the society witnesses progressive change and instant possibility of transformation. The following extract highlights the case in point:

All of a sudden, this was no laughing matter; a pall of seriousness had been created by the white-hot anger on the teacher's face and the sound of Lu Wenli's sobs. Meanwhile, He Zhiwu's rolls were not going smoothly-he could not control the direction of his movement and kept bumping into desk and bench legs which forced him to adjust his progress. Thanks to all the mud we had tracked in, the brick floor was bumpy and uneven. If it had been me down there, I can imagine how uncomfortable it would have been. (11)

Arts, sports and recreations thrive abundantly. But no trace of western art influence is found in those arts which flourish tremendously in Chinese society during post-communist takeover. Modernization takes place gradually in military band to music band for the purpose of public entertainment. Experiences matter to the art lovers and connoisseurs. Rather than enjoying the copy of any art and seeking vicarious pleasure, they tend to lay emphasis on the original experiences.

It is the copied objects that give instant gratification to people. But the Chinese trend is not directed towards the consumptions of objects, fake objects, and copied objects for the sake of deriving instant thrill and gratification. However boring the process of getting habituated to the original and pristine nature of experiences, they tend to love the original. They develop whatever they want to develop in their own

terms. The following extract is illustrative of how Chinese music and art develop carving out its own locus of original efforts and originality:

Boring, monotonous, local noise-making, but the first time we showed off what we could do on the playground-our style, our flair, our appeal, not to mention the high-spirited rhythms and melodies- really opened the villagers' eyes and set their eardrums vibrating. Had any of them ever seen an honor guard? Had they ever heard music quite like that? The school supplied uniform for every member of the band: blue shorts and white shirts for the boys, white shirts and blue skirts for the girls, white rubber-soled shoes and knee-high socks for everyone. (17)

Taste for music and art is governed by discipline. It is guided and controlled in a systematic way. Some people can call it a censorship on art and aesthetics. But the institutions and bodies of organizations that exist to monitor the expansion of art and music deliberately do so to prevent them from degenerating into vulgarity and artificiality. Certain degree of restriction is a must to save art and aesthetics from getting infected by the vulgarity, commercialization and commodification of art and music.

Gaz 51 Soviet truck comes recurrently throughout the novel. Wenli's father Zhang drives it recklessly. Gaz 51 truck is given to China by Soviet Union so that it could carry necessary artillery and ammunitions from China to Korea during the time of Korean War. After China succeeds in keeping American influences and intervention at bay, Soviet did not take Gaz 51 truck back. This means of transportation reminds bloodshed and violence. People talk about how this truck came and where it is used now. This truck reminds that period when China was hectically engaged in pushing America away from Korean peninsula. Western intervention and

aggressive beget adverse effect in the entire zone of China as well as Korean Peninsula. Western modernity and western cultural influence are held by Chinese people as the harbinger of horror aggression, conflict and various other sources of unspeakable violence. The following extract highlights how Chinese citizens are averse to the violence-generating sides of western modernity:

We were told that the Gaz 51 was a soviet truck, leftover material from the 1950s war to resist US aggression and Aid Korea. The bullet holes from US planes in the cab served as proof that it was a truck bathed in glory. When the flames of war blazed, it had charged ahead heroically amid a hail of bullets, and now, during peacetime, it raised a cloud of dust as it tore down the road. When it passed by, we could see the smug look on the face of Wenli's father through the window glass.

(15)

The political interests of Western Europe and America breed conflict in Korean Peninsula. Along with the expansion of political interest, cultural influence and modernity of the west are likely to penetrate China. That is why it is so imperative for China to avert and eradicate the aggressive intervention of America. To cope with the aggressive and interventionist march of America, China has to take aid from its neighboring communist ally, Soviet Union. Soviet Union provides many military and logistic aids to China so that it could tackle the overwhelming influences and interventions of Western Europe and America.

The narrator narrates that the standard of education in the school of village area is worryingly low. At school class, students used to laugh at those who used to speak mandarin, the standard Chinese language. The majority of students of village area prefer to talk in the dialect. The standard language is taken as the laughing stock.

This situation shows how backward and low the level of learning and education is. When the teacher Zhang tells students to write essays on their ideal figure, one student writes that my ideal person is a truck driver who is Wenli's father. From this level of learning and education, China succeeds in establishing the finest universities of its own. The following extract describes the level of education in the village schools:

Teacher Zhang was in the habit of reading the best and worst essays in front of the whole class. But instead of telling us who wrote them, he would make us guess after he finished. In rural areas back then, the local's laughed at people who spoke Mandarin, even in school.

Teacher Zhang was the only one who dared to teach us in that alien dialect. A graduate of a teacher's college, he was still only in his early twenties. He has a gaunt, pale face, wore his hair short with a part down one side and dressed in a faded blue gabardine army jacket. (7)

The level of education is miserable. The national language and culture is slowly emerging in the country following the successful communist takeover. Teachers are making their best effort to make people recognize, identify and accept the standard language. With the help of standard mandarin language, teachers try to unite, systematize and standardize Chinese people's collective conscience. From low level of education, refinement and literary, China succeeds in expanding the horizon of modernization. Without relying on the imported notions of western modernity, China succeeds in uplifting and improving its culture and society in a modernist way.

Within a decade after the communist takeover, China has countless numbers of the finest universities and research centers. With its own strength, resources, commitment and proper mobilization, it succeeds in heading towards the path of

modernity. The following extract gives a glimpse of modernity brought forth by China via its own internal strength and capacity:

Colleges and universities had opened their doors again; rural landlords and rich peasant families were eating better, and oxen belonging to production teams were fattening up. Why even someone like me was having his picture taken in front of Tiananmen Square and personally viewing Chairman Mao's remains. Over the next two days, we visited Beihai Park, the Temple of Heaven and, next to it, and the Museum of Natural History, where the most impressive exhibit, for us at least was the dinosaur skeleton. (52)

Reform, change and progress occur gradually in different sectors ranging from education, health and standard of living. In the pre-communist rule, poverty is the dreadful problem. People die of hunger. Now at least citizens have got sufficient to eat. They have got the chance to attend school and universities. Majority of people have become employed and they are confident enough to handle their own problems and address the emerging challenges of society.

The tradition of making meal is gradually replaced with the meal-making machine. Mechanization affects daily life. People feel comfortable. At least they are free from unnecessary hassles and discomforts. In Xidan Bazaar, the narrator perceives this sort of change. He describes "The three of us also stood in line for two hours at a renowned dumpling shop next to XidanBazaar, and treated ourselves to a meal of machine-made dumplings that were filled with fatty pork that oozed grease when you bit into them. The machine spat the things out behind a waist high counter for customer at the dozen or so tables up front"(54). Mechanization is an instant act of accomplishment of unique kind.

In society rationally administered, youths like the narrator feels confident. He is happy that his brother gets a chance to go to college. He too is promoted to the post of deputy unit commander. His friend Zhiwu is too happy that he gets a full time job and he is economically able to look after not only his family but his ageing father and mother. The narrator says “my brother had been the first person from Northeast Gaomi Township ever to go to college. That has brought the family so much distinction that following him into college had been a dream of mine since childhood. And now the opportunity to see that dream come true had arrived” (64). Entire nation is heading towards modernization. Without taking resort to the western notions of modernity, the country experiences modernization, progressive change, technological transformation and social solidarity as well as nationwide commitment to progress.

The pain the victims of social chaos felt at being lost and far from home was intense, and so hard to bear, that their only hope was to stop trying to remember the secret, the lost meaning they'd come here to seek. The following lines dramatize this sort of conviction with which Chinese youths were driven:

We were stunned, but only for a moment. Then we burst out laughing. A teacher by the name of Ma, whose face was red to begin with, turned the color of a rooster's cockscomb. Lu Wenli, who had pulled a long face, chuckled aloud. I was the only one who did not laugh. I just stood there amazed at what had happened, and recalled a well-known tale from our village that our storyteller Grandpa Wang Gui had told us. Once, when a down-and outer named Jiang Ziya was selling wheat flour, a strong gale swept it out of his hand. (26)

Cultural self-isolation and shutting China off from outside influences is dismissed as an unrealistic alternative to westernization. Though cut off from the dynamism of

western politics and trade, China continued to strengthen itself in its own terms. Traditional forces are revived eclectically. The pressing needs of the time are addressed innovatively and constructively.

Cultural reassertion against Euro/American hegemony was one source. The appearance of new centers of global capitalism was another. But there was also a failure of nerve in the pursuit of alternatives to the rule of capital. ArjunAppadurai exemplifies the concept in association with this aspect of the dynamics of alternative modernity. His view is cited below:

The ceaseless production of alternatives is a defining characteristic of modernity. Modern, like contemporary, is a moving target, and cannot represent a periodization or a style, except in a fleeting and ambiguous sense.” Whether modernity is appropriate or desirable as a periodizing concept is a controversial idea to which I will return below. Suffice it to say here that alternative modernity is a very modern idea not just in its affirmation of modernity but in the aspiration to an alternative form of it. (164)

Cultures that alternative modernities draw upon as evidence of difference are themselves in many cases products of modernity. Modernity does not arise out of the vacuum. It arises out of the underlying norms and cultural ethos. The cultural basis out of which alternative modernity arises is drastically different from that of the cultural basis of westernized modernity.

Youths retreating towards the path of seclusion are a symptom of degeneration and instability. Since the native sources of modernity are directly responsible for the gradual transformation of the society, unrestrained and uncritical appropriation and

importation of western values breeds dystopian attitude and painful sense of disillusionment. The following lines cited from the text clarify the point further:

He reserved a luxury suite in the Huiquan Imperial Hotel with a panoramic view of the ocean, close enough to hear the sound of the waves. I do not know if he is relating his experiences over the past thirty. For the next three days his mouth never took a break, whether we were sitting around drinking or strolling on the beach. He ordered every imaginable delicacy, nearly all of which I ate alone. Help me out here, I said, I cannot eat all this, and I would hate to let it go to waste. You eat, he said. I have got the three, highs cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar, and I cannot eat that stuff. So he just drank and smoked and talked. (91)

Though the narrator is inspired by the preliminary effect of the western culture, he ultimately faces the prospective consequences of immersing and imbibing the ethos and spirit of his own mandarin culture. This western culture is supposed to make the narrator firmly and fully committed to reality. But upon reflection, the narrator is puzzled to know that he is pushed to the far-fetched zone of imagination. The growth in the inclination for escapism from ground reality is an indicator of an individual's degeneration.

The condition of being delusional is one of the worst consequences of following western culture. Apparently, it is believed that the book is written to improve the insular thoughts of Chinese youths. But the result turns out to be counter-productive. It is by no means certain that delusional aspiration on the part of the readers of this mysterious book sparks dystopia and disillusionment. The miserable and directionless life of Zhiwu's mother enables the narrator to make use of the theory

of how innocent people fall victims to the widespread problems of cultural aggression and displacement. When women are compelled to assume traditional cultural role and forced to make retreat from new modernist role, conflict and crisis arise. In their search for new experiences and freedom, women have to encounter several factors which drag their progressive pace and push them ahead on the way to transformation. Zhiwu's mother had to face similar kind of situations. Now Zhiwu does not know how his mother happens to land in the soil of China. Behind the story of her growth and ending lies another sub-story of deception and treachery. As a result, they are disturbed and disappointed by the conflicting attitude.

The plight of Zhiwu's mother in Xinadu is an outcome of her disastrous marital life. Betrayed by her husband, a new avenue of her life has opened but she has to pay a huge price to bring her ruined life of onerous responsibility to the right track. Her condition reflects several facts about the inability of a person to imbibe position of woman in alien land. Zhiwu has the faintest memory of his mother. Had she access to the economic resources like her husband, she might not have lived such a life of burden, insecurity, responsibility and subordination.

The situation in which Zhiwu's mother is landed puts extreme pressures in her. Since her husband's desertion, she struggles to be a sober and responsible mother. But she does not become successful as she intends to be because she is hassled and harmed in her efforts by the sporadic outburst of her shock. She does not like to demonstrate her pathetic plight by telling truth about her husband. On the contrary, she tells her children a white lie. The fact that she told a lie to her children is not a very important thing. Inwardly she is weak and diffident due to the disastrous failure of her marital life. But the patriarchal society does not allow and encourage her to tell

truth and live realistically. She is compelled to tell a lie to her children because she is bound to live like males.

Thus it is logical to deduce a conclusion that modernity in Chinese modernity arises out of the complex maelstrom of dynamism underlying beneath China's indigenous culture and the aggressive western cultural influence. However invincible the forces of westernized modernity might be, it cannot completely subdued and sabotaged the inherent fate of Chinese culture to get modernized on its own terms.

#### Chapter IV: Mo Yan's Appeal for Cultural Synthesis

The core finding of this research is that uncritical importation and appropriation of western idylls and westernized modernity in China can ultimately turn out to be a source of conflict and crisis. The view that western grand narratives boost and uplift the non-western countries is just a myth. It rather generates dystopia and disillusionment. This bitter but ground reality as the east west encounter is tested and probed in Mo Yan's memorable book *Change*. Yan evokes the contemporary problem of Nonwestern Modernity in China.

The transformation produced by the western culture is on no account acceptable. Each reader reads western culture and rewrites this whole journey through personal viewpoint and it shows Yan's writing strength. *Change* is a self-referential work that continually underscores itself. The anxiety, charm, and passion activated by the western culture transports at a frightened speed, often leaving the readers confused with turn of events, leaving the reader with unanswered questions by baffling spaces of truth and imaginary merge, which makes the work complex. *Change* lives and moves.

Ethos of western culture is something that reminds us of the whole world. Perhaps that's how every culture is, or what each and every custom and tradition. Western culture is part of something the presence and duration. It is something that has been distilled from the stillness or the noise of the world. But it's not the stillness or the noise itself. Struggling between fascinating and anxiety, doubtful about his complete submission to the cultural temptation, Zhang's questions his understanding with other reading experiences where the cultural locus was almost took on.

He Zhiwu's anxiety is not just restricted to the isolation he thinks he might face. The novel is less about finding the object than it is about the journey and what

articulates is a search for intangible things that everyone seeks or expects to find from life, and why they feel bitter disappointment, when they believe that their lives are worthless and invalid. At a more general level, similar observations and a similar sensation are deliberating about the change in Chinese society over the past several decades.

China is lost in the modernization and Westernization. The first person narrator painfully realizes that his world is depending on mistaken signs and haphazard habits while life located somewhere in another facet. It seems he is seeking Chinese future. He wants to meet the starting point of life. When he is able to reach this stage of transition, he happens to discover restlessly. Disconnection is an essential part of the relationship between controllers and controlled. In the novel *Change*, China with its history of silver mines and its presence of beautiful sunsets on purple mountains is a vivacious presence to be felt almost at every step.

The native Chinese culture and custom clashed with the emerging program of westernization during Cultural Revolution. As a consequence, the Chinese society moved into the phase of turmoil and instability. Yan exhibits the bitter fact that the wholesale utilization of westernized modernity in the Chinese community generates violence and bloodshed. Whatever pragmatic and practical western principles and values might be, if these norms are imposed on the culture of third world country, bloodshed and violence takes place. It deals with how and why the native and orthodox cultural environment of the modern China has categorically rendered the western values, viewpoints detrimental.

*Change* is a self-referential work that continually underscores itself. Technological determinism, which focuses on the material characteristics of the technology, represents the most common explanations of either the negative or

positive social effects of the technological advancement. This position presumes social effects occur regardless of the particular context within which people utilize the technology.

Thus, it can be concluded that China moves forward on the way to modernization in its own terms. Without relying on the borrowed modernity of the west, China succeeds in undergoing the modernist transformation. When principles of western modernity penetrate the fabric of Chinese society, violence and bloodshed crop up in Tiananmen Square and the partition of Korea. That is why China has developed its own original version of modernity.

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