



HOSAY: A PERFORMANCE IN DEFIANCE

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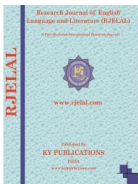
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Abstract

During the nineteenth century, Indians, indentured as plantation labourers on the British sugar estates in the Caribbean — Trinidad, Guyana, and Jamaica, transported with them many rituals and customs. Among these Muharram, the Shi'a Muslim's ritual observances commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hussain travelled to the New World, and eventually became "Hussay" (or "Hosay"). Hindus and Muslims and workers of different religious and ethnic groups became involved in the parades which assumed political overtones since it was viewed as an Indian day of defiance, and which led to riots in Trinidad, Guyana, and Suriname. Following the Bakhtinian literary mode of unification through subversion, this paper will look into the gathering of these unlikeliest of people in a celebration which encouraged the dialogue of free expression through artistic and creative participation and thus how it eventually defied colonialism and its effort at suppressing Hosay's unique voice by all workers, free and bonded.

Keywords: Bakhtin, Carnival, Caribbean, Colonial, Hosay, Muharram.



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In 680 CE, on the 10th day of the month of Muharram, Husayn ibn Ali (also known as Imam Hussain), a grandson of Islamic prophet Muhammad, was ambushed along with his family (including his infant son Ali) and companions on the way to Kufa because he refused to pledge allegiance to Yazid, the second son of Umayyad who took over the caliphate after the Prophet as the Commander of the Faith¹. Although the Abbasid Revolution ultimately overthrew the Umayyad caliphate's legitimacy as the ruler, the martyrdom of their leader still kept alive in the memory of the Muslim Shia community in the form of a mournful commemoration. Throughout the world, its memorialization varies according to regional practices and rituals. In the Indo-Shia communities of countries like Iran, Oman, Yemen and the other Arab Emirates the participants display a passionate

play of the events by drawing blood from the self-inflicted wounds on the surface of their body and thus symbolize the suffering of their leader.

The Caribbean observes the occasion with a distinct touch. They coalesce the traditional Shia practices (corresponding to the Iranian traditions) with the surrounding communities. In 1838 the first group of Indian indentured labourers arrived in Guyana and subsequently, in 1845 the farmworkers arrived in Trinidad and Jamaica. Thus, when the Indian Muslim indentured labourers populated the Caribbean plantations in the 1850s and the community began to take an active part in the society, they introduced their cultural practice of observing Muharram. This ultimately took a new name as "Hussay" or "Hosay" – an outcome of creolization of the name of the martyr Hussein. The

¹ <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hosayn-b-ali-i>

first occasion of Hosay might have occurred at the Philippine Estate near Couva (Thesis 41). But there was no official permission for the commemoration of Hosay until 1863 when Queen Victoria granted permission as long as there were Indian residents (Carmichael 274). After that other estates² picked up the ritual.

The labourer's long voyage across the black waters, the tormenting thoughts of their homeland, their former brotherhood and unknown apprehensions about their future in an alien space inevitably served to result in "the instant development of an indelible bond of ethnic kinship in which religion became secondary to ethnic emotions and home sickness" and thus during Hosay, the "Muslims were the main actors while the Hindus provided material, logistic and moral support and participated in tazia-making, dancing, gutka (stick) or sword-fighting and vending of sweets and drinks along the way and at the immersion grounds at the river banks of sea coasts" (Mansingh & Mansingh 28). Hereafter, Hosay generally came to be known as the 'East Indian Carnival' or the 'Coolie Carnival'. But this multi-ethnic solidarity surrounding festivity was a foreboding for the colonial representatives in the Caribbean. Situating the observance of Hosay in a historical framework and basing on these elements of multi-ethnicity this paper seeks to apply Bakhtinian concepts and tropes to understand how the performance of religious rites is "carnivalized" by celebrating unification in defiance of the European colonialism. Popular as a theorist of human interactions Bakhtin's concepts of 'Carnavalesque', 'Polyphony', 'Dialogism' permeates beyond novelistic criticism and a cultural text like Hosay is a suitable site to be analysed upon. First, it will be seen how the distinct observance of Hosay in the Caribbean is emulated into a model of Carnival; simultaneously the integrative elements of the observance will be contended with antagonistic discourses; finally, it will be seen how Hosay emerges as a defying cultural performance.

From the first day of Muharram, both Muslims and Hindus would venture jointly in the painstaking task of building the Tazia, a three-tier

structure resembling the tomb of the martyrs. Here, beginning from the materials of ritual a celebratory makeover is evident. Frank J. Korom in his study focuses on local expressions of the Muharram rituals in Trinidad and notes that "they have departed quite significantly from tradition in the scheme of color, shape, and external decor, making the tadjahs more colorful and glitzy, like the costumes and floats of Carnival" (126). Therefore, a carnivalesque aesthetic sensibility is visibly present in the creative aspect of Muharram. Moreover, the unofficial competition surrounding the tazia-making creates a space for interaction among families of different ethnicities. This invites to discard the fundamental refusal to any dialogue and creativity by the monologism of the colonial authority. When the assembly of the structure is finished, it was set up for public display where every community would pay their respect. Several tazias from the surrounding neighbourhood would join in an organized central procession and parade towards the immersion grounds. Here, what Ajai Mansingh and Laxmi Mansingh observe in their study of creolization of Hosay can be very aptly read in terms of the Bakhtinian concept of the carnivalesque:

The routes of individual and joint processions would be lined with onlookers, - both Indo- and Afro-Caribbean. While the Indians felt proud and elated by the audio-visual display of their culture in alien surroundings, the Afro-Jamaicans shared the sentiments of their colleagues in the non-European religious and cultural traditions with an aura of ecstatic Afro-drumming, animism and mysticism (30).

This certainly underscores "the structural characteristics of the carnival image" where "opposites come together, look at one another, are reflected in one another, know and understand one another" (Bakhtin 176). The Tazias become a mobile museum of integrative creativity.

To explore furthermore how the atmosphere of carnival produces performative defiance the Bakhtinian concept must be conjoined with the

² Tobago, Surinam etc.

framework of indentureship and colonialism. According to Bakhtin, one of the most important aspects of the carnival sense is:

The laws, prohibitions, and restrictions that determine the structure and order of ordinary, that is noncarnival, life are suspended during carnival: what is suspended first of all is hierarchical structure and all the forms of terror, reverence, piety, and etiquette connected with it —that is, everything resulting from socio-hierarchical inequality or any other form of inequality among people (including age). All distance between people is suspended, and a special carnival category goes into effect: free and familiar contact among people (122-23).

So, the Caribbean society otherwise highly stratified on the bases of colour, class, and religion that existed among the Indians, Chinese and the Afro-Creole people – breaks into a ‘free familiar contact’ on the special way the mass procession of Hosay is organised. Consequently, “all things that were once self-enclosed, disunified, distanced from one another by a noncarnivalistic hierarchical worldview are drawn into carnivalistic contacts and combinations” (Bakhtin 123). This flouting of laws and restrictions on the carnival square can be configured further into the structural elements of Hosay. Mohapatra builds an important argument regarding Hosay procession. Investigating in context of spatial immobility of the community generated by the indentured labour system, he underscores how the articulation of multiple identities in a performative manner became a ground for fear to the colonial authority - “through the Hosay procession, the community manipulated already existing spaces and places but gave them a new, albeit temporary, meaning” (186). The procession worked as an integrative element of the festival as the route physically linked the isolated plantation communities. Spatial immobility imposed on the immigrants was flouted by a carnivalesque discourse of freedom that laid claims to the prohibited public

space. This performance in defiance was reiterative action as every year the Tazias were paraded through main roads. Hosay, therefore, was a robust medium to articulate the labourer's ambition of unification. The coolie labourers could also speak of their collective grievances by representing themselves as a “fully fledged moral and cultural community” (Mohapatra 186) through the procession.

The observance of Hosay presents the Caribbean with a ceremony of incorporation, an intersecting ground to “shine through one another” (Bakhtin 162) - the indentured labourers, Blacks, Chinese, the Afro-Creoles. Remembering the martyrs, participants would parade the streets and mourn loudly. Although, in the wailing of Hai Hasan-Hai Hosain³ lies a sombre mood but the outward gives away to a mirthful festivity. The cacophony of Nagara, drum, Tassa and throwing scent on the audience, singing and dancing, all of these turns the mournful religious occasion into a carnivalesque atmosphere. Like the Hindu Ramleela, Hosay transforms into nothing less than a theatre on the street, a bodily enactment of history but in *their* time and place (Cudjoe 230). The procession continues toward the immersion ground which itself becomes a site for revelry. The landscape resembles a *mela* where activities take a festive turn:

The immersion ground had all the atmosphere of an Indian fairground. Vendors had their stalls on three sides of the ground while Tazias from different communities were parked or rested in the river bank. By rotation, drummers of each group would play the martial music for the sword - and stick-fighters to dance...a display of dazzling movement of arms, body and feet. Katghora dancers would then dance to the Tasa music and sing songs narrating the battle of Karbela. Often Indian wrestlers would compete in friendly matches (Mansingh & Mansingh 30-31).

³ “In some versions of the Karbala myth, Hussein's brother Hassan, is incorporated into the story and also dies in the same battle so that both brothers are rendered martyrs in the cause of

Islam” (Shankar, Guha. “Imagining India(Ns): Cultural Performances and Diaspora Politics in Jamaica.” 2003, pp. 112.)

In the final night of the celebration, the excitement of the crowd becomes unimaginable and it comes to an end with fierce drumming by the participants and ultimate sinking of the tazias in the river. Finally joining in a dinner, drinking and revelling with everyone the celebration erases all pain. So, the plaintive meaning embedded in the rites are reversed, the religiosity turns into an expression of unsanctified freedom. The contention between observance and the celebration of Muharram amalgamates into the emergence of free discourse. Analogous to a carnival Hosay brings together, unifies, weds, and combines the sacred with the profane; the solemn, thereby, turn into a frenzy for as the participants emphatically state, "The tadjahs must be taken out. The building of the tadjah is not enough" (Korom 193). In countries like Iran, Oman and Yemen this carnivalesque element of the mournful event is absent. While describing the artistic value of Hosay, Nunley and Bettelheim portray the religiosity and carnivalistic creativity in wonderful terms:

In degree of beauty, the aesthetics of Hosay equal the horror of the decapitation of Husain, the poisoning of his brother, and the massacre at Karbala; it is the wonder of that heroic sacrifice that translates into the beautiful. The vigor of this aesthetic has further enlivened the memories of its devoted followers so that shouts of Hosay! Hosay! Triumphantly echo in the realm where the imagined sacrifices of the brothers and those of all participants converge in the arts of Hosay (135).

But, beyond that "we can also see it as the inevitable convergence of religious, sectarian, political, and economic interests" (Korom 84). Later on, this aspect of secular convergence will be investigated in depth.

When an individual of a community exercises his right to engage in an activity that is different from his religious tradition, he takes himself beyond his ethnic affiliation. For the Caribbean people this willful participation, therefore, creates a dialectic of

subversion from their prescribed role as a member of a particular sect. The boundary of the other gets blurred. The matter of cultural communion overshadows and downplays the religious aspect, ultimately giving away to a hedonistic dimension. To dispense with the bohemian understanding of the carnival Bakhtin explains,

Carnival is past millennia's way of sensing the world as one great communal performance. This sense of the world, liberating one from fear, bringing the world maximally close to a person and bringing one person maximally close to another (everything is drawn into the zone of free familiar contact), with its joy at change and its joyful relativity, is opposed to that one-sided and gloomy official seriousness which is dogmatic and hostile to evolution and change, which seeks to absolutize a given condition of existence or a given social order. From precisely that sort of seriousness did the carnival sense of the world liberate man (160).

During Hosay the confluence of people from different communities to participate in the observance is precisely the exercise of this "communal performance" that brings "one person maximally close to another". The Bakhtinian "joyful relativity" of free participation in the Hosay is opposed by many influential and authority figures.

Now, an investigation into the antagonistic powers is needed to understand Hosay as cultural performance defiance. Korom notes that in 1991 a spokesperson of ASJA⁴ (Anjuman Sunnat-ul-Jamaat Association) spoke out objecting the event's festivity as Hosay "undermines the true nature and concepts and the moral, social and religious values of the Islamic religion" because it is "a bacchanalian event and the revelry and anti-Islamic practices connected with it are against the tenets and fundamental principles of Islam" (204). The Sunni leaders attempt to 'monologise' the occasion by imposing rigid religious doctrines. Bakhtin's discussion of carnival and the grotesque body in *Rabelais and His World* can be used in the investigation of the contradictions

⁴ <http://www.asjatrinidad.com/>

between the abstract religious rite and the mass aspiration of carnivalizing the Hosay - "The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity" (19). The material principles of carnival debase such abstractions, brings them back to the material, human level, and so counters "official" truth and structures and rites (Zepp 389). This totalitarian sense of unity basing on an orthodox religious attitude defies the carnivalesque image of Hosay. Yet, the bleak authoritarian dogma on the part of the Sunni Muslims of Indian descent fails to suppress and silence the 'polyphonic' voices of the Caribbean. For the member of other religious and ethnic community Hosay provides a platform where they willfully participate to exercise their fluid identities. At the site of the event, the individual self cannot accept any imposition of fixity upon them. Hosay, then as a carnival can be called "the apotheosis of unfinalizability" using Morson's and Emerson's observation of Bakhtin (89).

Returning to the concept of 'polyphony' by Bakhtin, it can surely be understood that the voices of the multiple communities speak for themselves and among themselves by free interaction between their distinct perspectives and even against the extreme authoritarian 'homophony' of religious rigour. The religious tries to dismantle their independent discourse by the enforcement of what Bakhtin calls the 'power to mean' (64). For the Sunni leaders carnivalizing the Muhharam was *bid'ah* or a sort of disgraceful innovation. But incorporating and co-opting various carnivalesque ethos into the event, the Caribbean community eradicate the plane of 'monologism' and create a discourse of 'dialogism', a Bakhtinian term that permeates all performances and cultural texts. When the Caribbean society emulates a carnivalistic model of Hosay by instantiating a dialogue, it destabilizes and subverts the traditional interpretation; rather the mixture of multiple dialogues inflects and imbues the observance with 'local' and 'personal' interpretations. Many Shia Muslims redefine the

meaning of the observance. Death, certainly, is not acknowledged by anyone having an essence of happiness. But, as Sahir Ali⁵ interprets the event as contributory to the protection of Islam from the Yazidis: "He died to protect Islam and his death should be marked both by sorrow and happiness...So the atmosphere of elation which is generated by those Muslims who participate in the Hosain festival is definitely justifiable" (qtd. in Thaiss 49). Tragic commemorative interpretation is thus redefined to accommodate the inclusion of the 'other' communities. The multiple perspectives of Hosay as a carnival nonetheless "challenges God, authority, and social law; insofar as it is dialogical, it is rebellious" (Kristeva 79). Hosay rightly becomes a performance of the Bakhtinian 'dialogism'. Single consciousness is thereby replaced by multiple consciousnesses which leads to the emergence of a lived heterogeneous collective body. For Bakhtin,

...consciousness never gravitates toward itself but is always found in intense relationship with another consciousness. Every experience, every thought of a character is internally dialogic, adorned with polemic, filled with struggle, or is on the contrary open to inspiration from outside itself—but it is not in any case concentrated simply on its own object; it is accompanied by a continual sideways glance at another person (32).

This 'polyphony' directly refers to the polyethnic citizenry. Describing Trinidad during Hosay what Harndoo Emamali says in the documentary film *Hosay Trinidad* is pertinent to the core:

Those who are directly connected with building our taziahs...will not make it a carnivaish or bacchanalish affair because we know the significance of it, and we know the reason for doing it, right? ... In Trinidad, especially, people will get frenzied the moment you start beating tassa drumming. And so they start dancing right away and whatnot. And so you really cannot contain

⁵ Ali, Shair (1990) 'Hosay: Symbols of Martyrdom', in Trinidad Guardian, 17 July 1990.

them, you cannot prevent them. The police is helpless to prevent anyone from dancing, or jumping, or drinking. You couldn't very well go and tell people, "Don't drink beer tonight," or to have them lock up their liquor shops and whatnot and so. No, it would be impossible to do something like that because we live in a cosmopolitan population! This is not an Islamic state. We are not only Indians, you see. This is a small United Nations. Trinidad is likened to a small United Nations (Bishop & Korom "Hosay Trinidad").

Hosay is, therefore, unquestionably religious and reverent on the esoteric level but it also is a responding national element from the cultural perspective.

Apart from the edict (fatwa) by the religious authority what posed challenges to the celebration of Hosay was the British colonial authority. Hosay contains elements of transculturalism. As the representative of working-class people in an alien land survival was an imminent question. Inevitably the inviting carnivalesque nature of Hosay proved to be a cultural strategy of survival in a hostile environment (Shuayb). Moreover, the Islamic religious story itself stood parallel as a democratic historical significance for the other indentured labourers because the martyrdom of Imam Hussain symbolised a sense of suffering that they too had to undergo as a result of the colonial subjugation. But, for the colonial administrators this inclusion of members from different ethnic and religious identity, gathering in a single whole had robust hostile associations. In the colonial discourse, this performative observance represented only images of chaos and disorder. To the authority, the howling cry of the martyr's name was translated as sloganeering disruptive of peace and order. The procession which culminated different ethnicities into a fraternity on the streets converted into a space of riot for the colonial administrators. Is that simply incomprehension of the performative and carnivalesque aspect of the observance on the part of the colonial administration? Or is there any real apprehension of hazard for the empire in the Caribbean space?

News of actual riots during Hosay celebration cannot be dismissed totally but they were infrequent. During the 1880s the colonial administration started to lengthen working hours and at the same time reduce wage for the workers; inevitably they feared riots of the labourers. Moreover, as "Colonial government authorities, whether in India or the Caribbean, also retained for themselves the right to demarcate boundaries between 'us' and 'them'" (Thaiss 42). Breton investigates this colonial superimposition of bifurcative order: "The Hamilton Report on the 1881 Carnival riots had made the point that Hosein should also be regulated to prevent it from developing into a disorderly affair like Canboulay. Hamilton thought that it would be a grievance if any privilege, such as the right to carry torches on a public street, was given to the Indians but withheld from the Creoles" (184).

This sort of divide-and-rule policy was further extended in the ordinance of 1884. The Governor Keates viewed Hosay as a festival of debauchery where Hindus and Creoles turned "an orderly meeting of Muhammadans for a religious purpose" into a "mob of excited and wildly noisy and quarrelsome rowdies" engaging in the decadent lifestyle - using opium, smoking ganja and drinking (Comins 42). It must be noted that "nervousness over moral contamination masks a more real fear" (Shankar123) that contributed opportunities to interact and communicate among Indian labourer populations and the 'others'. The 1884 regulation mandated by the authority tried to confine this dramatic display of emotional affiliation in the form of processions only to the plantation areas, preventing Indians from celebrating Hosay at the town of San Fernando, a major location. This ordinance also prohibited all 'others'. The full text of the decree was published in the *San Fernando Gazette* on August 23, 1884 (Korom 114). The section 6 of the *Ordinance 9* reads as follows: "No other than an immigrant or the descendants of immigrants shall take part in any procession or in any way interfere with such processions" (Korom 114). The intention is not hard to notice. It was clearly aimed at insulating the Muslims, Hindus, and Afro-Creoles from each other. By segregating multiple

communities into fragmented groups, the colonial authority tried to curb the number of participants in the observance. This would in effect become a major hindrance in the movements of Tazias. All these authoritarian machinations emphasized on maintaining social order than giving importance on religious observance was bound to provoke a feeling of unjust imposition in all communities. The confrontation was inevitable whether the elements were Indians or Afro-Creole. But that defiance erupting out of their displeasure of suppressive governmental actions turned into a resultant pity. On the evening of October 30, 1884 when police opened fire on the crowds participating the Hosay, a major catastrophe took place. Twenty-two Indian labourers were shot to death and more than 100 were injured; when the dead were counted and the injuries were calculated, a startling statistic emerged: 17 of those killed were Hindus and 5 Muslims, while 76 of the injured were Hindus, with 19 Muslims and 1 Christian (Mohapatra 182). The Hindu majority is certainly a reason for such statistics but it also refers to their 'pantheistic' religious nature. It underscores the integrative intensity of Hosay what was supposed to be a minority festival. This incident epitomizes how the colonial authority invaded the community space of the Caribbean and barred from any sort unification and refused the autonomy of the 'other' voices, suppressing 'polyphony' by imposing 'law and order'.

Sir Henry W. Norman, the Governor of Jamaica equated the celebration of Hosay with the Indian's increasing power⁶. Norman himself explained: "After a residence of some time in Trinidad the Coolie not only becomes a man of a more independent spirit than he was when in India, but according to some reliable evidence, he often becomes somewhat overbearing...There can be no doubt that the Coolies feel their power, or rather, I should say, have an exaggerated idea of that power" (qtd. In Kale 85). Moreover, as "a race crafty and

intelligent" (Singh 14) threatened to undo the progress of oppression made with the Africans. The Indians were evidently trying to build an identity for themselves by breaking out of their confined role as mere labourers. The alienness in a new world along with their constant exploitation resulted in the fear of the 'other' among the labourers. But gathering in defiance demonstrates the underlying struggle for independence from the 'other consciousness' i.e. the colonial master. This consciousness represents a case of 'deautomatization' from the forced role of the labourer as 'inhuman' resources for the coloniser to harness. By deconstructing a traditional cultural practice and flourishing it into a platform for hybridity where not only the Muslim community but also the Hindu majority and Afro-Creoles could engage freely, the Indians have constituted a discourse of dissent. Familiarization became the first step of this discourse-making process for the labourers as Hosay facilitated "the destruction of epic and tragic distance" between the multiple ethnicities and "the transfer of all represented material to a zone of familiar contact" (Bakhtin 124). Now, this course of familiarization among themselves created an unfamiliar expression for the colonial authority. What was simply to be a religious observance among the minority took the shape of a deviant cultural activity. Inevitably, for the colonial authority, the frenzy of the carnival revelry embodied a Bakhtinian form of grotesque devoid of any order. Thus, Hosay became elemental in subverting and turning the familiar into strange for the empire. Although it parallels⁷ Shklovsky's notion of *ostranenie*, this has another important structural resemblance to Bhaba's Third Space: "though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (37). Therefore, the process of negotiations among the unfixed, polysemic and multivocal posit Hosay as a microcosm of the

⁶ See "Account by Lieutenant H.W. Norman, Second Assistant Adjutant-General of The Army," found in George Forrest, A History of the Indian Mutiny, 1857-58: Reviewed and Illustrated From Original Documents:

With Maps, Plans, and Portraits. (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2006).

⁷ see McBride, William Thomas. "Bakhtin's Marxist Formalism." *International Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1991, pp. 23-30., doi:10.5840/intstudphil19912312.

'politics of cultural struggle' (Williams 3). Along with that the growing self-confidence of the Indians in the years leading up to 1884 warned the colonial authorities of the necessity of restrictive measures to guard the enterprise. Lest there emerges another Haiti, risk-management became a necessity for the colonial administration. Kale aptly concludes from Norman's remark that in developing Hosay as a carnival of incorporation, Indian workers had become "overbearing," unpredictable, and unmanageable in the eyes of the colonial authority (85-86). Hence to battle the unfamiliar cultural expression of Hosay, the colonial authority deliberately attacked the labourer's 'freedom'. Thus, opening fire on the crowd not only was an attempt to regulate the free discourse but also an attempt to destroy the Indian immigrants' aspiration for an identity.

Bakhtinian carnival is often criticized for its temporary nature and is characterized as a safety-valve for maintaining balance. For however momentarily the link establishes, it undoubtedly contributes to the defiance. Hosay indeed responds to the Caribbean and the global crisis: it challenges the common assumptions, looks at the familiar in a different light and finally crosses the cultural boundaries (Ahmed 3). In spite of prohibitive acts, legislations and state perpetrated violence against it, the festival survived in many places - the immortality of the collective body has to be acknowledged; the polyglot environment must persist. Noting the space of the Mexican dance-hall in South Texas José Limón very aptly puts that, "collective desire is not articulated against a repressive domination form beyond the dance hall. Rather, the adversarial culture is present within the dancehall; the site of contestation is at the point of dance production" (164). Thus, within the very structural elements of Hosay lies the power to plot rebellion. Although the celebration had to undergo a shift to Muslim dominated area like St. James area, west of Port of Spain, Credo, Vere, Jamaica after the 1884 massacre, it remains a major national cultural festival. The persistence of the organizers and patrons has kept the festival open. In Trinidad and Tobago Shia communities observe the festival with two major parades of colourful Tazias accompanied

with prayers and Tassa, sometimes local rhythms of calypso, soca and chutney music (Shuayb). As Korom sees it, Hosay is a 'double performance': esoteric, sacred, and ethnic on the inside, while exoteric, profane, and national on the outside. However, Hosay has played a decisive part in the cultural evolution of the Caribbean society. From Hosay festival elements like the musical instrument (steel pan), the skilful ornamentations transferred to the creative aesthetics of the Carnival (Taylor 368). Preserving its multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-cultural carnivalesque performance Hosay now draws thousands of tourists as Bakhtin vouches this carnival sense of the world possesses "a mighty life-creating and transforming power, an indestructible vitality" (107). Hosay deconstructs the local to reach a global paradigm; the local consciousness now approaches to transnational consciousness. What is clear is that the keystone of the Caribbean culture is the celebration of the difference and Hosay is just another vehicle to meet, to participate, to melt, to disintegrate, to borrow and combine the differences.

As multivocality and negotiability is inscribed at the heart of the celebration, the matter of inauthenticity and by extension of ownership upon which both the antagonists (the Sunni leaders and the Colonial authority) pled their cases for an 'uncarnivalized' Hosay to serve their purposes, ultimately became futile as the integrative process had already started and reached to such an intensity and extent that what lay ahead was an unending cycle of the same defiance if confronted.

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