Civil Society in Indian Cultures

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Introduction

India is certainly one of the most important social experiments in the world today. It is testing out whether a highly diverse people, increasingly aware of it freedom, can manage to live, and indeed to thrive, together.

At the present time this question is even more specific, for the world is completing a long rationalist cycle in which the potentialities for strong centralism have been implemented not only practically, but theoretically. The result has been the development of crushing totalitarian ideologies, so onesided and oppressive that they toppled either from external power (Fascism) or internal weakness (communism) within decades of their origin.

India then becomes a testing ground for the other major alternative approach which has been proposed for our times, namely a social dynamic which comes not from the top down, but from the bottom up; and not from the center to the periphery, but from the periphery to the center.

The chapters of this work analyze this both as problem and challenge, as possibility and hope. In the end the verdict is still out, but the reader can understand the issues much more clearly and draw upon the Indian -- especially the Bengali -- experience.

Part I concerns the principles of civil society and includes in Chapter III by G. Pattery the related proposal of swadeshi and sarvodaya by M. Gandhi which are not far from the notions of subsidiarity and solidarity in the modern Catholic social documents now central to the contemporary political theory of the European Union.

Chapter I by K. Bagchi, "Civil Society and Reason, Culture and Dissent," begins the work with considerable hesitation regarding civil society. He understands it more in an ideological sense as a new creation of abstract reasoning which would not allow for personal freedom. This concern regarding the depersonalizing effects of reason is shared broadly today. But the renewal of attention to civil society would seem to reflect the effort to reground social life in the concrete groupings of people as they face existential challenges. In this light Professor Bagchi joins the call for an expansion of the notion of reason by addition of further forms of awareness. This paper then is rightly placed first as it presents a critique of the notion of civil society and begins to point to way to elaborate the notion and the practice in a more adequate manner. The remainder of the work will build on this foundation.

Chapter II by Mrinal K. Dasgupta, "Pluralism vis-a-vis Cultural Conflict: an Eco-Sociological Analysis of the Future of Man," lays the foundations in biology and its lessons regarding evolution and its dynamics. This work shows how diversity is necessary and is generated from within, even as we develop common dimensions. From this he suggests the principles of such higher social unities as can constitute civil society within the Indian cultural traditions.

Chapter III by George Pattery, "Pluralist Society: A Gandhian Perspective," lays out a rich theory of civil society in the mind of Gandhi that is surprisingly contemporary. By giving priority to the village life of India Gandhi was able to conceive of small units extending indefinitely on a horizontal level in such manner that not only was there not a strong vertical line of power from above, but even horizontally there need not be a strong center controlling all the rest. Hence freedom or swaraj means on the social level rather self-reliance and self-sufficiency (swadeshi) for the welfare of all (sarvodaya). (It is indeed the theory of the internet.) In addition this chapter develops the significance of the body and of suffering in the thought and life of Gandhi and in social renewal.

Part II moves from principles to the vision of the ancient schools of Buddhism and Jainism to the horses and fears of Rabindranath Tagore.

Chapter IV by S.K. Pathak, "Models of Civic Awareness in Ancient India," looks back into the roots of Indian culture for the materials for such a construction. Especially, he reviews the pre-Buddhist and Vedic roots followed by the Buddhist, Jain and Tantric.

Chapter V by Sibnarayan Ray, "Pluralism and Cultural Conflict: Rabindranath Tagore," begins with Tagore very high poetic vision which he expressed with great and inspiring beauty. This was the picture of a peaceful world to which the Indian experience would make a decisively constructive contribution. The chapter notes, however, that in the last ten years of his life the looming conflicts within Indian and throughout the world turned Tagore's bright hope into dark foreboding. Chapter VI by Shyamal Sarkar, "Rabindranath Tagore's Concept of Social Integration," continues the themes of Chapter V so that the two constitute a real pair.

Part III turns to political practice of modern India during both the colonial and the post-Independence periods. Here the tendency toward centrism belies earlier traditions, but is being rapidly transformed in this post-cold war era.

Chapter VII by Anupam Gupta, "Civil Society and Basic Needs in the Public Sector: Economics in India," takes a new turn. Where the previous chapters had stated the problem and the theory, this and the following chapters look more to concrete realizations. They note in particular that India has been strongly centralized, not only by the colonial powers for the purpose of ruling but by the post-Independence power as well. Thus while there are local groupings these are held close by pervasive political powers so that they reflect not the varied local realities of their members, but national strategic goals and concerns.

Chapter VIII by Sanjeeb Muirerjee, "Civil Society and Western Societies: Tradition, Modernity and Communism," is a history of modern Bengali political movements. It shows the effort to achieve a politics that would have room for all as being less than successful. This is not only because of the classical stratification of the society, but because of the compromise of the socialist party which, though proposing the people as the legitimate source of power, in fact manipulates them in a way coherent with the centralist character of the nation.

Chapter IX by Dikshit Sinha, "Pluralism and Cultural Conflict in India," is concerned with the horizontal and vertical organization of Indian social life. In this context the importance of civil society emerges for assuring the bond between communities. In this regard the Pancheat system of old would appear to possess important lessons for contemporary life.

Gandhi and the Problem of Modernity: A Point of Departure

Asha Mukherjee

The paper consists of two parts. The first part deals with the problem of modernity arising out of the individualism and places the problem in the historical, cultural sociological and political perspective in the West as well as in the East. The affirmation of individuality has gone so far that a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena is missing. Reason has undermined moral coherence, and ethical ambiguity is an intrinsic feature of the scientific method. Religion that gives sanctions to morality is reduced to a relativization of norms. Different projects of modernity are caught in a series of self-contradictions. Gradually, in the 20th century polarization developed between transplanted modernity and defensive tradition. Gandhi[1] was one of the very few who formulated a critique of modernity. Most Indians began subscribing blindly to the political and industrial hardware of modernity.

The second part of the paper deals with the Gandhian point of departure where the contributions made by Gandhi are discussed with a view to the problems raised in the first part by emphasizing the idea of cooperative society which was supposed to be the basis of Indian psyche. An individual is understood basically in its relatedness with the other. He also argued for ethical universality and tried to align both means and ends.

Is it possible to devise a means for bypassing the negativities of modernism? The contention is that "Hind Swaraj still provides a point of departure" and we need to creatively capture and apply its spirit in the prevailing situation. In *Hind Swaraj*[2] Gandhi discusses the issues of freedom and violence in a wider and deeper understanding of the individual, society and the significance of human life. It emphasizes the primary human requirements of the "responsible society" and enables us to take stock of the present and innovate for the future. At the end some guidelines are suggested to translate Gandhi into practice so as to achieve social transformation. An attempt is made to argue that the problem of modernity centers around the individualism of the West and *Hind Swaraj* suggested as an alternative point of departure. Its aim is not to arrive at what Gandhi would have said were he alive today, but creatively to capture and apply the spirit of his endeavor in the prevailing situation. Independent India did not pay much attention to Gandhi and suspended like Trishanku, midway between heaven and earth, he has been debarred from being a role model since he is considered as a supernatural human being. This paper aims at suggesting an alternative to solve the problems arising out of negativities of modernity.

Individualism as a Problem for Modernity

The problem of modernity has historical, cultural, sociological and political perspective in the West as well as in the East. Modernity has spread beyond its geographical and civilizational area of origin, primarily due to its military and economic dimensions. But modernity both solves and creates muddy cultural waters that follow in the wake of the modernizing ship often dismay the third world modernists. Scientific, technological and economic progress does not come without some cultural baggage, the latter not as welcome as the former. Asians are beginning to question

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[1] Mohandas Karam Chang Gandhi, *Panchayati Raj*, compiled by R.K. Prabhu (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1989).
[2] *Hind Swaraj* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Trust, 1989).

how much of the entire package, bright or dark, is suitable for absorption, and how much of it can be resisted. The seed of modernity were first sown in India through foreign imposition.

Historically, the Muslim invasion did not disturb the group ethos of Hindus even though syncretic experiments in the field of art, music, architecture and religion continued. But the European conquest did effect Indians in all aspects of life and they were made to understand that theirs was an inferior civilization. This understanding was derived from modern humanist Europe, which was brought into a sharp confrontation with the Hindus. The response was a mixture of rejection, accommodation and imitation. The affirmation of individuality has gone so far that a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena is missing. Actions are not seen in their total perspective and the consequences are not initially foreseeable. Reason has undermined moral coherence, and ethical ambiguity is an intrinsic feature of the scientific method. Religion that gives sanctions to morality if reduced to a relativization of norms. Different projects of modernity are caught in a series of self-contradictions. Gradually, in the 20th century a polarization developed between transplanted modernity and defensive tradition. Gandhi was one of the very few who formulated a critique of modernity, although it was not academic. Most Indians began subscribing blindly to the political and industrial hardware of modernity, and struggled with an understanding schizophrenically split between Indian philosophic ideas and Western anthropocentrism. Removing Indian poverty was one of the central concerns of national movements, but Gandhi did not see economic problems overtaking the Indian dharmic or normative framework. He blurred the lines between knowledge and behavior not by force, but by "a total change of being which is brought about by a long deep process of unselfing." If we contemplate the developments in the economic and socio-political sphere in last century and a half, Gandhism appears almost irrelevant and the Nehruvian socialistic model has reached an impasse. Is it then possible to devise a means of bypassing the negativities of modernism? The contention is that "Hind Swaraj still provides a point of departure" and we need creatively to capture and apply its spirit in the prevailing situation. It emphasizes the primary human requirements of a responsible society and enables us to take stock of the present and innovate for the future, on the assumption that socio-political change is an ever present possibility.

India, for millennia has survived as a group society where all important decisions were taken by consensus, even during the waves of outsiders. Only when the imperial rule was introduced was the principle of individualism introduced into Indian society. The notion of "one man, one vote" has no history in Indian society, but the republican traditions of group society was pervasive. Groups bargain, cooperate and compete among themselves for political and economic power. The theory of human rights as an unrelated individual, without social relatedness, is based on an undefinable entity, almost a nonperson. Classes and kinds of people welcomed modernization as industrialization, science and technology. But tension persisted between modern individualist norms and the traditional group character of Indian society. The other element which the Indian political system could not absorb is that of "opposition" and "the right to disagree." The Indian psyche has different sociological and survival techniques, which either politely consents or angrily dissents; it is hyper sensitive to loss of "status." In Asian societies in general, gentlemen do not openly disagree. Open disagreement, if not expressive of poor taste, may just be interpreted as a bargaining chip, as a gambit for opening negotiations, which will lead to eventual agreement.

These differences and the process of change in the traditional Indian society to liberal democratic institutions created utter confusion of principles and standards. There is no clear cut value or set norms, which could provide a coherent decision making apart from those of bare survival. The fractured policies gave rise to violence and opportunism. Only Gandhi was

perceptive enough to take the warnings of the Western critics of modernization seriously, and adopt a principled position against it. For this he was regarded as both conservative and progressive. Awareness of larger civilizational interest at work among peoples, particularly in relation to conflict, have begun to catch attention of such political theories as Samuel Huntington,[3] etc.

But the crux of the problem lies in interpreting "the primary human requirements," "responsible society," the "possibility of socio-political change," nonviolence, etc. For example, it would not be out of order to revive the debate about the meaning of a nonviolent society in the modern world. True persuasion and civility could be effective ways of dealing with some problems of violence but this has very limited scope. Terrorism, militaristic attitudes, political violence perhaps cannot be stopped by persuasion unless they themselves have an inner sense of individual and social responsibility. Hence, the basic question remains unanswered as to how to achieve a non-violent society? On the other hand, if we reinterpret them in the present changed context we will see that they are so radically different from Gandhi's perception of them that it is almost impossible to see as how they will provide an alternative point of departure. But this does not restrain one from appreciating the sincere effort to work out a vision of social life utilizinig the best of modernity and the Indian traditions.

Gandhi's contributions in this regard can be seen as a point of departure towards the problems raised by emphasizing ethical universality; that he wanted to align both means and ends through truth and nonviolence. Aurobindo's[4] contemporary also tried to absorb modernity in his evolutionary theory. He did not condemn it but placed it in a map of multiple or "plural views of reality," knowledge systems and values. Aurobindo's vision was spiritual and cultural, where as Gandhi's was moral and socio-political. Social morality was the main concern of Gandhi, but not of Aurobindo who was more concerned with the spiritual future of human kind.

A Gandhian Response

Today it is only Gandhi to whom one can turn as a starting point for the ethical discussion. *Hind Swaraj* still provides a point of departure as it emphasizes the primary human requirements of responsible society, enables us to take stock of the present and to innovate future, on the assumption that socio-political change is an ever-present possibility. Gandhi has presented a critique of modern civilization in *Hind Swaraj* he discusses the issues of freedom and violence in a wider and deeper understanding of the individual, society and the significance of human life. This may be regarded as a Gandhian manifesto, which may not be practicable in its particular prescriptions, yet provides a point of departure for review and reformulation. In John Middleton Murray's words it is "the greatest book that has been written in modern times." The book is useful in providing a perspective on certain self-enclosing structures in modern society and on the unexamined assumptions which inform the self-contradictory logic of modernity's thrust towards greater control and manipulation of the individual under cover of enlarging the space of individual choice. *Hind Swaraj* also offers the reader an alternate vision of human dignity and freedom. It suggested nonviolent weapons for struggle, along with an ideal for community life.

Gandhi concentrated on truth, morality and nonviolence to relate across religions and to extend religion through moral elements into social service and political activity. Truth for him is a fundamental reality, which has dimensions beyond the merely rational to the spiritual or divine.

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[3] Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (Pondicherry: S.A.A., 1982).
[4] Samuel Huntington, "Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72.3 (1993).

It is being of the world and it is accessible to experience. The two senses of truth: one for the sadhus who after withdrawal for self-development return to society as religious teachers, and the other for the majority who remain within the social nexus and are governed by the usual dharma. Gandhi did not totally reject this dichotomy, but reaffirmed the intrinsic relation between religion and social reform. In the Indian context, he extended dharma to politics. For him God is truth was not enough, but truth is God. *Sat* is reality or God and is the substantive truth, but *satya* as truth can be brought closer to concepts of truthfulness and ethical behavior in general – in speech, thought and action. Here truth is the guideline for the conduct of life. The various modes of trhthfulness ultimately resolve into or stem from *ahimsa* or noninjury in thought, word and deed. This is the ethical implication of the vedantic ideal of identification with all that exists. Gandhi believed there is a moral situational truth in human exchanges perceived through a mix of reason and intuition or moral insight, which in principle is a subject of common, though conditional perception. A mere battle of right against wrong, and moral dilemmas remain conflictual, whereas a common striving for, or perception of truth, leads to harmony. The basis for this is Vyasa's principle of love by which one can arrive at a statement in which the fundamental interests of all parties are protected and none is injurious to the other. (Gandhi himself, however, could not arrive at statement in which the fundamental interests of all parties were protected after India's independence, and as a result had to withdraw from active politics.)

In the Kantian framework the slightest flavor of self-interest introduces radical evil, but in Indian philosophical environment it is not so. Rather, it allows for a graduated approach to truth. Swadharma does not deny the oneness or relatedness of all selves. By religion Gandhi meant the pursuit of all-encompassing truth and morality. Essentially politics is about the good society and this is the responsibility of both civic society and the individual.

How to translate *Hind Swaraj* into practice? In answering one can describe the role of NGOs who help in bringing about a transformation. Some of the steps to start with, it is suggested, are: Gandhi's "bread labor" which could be transmuted into compulsory national service of constructive social work; Panchayats could be provided the status of autonomous republics; consumption could be controlled; economics could be enriched by ethics; privatization would help in regaining mutual trust and make space for a new kind of confidence; and a dynamic education system could induce morality and responsibility, etc. There are also problems in Gandhism which need to be reinterpreted. The communal problem and the problem of the corruption of human nature due to power. It would be interesting to draw upon the ideas of Tagore,[5] which relate very meaningfully to these issues.

Conclusion

Today Indians stand at the intersection of four of the most important debates facing the world at the beginning of the new millennium: bread-versus-freedom, centralization-versus federalism, pluralism versus fundamentalism and globalization versus self-reliance. In this context Gandhi's vision of India was like all great thinkers he managed to distill all their qualities and yet transcend their contradictions. But the principles he stood for – *Satya, Ahimsa* and non-violence – and the way in which he asserted them are easier to admire than to follow.

His truth emerged from his conviction that meaning was not only what was accurate, but also what was just and therefore right. Truth cannot be obtained by "untruthful" or unjust means, which included inflicting violence upon one's opponent. Nonviolence was the way to vindicate the truth

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[5] Rabindranath Tagore, *Religion of Man* (New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers India, 1993).

by the infliction of suffering not on the opponent, but on oneself. It was essential to accept punishment willingly in order to demonstrate the strength of one's convictions. The power of nonviolence rests in being able to say, "to show you that you are wrong, I punish myself." This may sound very difficult to follow in practice. It only shows that Gandhism has its limitations, which have been exposed over the years since 1947, but this is not to deny in the least the greatness of his vision and thought. In fact, India after independence can be regarded post-Gandhian India. It paid lip service too much to its Gandhian patrimony, while striking out in directions of which Gandhi could not have approved. But its central challenges remained the ones Gandhi identified: to develop the capacity to meet the nation's basic needs, to promote among Indians the integrity and commitment he labelled "truth." Perhaps the main reason for the failures have been that people very often give different interpretations to his basic principles so that the purity of his vision is lost and thus may not lead to the desired results.

Gandhi's model was optimistically grounded in man's moral nature. But morality and conscience have a propensity to become subversive to authority: political, social or religious. The lawlessness present in the Indian situation: bandhs, satyagrahas, dharnas, student indiscipline, all can trace their origin to forms of Gandhian protest. The society and government of modern India is by no means organized according to the principles of *Hind Swaraj* within which it should have been possible to conduct a moral dialogue. These protest movements hardly pas the tests of responsible citizen action as conceived by Mahatma. Gandhism rests on the assumption that man by nature is moral and left to himself will always know what is good, and that good once perceived by collective wisdom cannot be wrong. Village society was to guarantee human dignity for all and retain its group solidarity as the foundation which guarantees collective morality and achieves the so-called "good" for all. The success or failure of Gandhi's experiment depends on the moral quality of the leaders, on a consensus for social and communal life, and on a high level of wisdom as the basis of judgement. In the present drastically changed scenario of decline in moral values and corruption the applicability of this theory needs to be worked out.

Part I
Principles for Civil Society in Indian Thought

Chapter I
Civil Society and Reason, Culture and Dissent

K. Bagchi

This paper begins with a particular rationalist theory in order to bring out how individuality cannot be protected in an abstract rationalist system. This criticism will then be broadened to point out that because abstract rational considerations do not take note of the concrete contexts in which alone the liberty, way of life and culture of an individual or group of individuals make sense, individuals or minority groups have today come to be endangered in the overarching structure of society. I then refer, very briefly, to the rational considerations which are intended to preserve the status quo of civil society. These cliches have been 'consensus', 'balance of the claims of individuals or groups and society,' 'rational spirit in which the conflict between individuals or groups and society may be settled,' and so on. All are rooted in reason as paradigm. It would be wholesome if civil society and its advocates eschewed the concept of monolithic reason which permeates their thinking in their dealings with individuals and be open to reasonable alternatives. Thinking in terms of a fixed structure, such as civil society, or of definitional terms, as when man is defined as a rational being, or of resolving disputes turns its back at the continual, dialectic of human development. This is not to call for 'alternative' reason, but, given the dynamics of human development, no solution can be found for the conflict between society and individuals or groups in terms of the status quo. This paper proposes rather a dynamic, open-ended, contextual, historical and specific reason.

Rationalist Theory

This theory is associated with the name of the philosopher Leibniz. In contrast to Spinoza's notion of substance -- a 'lion's den to which all footprints go but none return, as Hegel described -- Leibniz's 'Monads' were real, indivisible and individual units. His attempt was to see how far, within the over-arching concept of 'reason' which had governed Rationalist thinking, a place could be found for individuals, i.e., 'monads'. Each monad for Leibniz is oriented to the same world; yet this does not impair its individuality, as each monad represents the universe from its point of view. Monads are distinguished from the point of view of the 'clarity' and 'distinctness of their representations,' these being the criteria of the validity of a monad's representation. Monads could be arranged in a graded series from the point of view of the degree of their clarity and distinctness.

The question is Leibnitz's success or failure in according reality to individual monads within the overarching framework of rationalism; do they retain their distinctness? Have they ultimately, i.e., from the point of view of the maximally conceived degree of the clarity and the distinctness of their representations, any place in his system of individual spiritual atoms. Leibniz thought that he was departing from the Cartesian-Spinozistic thinking according to which reason was the determining criterion of reality, for such abstract reason takes away the individuality of the real spiritual units, i.e., 'monads'. For Leibniz, the real is the individual as constituted by spirituality which has no materiality in it. Though not all forms of spiritualism eschew the reality of individuals, Leibniz does. This becomes manifest when he says that at the head of the graded series of monads stands God, the Monad of Monads, who has no materiality but is 'pure act', i.e., pure spirituality. Now, if individuality is spirituality, and if God is pure spirit -- the only spirit -- then

other Monads lower in the grade series are not pure spirit, and therefore are not individuals, Leibniz's argument is then: What is individual must be spiritual, and what is spiritual must have absolutely clear and distinct representations; so God, the Monad of monads whose representations are absolutely clear is the only individual.

We are not, of course, interested in a Leibnizian exegesis. Engaged as we are in the question of the status of individuals or individual groups in a civil society, we find Leibniz interesting in so far as, at least initially, he attempted to accord a place to the individual spirit in the system.

Let us broaden our horizon to ask to what extent, if any, can a civil society make room for conflicts that may arise when a group within the society asserts itself against the societal structure? The question becomes crucial when civil society claims to model itself upon reason, and its rationalist supporters advise the conflicting group that the rational course for it would be to settle the conflict within the societal structure which, as rational, has to be preserved.

Locke is a representative of the advocates of civil society, conceived as a unity in rational terms. He holds that all men are naturally[1] in a state of perfect freedom to order their actions and dispose of their possessions and persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature.[2] This state has a law of nature

to govern it, which obliges everyone; and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind…that, all being equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions. For men, being all the workmanship of one omnipotent and infinitely wise maker sharing in one community of nature, there cannot be supposed any such subordination among us, that may authorize us to destroy one another….Everyone, as he is bound to preserve himself, so, by like reason, when his own preservation comes not in completion ought he to preserve the rest of mankind.[3]

On analysis of Locke's view, we derive the following points:

(1) Reason which is the law of the state of nature teaches that all mankind are equal.
(2) Men share in a community of nature.
(3) Everyone wants to preserve himself and so, 'by like reason', everyone ought to preserve the rest of mankind.

This is a strange admixture of philosophical theory and prescription. The philosophical theory of man sharing 'a community nature,' is made the ground of the prescription that everyone ought to preserve everyone else. The twin doctrine of 'like reason' and 'community of nature' is the ground of the prescription. Here in Locke lies the germ of that concept of regimented reason which has been extolled by the advocates of civil society whenever there has been the finest echo of dissent. It is conveniently forgotten that the dissenter may not share a 'like reason' or that his reason is 'unlike' the reason that maintains the status quo.

Besides, while it is undoubtedly a wholesome prescription that all humankind be treated as equal, such prescription does not follow from a metaphysical doctrine that men share a 'community of nature' as it can be made even without the support of that doctrine, or the metaphysics doctrine

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[1] John Locke, "An Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent and End of Civil Government" in Man and the State: the Political Philosophers, ed. Commins and Linscott (New York: Random House, 1947), p. 59.
[2] Ibid., p. 59.
[3] Ibid., p. 60.

itself is questionable. It derives all its strength from the concept of a 'monolithic reason'; but today it is no longer possible to sustain such a concept. With the founding of different logical systems, the advance of social science, the anthropological discoveries of primitive communities each having its distinctive pattern of thinking, the concept of monolithic reason has been abandoned. There can be no intertranslatibility, to use the Quinean terms, of different reasons.

A more adequate philosophy for these matters is that of John Stuart Mill rather than Locke. Tracing the history of the struggle between liberty and authority. Mill says that in former times, liberty meant "protection against the tyranny of the political rulers."[4] "Rulers were conceived…as in a necessarily antagonistic position to the people whom they ruled….Their power was regarded as necessary, but also highly dangerous, as a weapon which they would attempt to use against their subjects, no less than against external enemies…The aim, therefore, of patriots was to set limits to the power which the ruler should be suffered to exercise over the community: and this limitation was what they meant by liberty."[5] But Mill was not content to trace the period of history when liberty as a concept emerged. Proceeding further, he writes, "In time…a democratic republic came to occupy a large portion of the earth's surface…and elective and responsible government became subject to the observations and criticisms which wait upon a great existing fact."[6]

Even this does not satisfy Mill as far as the question of the guarantee of liberty is concerned. He writes, "It was now perceived that such phrases as 'self-government' and the 'power of the people over themselves' do not express the true state of the case. The 'people' who exercise the power are not always the same people as those over whom it is exercised….The will of the people…practically means the will of the most numerous or the most active part of the people; the majority may desire to oppress a part of their number, and precautions are as much needed against this as against any other abuse of power…society requires to be on its guard."[7] Discerning and acute as is Mill on the question of liberty, he pinpoints that part of man where his independence is absolute. As he says, "The only part of the conduct of anyone, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute. Over himself, over his body and mind, the individual is sovereign."[8]

The only purpose for which power can be exercised over an individual is, according to Mill, "to prevent harm to others."[9] If, as is done many a time by the advocates of civil society, appeal is made to the individual to reason that his own good may be preserved (by preserving the society), then Mill would say, "His own good…is not a sufficient warrant. He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because…to do so would be wise….These are good reasons for remonstrating with him, or reasoning with him…but not for compelling him."[10] But these good reasons are not justificatory reasons for visiting with any evil in case he does otherwise. "To illustrate that, the conduct from which it is desired to deter him must be calculated to produce evil to someone else."[11] That is to say, society or the majority cannot reason or remonstrate with the individual in this way. "Unless you do this and this, that and that would be the bad consequence for you." Society can only argue

[4] 4. John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty" in Man and the State: The Political Philosophers (New York: Random House, c1947), p. 135.
[5] Ibid., pp. 135-136.
[6] Ibid., p. 138.
[7] Ibid., p. 138-139.
[8] Ibid., pp. 144-145.
[9] Ibid., p. 144.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.

for itself thus: "If he does not do this and this, it would be bad for others." The point is that society's calculating reasons cannot be the individual's reasons for doing or not doing something.

The extent to which society has come to interfere "with every part of private conduct" has been alarmingly brought out by Mill: "The ancient commonwealths thought themselves entitled to practice the regulation of every part of private conduct….In the modern world the engines of moral repression have been wielded more strenuously against divergence from the reigning opinion in self-regarding."[12] Mill then writes with the favor of a revolutionary: "Let us suppose…that the government is entirely at one with the people….But I deny the right of the people to exercise…coercion. The power itself is illegitimate. The best government has no more title to it than the worst. It is as noxious, or more noxious, when exercised in accordance with public opinion, than when in opposition to it."[13]

Mill wrote his essay "On Liberty" (from which the previous quotations are taken) in the 19th century. In the 20th century, society has become devious in its dealings with minority groups. Civil society today aims at influencing and altering individual behavior through what Skinner has called (and indeed advocates), "reinforcements";[14] it aims at "engineering," as is sometimes said, human behavior. Again, simulated behavior to earn the favor of the powers that be has become the order of the day. Either you join the dominant majority in the society or you are nowhere. One twinkle in the eye of the Big Brother and the individual is finished. Stooges and lackeys abound in the society to act as watchdogs of the Big Brother. Regimentation is the order of the day.

But side by side with all these sordid features of civil society, there have been dissent, protests and questioning. The state ombudsman had failed in many situations. Groups have come to be aware of their histories, traditions and cultures. Sovereignty of the state has come to be questioned. Self-conscious, conflicting groups have arisen which live on their cultural moorings. Their culture, which has long been suppressed, is too prized a thing to be relegated to oblivion. They can no longer be brought under the umbrella of unity: a unity is too petrified to be any substitute for the cultural identity of the group concerned. What gives content to this identity is the complex mosaic of mores, myth, art, religion and language -- better langue: in a word, whatever constitutes the meaning and the Weltanschauung of the group gives content to its cultural identity. The Weltanschauung is vital to the group; it is woven into the texture of its life, conduct and practices; any attempt to disturb it would give rise to reactions. It would be perverse to appeal to a common reason intended to bind the group to the dominant one. The vital reason such appeal cannot be made -- leaving aside the question of whether it should be made -- is that the cultural group has its own reason bound up with its Weltanschauung. For a common reason under which the group may be brought along with the majority, there has to be some convergence of its reason with that of the majority, which is just what is not possible. The culture-group's reason is bound up with its life style. And this is different from that of the majority. If the group finds its secure anchorage in its mores and myths, history, tradition and language, by what right or common reason can it be forced into a common civil structure? We have just seen that the concept of a "common reason" is inapplicable because it does not make any sense and cannot be grasped.

Then again, it is said by a softening of the stand on the part of the supporters of the structure of civil society that the conflicting group may be given the right to dissent, within the structure. But what maximum of dissent can satisfy the dissenting group so that it can accommodate itself

[12] Ibid., p. 148.
13. Ibid., p. 151.
[13] Ibid., p. 151.
[14] See B.F. Skinner, Science and Human Behavior (New York: Macmillan, 1953).

within the structure? The majority group cannot appeal to the reason of the minority as if the "reason of the minority" is covertly contained within that of the majority. Reason is not the prerogative of the supporters of the structure, though, more often than not, the structure-group's reason has been taken to be the paradigm of reason. Nor is it an argument to say that man is after all rational and therefore a rational solution to the problem of a conflicting group in relation to society is a desideratum. This cannot be the basis of a solution because more often than not it does not take into consideration the concrete context in which alone contentious issues may be discussed. So-called common reason loses sight of the logistics of the situation or, rather, its problematic. Also, to say that man is rational is to give a petrified picture of man. The time has come to disabuse our minds of the "rational" -- "animal" (or "brute") disfunction. Man is rational, but also something more, which is not the animal in him, but still not reducible to reason. Man is as much psychological, historical and culture-bound as he is rational.

Moreover, what indeed is meant when it is said that man is rational? Is he abstractly rational? But reason, we have seen, is contextual, relative, historical and culture-bound. Human reason is not abstracted from its historical, religious, social, cultural and ethnic contexts. It is really the afflux of one or other of those contexts. If the conflicting group feels this to be so, then the wholesome course would be to live in sympathy with its culture and take an inward view of it as far as is possible for an outsider, for an outsider cannot understand the conflict group's reason unless he is wholly in it and lives it. If, then, it is the life of the culture-group, its Weltanschauung, that animates the group and constitutes the reason for what it expresses to an outsider, then the outsider -- here, the majority -- must eschew its concept of reason and generously welcome a reason alternative to its own.

The time has come when the advocates of the structure of civil society should extend the parameters of their thinking by conceiving civil society in dynamic terms and as open-textured. If the society can permit the conflicting group to live its life, it will not only serve the limited interest of conflict-resolution, but also make civil society a chapter in the big dynamics of man's non-societal development. Free as man is, he would resist any attempt to muffle his freedom through society, politics or whatever. It is strange that society, which was founded to preserve man's freedom, later came to spell danger thereto. There is a reason for this unwelcome twist of history, namely, that civil society has not been able to eschew its political overtones. Once it does that, it allows willingly a group to lead its own life, nurturing its tradition and culture. Thus allowed, freedom, the group's distinct development in whatever way -- culturally, religiously or ethically -- becomes an accretion to the repertoire of humanity at large. What is urgently needed today, when the societal structure has come to be challenged in many instances, is that a given society must cross its threshold and leave open the possibility of alternative forms of society, alternative forms of reason, alternative forms of culture. In this lies true freedom, namely, freedom that is not restricted to any group -- majority or minority -- but of which the sky is the only limit.

Chapter II
Pluralism via-a-vis Cultural Conflict:
An Eco-Sociological Analysis of the Future of Man

Mrinal K. Dasgupta

Man is both a biological species -- a product of evolutionary biology -- and a cultural entity consciously and not so consciously self-created. He has subjected himself to self-imposed contradictions and has not been able to secure freedom from the forces of nature. Geographic isolation leads to reproductive isolation which diversifies and stabilizes gene pools into strains and races and, further, into species as a continuous process forced by habitat instability, migration, etc. Cooperation within similar entities and competitive exclusion between and within them operate at all levels of biological hierarchy. Social distances encourage cultural and reproductive isolation in human society. The evolutionary process is particularly slow among humans, due to their complex biological and social nature.

The crisis from within and outside society breeds cultural conflict. At all hierarchical and stratified levels, it has been increasingly nurtured by the progress of human civilization, clearly borne out by man's cultural, racial, linguistic and religious, not to speak of political, history. For instance, no institutionalized religion is sympathetic to non-conformists or non-believers. In crises, a centrifugal fundamentalism is promoted within both majority and minority. Tolerance is merely a quiet and transient meeting, feasible without perturbation or stress. Values are created by conscious against subconscious instincts, desires and acts. The value system is created by the beneficiaries of the status quo, only to be dislodged by the newer dominant forces. The biological solution to cultural conflict as a biological problem could be mass interbreeding across all natural and manmade social divisions, toward establishing a common human culture with a common religion of man. But nature and society abhor such homogeneity, and variation emerges as antithesis, as order can exist only in the midst of chaos. Striving for a truly civil society -- pluralistic, moral, ethical, just, stable, equitable, sustainable, and symbiotic -- with nature is and shall remain an unending process for the millennia to come.

Three Basic Concerns and Three Basic Contradictions

Since the earlier days of human culture man has had three basic philosophical concerns: self, creation and nature. Through the pursuance of civilizations from these three basic concerns have emerged three basic contradictions.

(1) social-psychological-ethical -- between man and man -- cooperation, co-existence, reciprocal altruism vis-a-vis dominance, repression, acquisition, and competitive exclusion;

(2) economic-cultural-ecological -- between man and nature -- communion vis-a-vis dominion, exploitation vis a vis integration, and linear development vis-a-vis sustainability;

(3) intellectual between man and manmade -- intellect, creativity, hypothesis-building, intuition, wisdom vis-a-vis their material and non-material technology, knowledge and information. Symptomatologically, these basic and antagonistic contradictions appear as innumerable non-antagonistic contradictions in the social and psychological superstructure operating at the subconscious and conscious levels. In times of crisis they become strongly

antagonistic. Some of these can be enumerated as reductionism-holism, mechanism-vitalism, analysis-systems thinking, religious fundamentalism, tolerance, consumerism, etc. Man has lived much less than any extinct species. As in biological evolution, no less often in social evolution successful intruders dominate in a succession that takes place unendingly. Will man excel any of his extinct predecessors that marauded the earth with a collective conscience and consciousness?

Notwithstanding the individual efforts and successes, albeit with limited impact on the society at large, civilization has nurtured all three contradictions.

The trend is not going to be reversed in the foreseeable future unless a superior force sets in -- not merely the possibility of a holocaust but a real danger of extinction of the species. Nature -- the Gaia (read, the laws of nature and society) -- is active and takes revenge. It has not been unknown to the greatest intellects but could never be perceived by more than the few. "All actions take place in time by the interweaving of the forces of nature, but one who knows the relation between the forces of nature and actions, sees how some forces of nature work upon other forces of nature, and becomes not their slave." (Geeta, 3, 27, 28, trans. Juan Mascaro [Penguin, 1962]).

Even the dangers of industrial civilization were not intuitively felt by many in the early 19th century. Engels wrote, let us not, however, flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human victories over nature; for each victory nature takes its revenge upon us (The Dialectics of Nature). The imperfections of reductionism were also evident only to the gifted intellect. The analysis of nature into its constituent parts was the fundamental condition for the gigantic strides in our knowledge of nature during the last 400 years. But the method of investigation has left us as a legacy the habit of observing natural objects and natural processes in isolation, detached from the vast interaction of things (Anti-Duhring). When Rabindrananth Tagore (1922) spoke of (human) race suicide he referred to the contradiction between city and village, the latter being turned into a maid servant from the status of wife, as a consequence of the urbanization, resulting from industrialized civilization. The seminal ideas of the ecosystem cobweb of life, holism (as opposed to reductionism) and sustainability -- are to be found in these writings.

Man himself will put a limit to growth when the currently preferred technological quick-fixes, viz., economic, environmental and cultural imperialism -- sugar-coated in the name of democracy, peace, a uniform and just social and political order throughout the globe -- will be exhausted. Economic growth creates competitors among the exploited in order that the market be not squeezed, and in turn snap the lifeline of the exploiter. Thus the USA is concerned over Japan. The G-7 nations hope boundless markets in China and India will be chilled once these become as industrially advanced as are they themselves. To contain Russia, the political and economic pressures imposed are not in consonance with a pluralistic spirit. By the same logic the exploitation is hierarchical, working in a long tenuous chain -- the rich extorting the poor, the poor searching out the poorer. This is operative between countries, between economic values and social cultural groups in a society, and even between individuals. The evidence is too great to cite. Is there any sign of "pluralism" in practice?

On the other hand, wisdom lays stress on the new realization that seeks harmony and synchrony among three equal and equidistant forces each of which contain sub-contradictions, viz.

(1) Social-moral--psychological factors is ethics and morality vis-a-vis institutionalized religion, social institutions, social goals, social engineering in a holistic system vis-a-vis parochial perspectives; culturally imposed values vis-a-vis instinctive urges, culturally imposed trends and fetishes; pluralism vis-a-vis cultural conflict, etc.

(2) Economic factors -- production systems -- capital-intensive vis-a-vis cooperative market -- multiplying growth and development vis-a-vis sustainable development with distributive justice and social security, energy-exhaustive vis-a-vis energy-efficient systems, etc.

(3) Ecological factors: resource-exploitative and exhaustive vis-a-vis resources preserving and generative; species selective and extinctive vis-a-vis species diversifying and ecologically homeostatic, commodity multiplying and processing intensive vis-a-vis those broadly based on biodiversity, etc.

Eco-Sociology

Sociology per se is broadly a reductionism from psychology, while it has much to adopt from ecology in terms of methodology and principles generated in the study of ecosystems. Ecology, on the other hand, views man merely as the secondary or tertiary consumer. Much human sociology and ethology can be invigorated by ecology. Disciplines of science do transgress in principles and methodology.

Cooperation vis-a-vis Competitive Exclusion in Natural Evolution

A biological species is a population non-interbreeding in the case of animals (sterile progenies are produced even if they interbreed) but may be interbreeding in the case of plants. The individuals agree among themselves on exclusively distinctive characters and disagree with those of others. A species originates through several means, major courses among which are (1) adaptation and selection, (2) geographic isolation followed by reproductive isolation, and (3) repetitive imitation. Strains or races within a species also arise in a similar manner, but at a lower hierarchical level. Ecotypes are inbreeding populations, geographically isolated over a fairly long time and favored by the habitat. Prolonged reproductive isolation among ecotypes, races or strains develop into species though non-interbreeding populations through stabilizing selection, chiefly in an unstable habitat.

In adaptation and selection, cooperation operates within a species until the unstable habitat forces selection of adaptable sets of genes which constitute and stabilize into a race(s) that is(are) selected out.

A strain or race is identical to a species in its own level of realm. i.e., at a hierarchial level lower than that of a species. Certainly, however, a race or strain is the progenitor of a species of the future. Interspecific or interrace competition is more pronounced than intraspecific or intrarace competition. In other words, interspecific or interrace cooperation is less pronounced than intraspecific or intrarace cooperation. Strains or species compete among themselves and only some of them can dominate in a mixed population over some time -- the composition of which surges toward homogeneity and stability in spite of spurts of stress from outside or perturbation from within and even under population-genetic systems of control within a multi-race or polyspecific community. Simple races cannot withstand great stress or perturbation while complex races composed of heterogenous gene pools caused by interbreeding among races can withstand greater stresses, and have better chances of survival and surer and faster chances of being organized into a species.

Geographical isolation effected by any means from active or passive dispersal to continental drift or landmass movement or microhabitats or microniches within a habitat, leads to reproductive isolation from the ancestral race and then to species over a few to hundreds, thousands or millions

of years depending on the level of complexity of the race or species and the level of biological organization, genome size and heterogeneity within in the genome.

Dialectics of Nature from Subhuman to Human

Nature has the opposing forces -- conflict and competitive exclusion, and syntheses for mutual benefit and cooperation. A species originates by consolidation of the gene pool, stabilized by reproductive isolation, ecologically by the forces of adaptation, and, in the process, results in evolution. Cooperation operates within a species until the unstable habitat forces selection of adaptable sets of genes which constitute and stabilize into a race that is selected out. A strain behaves identically to a species but only in its realm, which is the progenitor of a new species. Man himself has partially taken over from nature, and has started steering or at least interfering in the course of evolution, including his own. Nature, however, opposes the conscious and not-so-conscious acts of civilized men.

As the races and species originate, they stabilize through geographical and reproductive isolation and other processes of stabilizing selection (read also cultural isolation) in human society. Further diversification takes place with destabilizing forces, such as the need for survival in an unstable habitat. Stabilization-destabilization is a continuous process.

The rules of opposing forces -- between symbiosis, cooperation and competitive exclusion operate in the evolution of human societies with necessary modifications. The major differences are: (1) increasing human interference in biological evolution, including that of man; (2) the population-generatic and ecological-adaptational processes that help originate species are too slow to be recognized in the scale of thousands of years of known history of modern man, but there is evidence that similar processes do operate in man; (3) the barriers of geographic and isolation were never absolute human history (i.e., migration, mixture of ecotypes and cultures, more through battles won or lost and less often so through acculturation or intermingling of cultures, particularly when the minority cultures are insignificant compared to the majority culture); (4) with increasing transcultural contracts across nations, continents, religions, races and cultures, cultural, geographic and reproductive isolation are being transgressed, but are too insignificant in size to be of any massive impact at global level toward building a singular human society.

Nature, however, seems to be operating opposed to the conscious and not so-conscious acts of the civilized man. The Gaia theory speaks of natural revenge against the ecological crisis perpetrated by man upon himself.

Pluralism is Commensalism in the Ecological Context

Commensalism is non-interactive (both non-antagonistic and non-integrative) association between species in a community. It does not imply symbiosis (original meaning -- living together) for mutual benefit. A multi-species community may have lived for millennia unless and until there is sufficient perturbation to force competition between the members. Under such exigences the survival instinct of a species calls for adaptation to new changes in its environment. A gene pool is selected out within the species, and, if it can, a new race appears and stabilizes, as a population, and constitutes itself into a new strain or species. Diversification of races or ecotypes, due to instability in the habitat or threat from the species, does operate, but only at an increasingly reductive scale, as man changes his physical environment (man has conquered nature!), and is capable of changing social environment, too, through evolution or revolution.

A heterogenous, commensalistic human association is a geographic entity -- community/ society/nation -- which has populations that do not freely "interbreed" (not has imposed cultural restrictions), resulting in cultural tolerance but no integration. On the occasions of a crisis imposed from outside, the cultural integration coalesces further, and the geographic entity/community/ society/nation acts as a homogenous population acting in unison in order to meet the crisis, but only thus far. Whether it succeeds or not, the integration achieved dissipates into heterogeneity only too soon, but at a different level of operation. On the occasions of crisis from within, either there is numerical, political, economic, social or intellectual dominance enforced by one or a group over the other(s), or competitive exclusion in the form of driving out the weaker ones, not necessarily the minority, from the territory/habitation/cultural hierarchy.

The nature of crisis in a human society is principally economic, but can also be manifested in the cultural and social superstructure, such as religion, language, race/stock difference, caste, i.e., any group formed by inbreeding and delineated by lack of outbreeding. Any such group may have a dominant-recessive relation with respect to others by way of economic power which is readily converted into political power. Horizontal and vertical uplift or cultural oscillation is a counterforce, but is necessarily weak.

In the ecology and population genetics of lower organisms, an environmental crisis in an unstable habitat is confronted by the stabilizing selection of a gene pool concentrating on the necessarily required components of the genome. The alternative, but rarer, possibilities are the introduction of new and environmentally and adaptively necessary genes for survival but nonexistent in the parental gene pool, through imitation or natural hybridization. The higher the organism, the looser are such possibilities, and they should be rarest in man. Parallel to this phenomenon, in a human polycultural society, a social crisis forces a centrifugal tendency toward fundamentalism in both majority and minority communities and cultures.

The loss in the gene pool operates during violence, rebellion, revolution, epidemics, famine, war, pestilence, social negligence against female children, infant death, abortion, population control, etc. They have neither been assured nor can they be precisely measured with the knowhow available to science. It removes sections of the gene pool in human societies more vertically than horizontally, across the society at large, along economic lines within and across the nations, and the ebullient and brilliant youths in one extreme aid the lunpen proletariat on the other. It results in more males than females in most cases.

Ethnic History of Man

Basic human ecotypes and cultures are largely isolated both geographically and reproductively. The geographically adjacent areas with some features of cultural homogeneity, however, tend to ignore the isolation imposed by political or administrative boundaries. In spite of these marginal cases, racial conflict and mutual hatred are more cultivated than ideologically discouraged. Emigrations continue to take place since the beginning of history. In most cases the emigrants come into conflict with the aboriginals or preceding residents. Who dominates or suppresses, or if and when the two peoples culturally intermingle, depends on the number, military power, and political or intellectual craftsmanship. Old cultures which have been the melting pot of races, as on the soil of the Indian subcontinent for some 2000 to 5000 years, cannot forget the memories of being a superior victorious race or of having vanquished or culturally dominated the aboriginals in the remote past, and identify themselves with a vague origin which has little

relevance in the current context of indiscriminate mixtures of "blood" and heterogeneity in the gene pool that has developed through time.

Nature also has more often permitted ethnic identity than not, in the form of continuance of morphological and even skin-deep, race-specific features. Incomplete dominance and quantitative patterns of inheritance of racial morphological types would have obliterated race identities. This can be achieved by frequent outbreeding with indifferent stocks without any backcrossing. In other words, a few inter racial marriages do not change the complexion or morphology, and a common human species and culture remains unachievable in a few millennia to come.

Language developed in diverse Stone Age settlements before the prominent human ecotypes had evolved. Distinct linguistic groups migrated in large scale and assimilated indigenous groups or language, religion and culture, and became single, inbreeding cultures, or left other strong minority groups. The colonialism of the recent past occasionally succeeded in linguistic domination. Language remains a strong national bond and a line of conflict as well, further emboldened by other differences like religions and ethnicity, both of which usually are stronger than language difference, but any one or two of these three forces may determine the course of conflict. Hardly, if ever, are they reconciled.

Religious History of Man

(a) Before Judaism, Islam and Christianity could battle out their dominance in their land of origin, their believers spread their cultures further afield. Wherever they are not territorially or geographically isolated they continue to conflict, one with the other, for dominance in settlements, trade and culture. They also uniformly cultivate aggression against nature which has a theological origin, which in its turn had its origin in living against the odds of nature. At the same time all these sets of believers, particularly the Christian and the Muslim, have bonded with strong intra-religious cohesion. Further, the Baconian-Cartesian system of science is also exploitative of nature. Marxism, having principally originated as an antithesis to the paradigm of the industrial revolution, had elemental tenets of holism but these were lost due to being overburdened by political economics and in the exigency of emancipation of the working class. Thus, Marxism was anti-theological, but could not afford to be non-deterministic and natural.

(b) Zoroastrians, are a nomadic population who spread to the fertile East, and, having been a small population, actually flourished through avoidance of attrition -- taking to nonagricultural occupations -- and continued largely as a non-interactive community. As a result, they have not multiplied but, nevertheless, survive at a lower ebb.

Vedic Hinduism arose in the Aryan stock driven by nature and circumstances to India. The vast expanse of fertile land and easy victory over the non-Aryans have left little memory of conflict, which is why they had no difficulty in theologizing communion with nature and between men. As the Aryans further intruded and spread out beyond the Sindhu-Ganga basin they integrated the non-Aryan dominance (Sanscritization, more recently, in the cultural context of the earlier non-Aryans who had fled). The present Indian stock is basically heterogenous (containing perhaps all original human races and ecotypes), but the so-called glorious memories of the Aryan ancestry have built up a psyche with a superiority complex among the Hindus that constitute a numerical majority, but one that is not too comfortable to be an absolutely dominant on the Indian subcontinent,

(c) The Hindu, Buddhist or Mughal empires in India, vis-a-vis those strongly imperialist ones in Europe and Central Asia, did accumulate surplus capital, by way of Machievellism

administration and extraterritorial colonialism, although not enough, and thus failed to give impetus to capitalism, science and manufacturing. This may be one of the major reason why the impacts of empires could not be felt in the country at large. (This adds to the popular, but now widely rejected, concept of man of the so-called Asian mode of production or of Rabindranath Tagore and Gandhi that "India grows in villages unaffected by political changes in religious creeds").

(d) Hinduism first tasted conflict within itself from the Buddhists, represented at the core by the Kshatriyas at first, but later on a wider scale. This was accepted as the popular religion in contrast to the strongly ritualistic, caste-ridden and caste-oppressive Brahminical Hinduism. Buddhism was physically rejected through vandalism, annihilation and persecution. It itself eroded through vertical split and horizontal fractionism and lack of royal patronage. No less a role was played by the centrifugal egalitarian and reformist consolidations strengthened by fundamentalist codification of the socio-religious order so long guided by dictate and tradition, by the numerically much greater Hindu society at large. The religious institutionalization in the Hindu community gave it new religious importance for the first time. However, Buddhism proved philosophically superior, more coherent than the merely moralistic pre-Buddhist concepts prevailing in the rest of South Asia and throughout East Asia.

(e) The only major religious confrontation that Hinduism faced was from Islam that entered on Indian soil more by transformation forced by caste hatred perpetrated on the majority within the loose congregation that called itself or was known as Hindu society, than by migration or any political-cultural imperialism. In spite of being one of the largest empires, the Mughal empire spread through north India virtually without any opposition. But the more significant singular feature is that there had been no state patronage of mass conversion to Islam or no major suppressive acts inflicted on the Hindu majority. The cults -- the Bhakli movement by Chaitanya in Bengal and several in the south. Sufism from the north and numerous other folk cults throughout India -- acted to impede the drifting of Hindu non-Brahmins of the lowest strata toward adopting Islam. Such were the features of Indian religious and cultural history that Rabindranath Tagore was inspired by the hypothesis that the Eastern civilization grows in villages, not with the empires. Perhaps that is why in his Religion of Man he drew more on the elements of folk religion than on institutionalized and legitimate religions.

(f) Overall, religious conflicts continue throughout the world since the major religions have developed in West Asia and spread to Europe and Asia, except where a religion is politically and numerically dominant. Both majority and minority communities have been lulled into belief in nurturing fundamentalism -- the root of the worst form of conflict, as Tagore said. Communal conflict remains commonplace, be it in the India subcontinent, Jerusalem or the former Jugoslavia, or throughout central Europe between the two World Wars or back in history during the crusades.

Religious pluralism is an idealization -- highly desirable, but far from reality. Whenever a religion is institutionalized, codified and practiced by believers in the form of rituals, essential codes of conduct and life style, it becomes much different from a religion as a way of individual emancipation from consciousness to supraconsciousness, from a realization or feeling which is purely individualistic rather than achievable en masse. This is manifest by an analysis of all religions -- major or minor, institutionalized or not, or as religious divided into sects, believed by large numbers of people across countries or by small tribes or communities from less than a handful to a few hundred, to millions and billions of followers throughout the world, over space and time.

Religion, at its best, is an individual creed, a way of life, an enquiry into birth and death, a seeking for ideals and values in life. It is debatable if, for any goals, "belief" is a must, but there can be no harm so long a religion remains an individual feeling, practice, enquiry or understanding. As a religion is institutionalized -- which it must be -- things go awry. It must be because, like any idea, a religion is conceived to be universal, and its author(s) seek(s) to found a set of followers and believers. Thus, religion, conceived, codified and practiced as an institution, is more than a set of universal ethics and values. Those who have relied heavily on the noncoerciveness and tolerance of religion have overemphasized its content of ethics and values and too much ignored its power of bondage within believers and antipathy or even hatred against non-believers. While most religions are theistic, non-theistic religions also prescribe a code of religious conduct and have elements of regimentation.

Conflict arises principally from the attitude toward nonbelievers of one's "own religion" and, more aggressively, against a non-believer if he or she slightens the role of religion in individual or social life. When the Church interferes with the state the results have been disastrous. Even now republics have religious identities, and political parties seek religious names for republics. Religious bondage is the strongest of all centrifugal forces in a society; no religion is kind to non-believers. The Geeta calls nonbelievers to set aside all religions and follow the Lord Krishna. Hindus love to believe that theirs is the most tolerant of all religions. But Hinduism is the most stratified of all religions. The right to worship, to temples, to texts and to free mixing are taboo for various sections of the people. In spite of being fundamentalist at its core and thereby the strongest of all cultural bonds, a universal brotherhood across religions is a utopia for which idealists have spoken volumes for thousands of years and for which humanity will need to wait a few thousand years more.

Cooperation Conflict through Cultural and Eco-History of Man

From the cultural and eco-historical events throughout the progress of civilization since hominoids appeared, it can be argued that more intersocial conflict than intrasociety cooperation has been habitat-enforced and culturally acquired through "civilization." In biological language, conflict implies competitive exclusion for dominance and intrasociety (mono-specific community) cooperation implies greater coherence, inbreeding and stabilization of the gene pool in the process of selection (table I).

Concluding Remarks

1. Pluralism in human society is equivalent to a multispecies community, where tolerance is a precondition. Tolerance is far from integration -- at best communalism -- feasible in a society without perturbation or stress, hence transient. Sources of perturbation from within and stress from without are too many in human societies -- the worst being economic, religious, racial, linguistic, etc. Pluralism or cultural diversity is akin to species diversity in nature. Species diversity can flourish without stress only when microniches exist within a habitat.[1] In the context of a human society, when economic classes or social groups (ethnic, religious, linguistic or cultural) do not compete between themselves for their needs and are separated, they do not come into conflict. Thus, feudal societies were apparently more peaceful than newly developed industrial societies.

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[1] The Ramayana is the story of an occasional sabotage by the King of an already isolated Kingdom, for which the King lost everything and himself, and the Kingdom got the subservient dominant staus.

Egalitarian and consumerist desires are fostered as the industrial societies increase and accumulate wealth, but social tensions continue to increase within and across the nations linearly and with an exponential enhancement of disparity. Discontent turns into dissent. Human society tends to break down microniches as civilization advances, wealth becomes transparent, luxury becomes an eyesore, differences become naked. The forces that break down microniches are consumerism -- an attitude encouraged by industry due to its need to thrive; egalitarianism -- the aspiration of people for what they understand they have not; and communication which has "internetted" the globe, uncovering the vices of society long shrouded in mystery.

2. Values are created by conscious rather than subconscious thoughts, desires and acts. While the subconscious level is the result of, and bears the imprints of, natural evolution, the conscious is a creation of cultural evolution, which aspires to become or achieve a superconscious -- godly or suprahuman -- state of mind. Gifted individuals have, or will, reach the superconscious level of mind or state of a Yogi. This is an ontogenic development of consciousness. On the other hand, the cultural evolution of man is in the process of development and my take thousands of years. Evolution of consciousness must be the slowest -- slower than cultural and far slower than biological evolution. Cultural evolution operates by the transformation of the value system through social evolution or revolution, or is brought on by the changes in material culture through industrial and technological changes. A value system is also created by the privileged -- the beneficiaries of the status quo -- against, and imposed upon, the underprivileged, the dispossessed and the depredated. When social structures change, newer contradictions appear and the newer value system is generated -- partly naturally and partly created by the keepers of the society.

The older value system is also destroyed by aspirants, reformists, rebels and revolutionaries. Should they succeed, it takes time to build up a new value system over the old. A value system does not work in a perturbed or stressed society. It is overtaken by the fundamental centrifugal forces that lie concealed in the subconscious. In most cases, the political powermongers throw over the value system first of all. Wisdom can be concurrent even with illiteracy. The political aspirants are triggered to violence and barbarism by their masters, and pluralism is thrown to the winds and seas.

3. What is a civil society? How is it defined? What are the cannons of judgement? In a way, it must be very uncivil to brand any society uncivil. The model and self-styled civil societies are replete with social tension, throttling dissent. Idealistically, a civil society is a stable but utopian society, conceived like the heavens in mythologies, democratic pluralism in capitalist societies, and communism in communist societies, when the state withers away. Not to speak of practice, can such societies be achieved, even theoretically? Collective human wisdom and good sense will continue to strive for a civil society that will be not only pluralistic but also moral, just, ethical, stable, equitable and sustainable. But again, stability is thermodynamically inconceivable, unless a stable and ordered system is surrounded by chaos and instability all around. In order that the world become stable, where can this chaos be?

4. Cultural conflict is essentially a biological problem and calls for a biological solution. Cultural conflict arises in terms of economic, racial, religious and linguistic pluralism(s), everyone of which has to be addressed.

The biological solution is interbreeding en masse across all sorts of natural made and manmade divisions toward a common human society, a common religion of man complete with a common culture. On the one hand, this is impossible to achieve in the conceivable future. On the other hand, we would lose the variety that is the spice of life. The world becomes monotonous; nature abhors monotony and homogeneity. Heterogeneity and contradictions will appear from

within such a society. Social and cultural conflicts will remain endoparasitically inherent with human culture.

5. Well-meaning thinkers, philanthropists and minds of all descriptions have advocated cooperation and tolerance, but civilization and culture have moved in the opposite direction through the entire course of history and have nurtured conflict through cultural isolation. Unless there is a grievous crisis that puts human existence or survival at stake and such a crisis is squarely felt, the communities, cultures, societies, and particularly those that rule the world from the secured ivory towers of epicurean comfort will not change their modus operandi. Conflicts are created by the chauvinists, mischief mongers, schemers and aspirants of all humans at international, regional, national, subnational, provincial or local levels.

6. To sum up, what I have said above is not against pluralism, but to make its advocates take cognizance of the ground reality as well, of the hard truths in the laws of nature and society. In spite of all, odds, man is to strive for the utopia for which generations to come will struggle. In all societies of the past and the present, those who understand are too few to reckon with, because "A strange darkness has engulfed the world, where the blindest are those that claims to see the most" (Jibanananda Das).

Table I
Trends through the Cultural and Eco-History of Man

Age
120 MYR
20-30 MYR
2.5 MYR
1-2 MYR
0.4 MYR
70-30 TYR
53-27 TYR
50-25 TYR
12-8 TYR
5.5-4 TYR
1000-800 BC
600 BC-100 AD
1650
1600
1800
1800-1850
1850-1900
1900-1950
1950-2000

Population
-
-
-
-0.125M

-
-
-
-3M
-5M
-
-
-0.25B
-2.5MYR to reach
-0.5B
-1B; 150 yr. to reach
-1.1B; 50 yrs to reach; Growth curve turns exponential
-1.8B; 50 yr to reach
-2.24B(1930)
-3B(1960)
-4B(1975)
-5B(1983)
-6B(2000)
-12B(2045)

Event/Ecology/Intellectual traditions
-Tropical Forest
-Ground Apes; African mother
-Hominoids, Objects as tools
-Homo sapiens in East Africa; Pathetic existence; other Homo spp. failed to survive; Food-gathering and hunting
-Ecotypes -- Neanderthals in Europe and Cro-Magnons in Europe and Asia
-Fire invented; Forest destroyed
-Homo erectus in Java; Survives for 2000-5000 yr and extinct, and interaction with H. sapiens not known
-Food storage; sharp tools; mass emigration; building colonies; exotic fight with the indigenous
-Domestication of animals, plants; origins of agriculture; food and nutrition security first achieved; big game hunting with fire and by group drive; bronze discovered; bydraulic, exclusively farming (EFS) and nomadic mer -- change societies (NMS) formed; emigration, domination, acquisition of private property; battles fought for settlements, pastures and animals progenitors of modern societies appeared; exclusive farming societies better nourished
-No marked biological evolution, empires by nomadic merchant pastoral societies, horse cartage; urbanization channel irrigation; preservation for future, granaries
-Iron plough in Europe
-Large hydraulic societies trading empires; Protagorus, Plato, Aristotle, Theophrastus, Socrates, Epicurus, Euclid, Lao-tzu, Confucius, Gautama Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed
-Crop rotation, over production, fall in price, capital transfer to industry
-Bacon, Descartes, Leibnitz, Newton, Graunt, Dalton, Kant, Hegel, Malthus, Leewoenhoek, Beethoven, Cromwell, Linnaeus, Rousseau, Voltaire, Mozart, Adam Smith, Jennerl, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Microscope, Economics, Colonialism

-Lamarck, Darwin, Mendel, Pasteur, Verhulst, Leibig, Spencer, Mill, Dickens, Shelley, Genetics Evolution, Microbiology

-Einstein, Freud, Marx, Engels, Planck, Dewey, Bergson, Ramakrishna, Le Corbusier, Pavlov, Fleming, Imperialism

-Lenin, Mao, Keynes, Rabindranath, Gandhi, Picasso, Sartre, Wittgensteinl, radio and wireless; World Wars

-Watson and Crick, Camus, Chomsky;

-Electronics revolutions, satellites, telecommunication, information and cybernetic revolution, technological revolution; fall of the USSR; biotechnology

Cultural Evolution

-No man, No culture

-Behavior learning; Personal skills

-As above; Fight out survival

-Competition with large animals -- their extinction. Any interaction with other Homo spp?

-Interact in Europe; Earliest and largest reproductive and cultural integration -- makes the current stock of the West white man

-Intense struggle for existence (1) Conflict across groups leads to acquiring domination, aggressiveness, acquisition, selfishness, intolerance, cruelty, etc. (2) Cooperation within groups, reciprocal altruism, searching, guarding, saving, storage and concern for the future; Synthesis of traits -- both good and unwanted.

-1. Conflict between man and nature -- 40 percent big game eliminated, soil erosion through agriculture; 2. First feeling of having conquered nature; 3. Conflict between groups/societies -- NMS conquer EFS; miming with vanquished groups; 4. Cooperation within a group and settlement, more the external threat felt, more the coherence; isolation and inbreeding within settlements and social groups; better tools; females from vanquished farming societies integrated into victorious nomadic societies; exploitation of natural resources; family; magic, myths and rituals built up avoiding food and nutrition by rituals.

-Social control to state; city-village and bureaucracy; gap between people beginning to form

-Agriculture more destructive of nature

-Religion, philosophy, observational science, logic, idea; To conquer 'nature' and 'other cultures' forms the foundation of society; anthropocentrism; Asian societies -- fertile land, wide land: man ratio little conflict -- more tolerant, metaphysical, but violence remains a part of creed as in any other society; little impetus for growth in manufacturing industry but developments in science, particularly medicine for health; Europe synthesizes knowledge from different cultures; manufacturing economy; feudal societies face destruction; organic agriculture; slavery; theory of spontaneous generation.

-Industry becomes less risky and more capital generating enterprise than agriculture or trade.

-Scientific methodology to 'conquer nature'; Values formed in Europe can be identified as the values of the modern civilization (1) Intensification of human endeavor; (2) Over-exploitation of nature and competitive exclusion of other cultures, other peoples; (3) Technology considered key to growth; (4) Cooperation within and conflict across considered key to national property.

-Industrial revolution; slackening of church; mechanization, chemicalization and breeding revolution in agricultural technology

-Atomistic Society, high-rise building in metropolis, automation, alienation

-Economic crisis and resurgence in capitalism, freedom from colonialism, megapolis

-Pesticides, plastics and polymers, superfarming, ecological crisis, megacorporations, new tactics of imperialism-ecological, economic, cultural; new value systems being formed -- concern for future, green movement;

-Man is at the crossroad -- facing the greatest crisis in human civilization -- ecological crisis the choice is between the beginning of the end or a new world order, a new thought process, a new value system; greater than ecological crisis is the intellectual crisis;

-Capability needed to decipher, discrete, discriminate, and to adopt a course of action for man as a biological and cultural species.

B = billion; M = million; MYR = million years ago; TYR = thousand years ago; Yr = year(s) Yr* = May be 0.5B yr. earlier as the new evidences suggest.

1 = 8 years to reach; minimum doubling time of population in this period ever in human history (35 years).

Pluralist Society: A Gandhian Perspective

George Pattery

This paper is an enquiry into the nature of the components of 'pluralist society' for India. Rather than arguing for such component from purely speculative philosophy, our starting point will be more sociological. The Indian social situation today presents a search for 'primordial models' for social reconstruction. We shall enquire into one such primordial model, namely the Gandhian vision of society, and elaborate its essential features. Based on these features, we shall analyze more theoretically the nature of an Indian pluralist society. Our contention is that the request for freedom and selfless action resulting in suffering are two important constituents of a pluralist society. What is exercised in terms of Indian society seems to be equally valid for any pluralist society.

Indian Society

Master Narratives of Indian Society

Two master narratives dominate the sociological thinking about present-day India. Dumont's well known study conceived Indian society on the principles of hierarchy and totality. He gave the Brahmanic world view the status of objective truth and created a master narrative of Indian society as hierarchically based on the caste system.[1] Thereafter, sociologists either actively rejected his model or tamely imitated his thesis.[2] Another master narrative was fabricated by the colonial state and spoke of the eternal conflict between Hindus and Muslims, and the neutral mediator role of the British. Any instance of social conflict is seen as the inevitable repetition of this phenomenon.[3]

These two master narratives are the creations of the West, as part of their attempt to comprehend intellectually other cultures. In post-independent India, this discourse has been inherited by the nation-state. Today's political agenda cannot get beyond these stereotyped understandings. Any discourse about Indian society begins and ends on these two master narratives, and nation-state claims to be the sole authority to mediate on social problems. In the recent past, with the emergence of the Hindu revivalist party on the national political scene, the nation-state is increasingly claiming to be the sole authority to speak on Indian society, attempting to relegate all other agencies to the background.[4] All agencies, including religion, are defined in a manner entirely consistent with the needs of the nation-state.

Community: A Sociological Perspective

In the background of these two master narratives and the claim of the nation-state to be the sole guardian of society, we would like to examine the concept of civil society, especially in the

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[1] I. Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System, and Its Implications* (London: George Weidenfeld and Nicholson. 1971).
[2] Veena Das, *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective on Contemporary India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 35-36.
[3] Ibid., p. 43.
[4] For the extended analysis of Indian Nation-State and its over-powering role, see Ashis Nady, *Traditions, Tyranny and Utopias: Essays in Politics of Awareness* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987).

context of multi-cultures and religions. A sociological rather than a strictly philosophical approach is in order at this stage when we try to understand the nature of society as such. Community spatially bound, face-to-face with the sphere of human relationships, is based on an innate moral order.[5] The most natural communities, like the family, have intimate human relationships and are bound morally. However, in modern times we have many more communities which do not fall into the natural community category. Sociologists speak of 'imagined' or constructed community when talking about communities other than the natural ones.[6] A constructed or imagined community "…consists of members who do not know each other in their concrete existence and yet, in each member, there lived an image of a larger communion."[7] Such communities demand allegiance from people who have no concrete relations with each other. It fosters relations by creating images of communion and oneness.

In traditional societies like that of India, communities with multiple levels of relationships and moral agencies exist. However, the creation of a nation-state at the arrival of colonialism, and later by the independent India, led to increasing standardization of relationships. The nation-state, with its ideologies of nationalism and secularism and through its agencies of bureaucracy, legislation and judiciary, is encroaching upon and claiming the intimate loyalties of peoples. The increasing violence implied in the nation-state has led people to search for 'identity groups,' and they nostalgically long for traditional models of communities.[8] Indian sociologists are critiquing the pathologies of the nation-state and modernity, and are engaged in developing a concept of society that is more normal and healthy. In this search, they fall back on primordial identities.[9] Gandhian social vision can be seen as one such primordial model for taking care of plural identities.[10] Hence, an enquiry into Gandhi's social theory and vision might be a useful exercise as part of our enquiry into the nature of the pluralist Indian social fabric.

Gandhi's Social Theory

Gandhi's social theory evolved out of his engagement with life-issues and problems and also from his "experiments with truth" at the personal level. His social theory was not the result of philosophical analysis of social concepts, but the consequence of his engagements with the historical social forces of his time.

The development of his social theory had two phases: one of deconstruction, the other of reconstruction. The particular socio-political situation in which he lived and with which he struggled demanded a deconstructionive approach. It included deconstructing its colonial entrenchment from the fundamentalist forces.

This was not simply an attempt at political freedom from the colonial masters, but at deconstructing the understanding of Indianness and Indian society from the colonial constructions. The colonial construct of Indianness and Indian society had deeply affected the Indian psyche. The cultural deconstruction of India from the colonial construct occupied much of Gandhi's struggle. In the popular presentation of Gandhi, it is the political aspect of deconstruction in the narrow

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[5] *Critical Events*, p. 50.

[6] Cf. p. 46 of *Critical Events*; also Romila Thapar, "Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity," in *Modern Asian Studies* (May, 1989), pp. 209-231.

[7] *Critical Events*, p. 46.

[8] Sudhir Kakar, "Reflections on Religious Group Identity," in Seminar (Feb., 1993), pp. 50f; Ashis Nandy. "Terrorism -- Indian Style," in Seminar (Jan., 1993), p. 38.

[9] *Traditions, Tyranny and Utopias*, p. 139.

[10] George Pattery, *Gandhi: The Believer* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1998), pp. 151-159.

sense which is highlighted. However, the reconstruction of India formed the essential dimension of his program. In this attempt, he appealed to the 'primordial traditions' of India. This 'primordial appeal' should immediately be distinguished from the 'primordialist approach' of the nationalist Hindus of his and also of our time. Their primordialism consisted of a 'strategic' reference to a golden age in order to revive Hinduism; at the same time they are 'syncretic' in adopting elements from Western developmental models and from organizational factors of Christianity.[11] Gandhi's approach was different. He appealed to the mythological persons, cultural symbols and social systems of India's past to reconstruct India's present, not a past that is idealized but a past that embodies the essential and the ultimate values of life. His primordialism involved a faith-epistemic in constructing a society that is holistic, and that cares for the self-realization of the individuals. The master symbol of his social theory was 'swaraj'.

Swaraj: A Primordial Narrative

Gandhi's social theories were already formed in 1908 when he wrote Hind Swaraj, during his return voyage from London to South Africa, in answer to the Indian anarchists whom he had met in London.[12] Apart from its repudiation of modern civilization as based on power and wealth (greed), Gandhi elaborated his social theory based on 'Truth and Non-violence'. That his social-manifesto was written as early as 1908 may prompt us to think that he would have changed much of it in the course of his life. However, he endorsed his theory as late as 1921 when he wrote: "The booklet was written in 1908. My conviction is deeper today than ever"; and again later in 1938 saying: "…after the stormy thirty years through which I have since passes, I have seen nothing to make me alter the views expounded in it [Hind Swaraj]."[13]

The two pillars of his ideal society are: genuine freedom, based on truth and non-violence, and selfless-action through suffering to achieve that freedom. Quoting James Allen, he said:

For ages the oppressed have cried for freedom and yet a thousand manmade statutes have failed to give it to them. 'They can give it only to themselves; they shall find it only in obedience to the Divine Statutes which are inscribed upon their hearts. Let them resort to the inward freedom, and the shadow of repression shall no more darken the earth.[14]

Let us elaborate on these two notions in swaraj. Swaraj consists of striving for total freedom on a national scale that will guarantee real self-dependence and genuine interdependence. Gandhi's concept of swaraj meant that every village would be a republic or panchayat, having full powers as a self-sustained and self-dependent body, having the individual as the ultimate unit who would render his cooperation freely and willingly. The ultimate basis of the individual and the village-society is truth which is both a transcendent and immanent concept having non-violence as it operational principle.

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[11] Christophe Jaffrelot, "Hindu-Nationalism: Strategic Syncretism in Ideology Building," in *Economic and Political Weekly* (March 20, 1993), pp. 517-519.

[12] Mahadev Desai, in his preface to the new edition of Swaraj (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1939), p. 14.

[13] Cf. *Young India* (1 Jan., 1921) *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, in 92 vols. (New Delhi: The Publications Division of Government of India, 1958-), XIX, pp. 177-179. Henceforth cited as CW. Cf. also *The Introduction to Hindu Swaraj*, Revised Edition (1939), p. 18.

[14] *Young India* (1 Nov., 1928); 'Notes' in CW, XXXVIII, p. 1. Young India is one of the papers regularly edited by Gandhi.

In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose center will be the individual, always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle for which they are integral units.[15]

The outermost circumference in this design would not wield power to crush the inner circle, but would give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it. Machinery would not displace human labor, nor would there be concentration of power in a few hands.

Gandhi preferred the Sanskrit word swaraj to the English expression 'independence'. Swaraj meant rule of the self, where the self is a related entity: related to the nature, to others and to the ultimate. Here self is understood not as an isolated monad subsisting in itself and for itself. Here self is self of the Self which is the transcendent-immanent reality. It has immediately a transcendent reference which is the basis for its horizontal relatedness. The truth of the individual is the presence of the ultimate Truth. It is the realization of ultimate Truth that is the goal of the individual. Since all individuals are in the quest after Truth, they are related to one another in this search. This transcendent referentiality of all individuals gives them an axis and teleos that binds them freely and non-competitively. Swaraj presupposes the interdependence of the individual on others, nature and the ultimate. This inter-dependent nature of realities, this inter-relatedness and being-with-others constitutes the very core of the individual. Hence inter-relatedness is not an additional quality of the individual arrived at through a social contrast for the sake of socialization. The individual is related. This inter-relatedness presupposes pluralism which is not simply a philosophical concept in the Gandhian system, but an operational principle which immediately gives non-violence its legitimacy. The individual should not violate the Truth in others. This respect for the truth in others, and this relatedness with others non-violently is the path of self-rule or swaraj. It is the very striving after swaraj that takes care of swaraj.

In Gandhi's vision, this freedom or liberation is not an individualist affair. Freedom is a political reality: freedom from every kind of foreign domination; it is an economic program: freedom from oppressive and exploitative market-system; and it is more as well: freedom from every kind of inner compulsion and self-alienating desires.

Swaraj and Sarvodaya

For Gandhi, swaraj or freedom is not an anthropocentric project where human beings devise ways and means to achieve the highest social good through social contract and a manipulation of nature. It is based on the very nature of self, understood in its relatedness. The ultimate goal is mukti: the realization of the self. If so, in this search for liberation/freedom, how are we related to one another? The relationship is understood in terms of Swadeshi. Swaraj implies swadeshi, i.e., at homeness. This means being rooted in one's immediate surroundings. As the entire creation is linked together, the correct mode of relating is to remain true to one's immediate surroundings. Fidelity to one's own earth and water will eventually prepare one for final emancipation and for reaching out to all, and thus achieving oneness with the entire creation.

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[15] Hanrijan, "Independence" (28 July, 1948). CW, LXXXV, p. 32. Harijan is one of the papers edited by Gandhi.

At the social level swadeshi amounts to self-reliance and self-sufficiency. One does not become a burden to society, but relies on one's own resources for subsistence.[16] Swadeshi means:

…that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings, to the exclusion of the more remote. I restrict myself to my ancestral religion; if defective, I purge it from within. In politics, I use indigenous institutions; if defective, I improve upon them; in economics, I use the immediate surroundings.[17]

Swaraj as total freedom is true home-coming. Gandhi's vision of swadeshi is better expressed in the words of Edward Carpenter who also advocated the return to nature. He said:

In such new human life then -- its fields, its farms, its worships, its cities always the work of man perfecting and beautifying the lands, aiding the efforts of the sun and soil, giving voice to the desire of the mute earth -- in such new communal life near to nature, so far from any asceticism or inhospitality, we see far more humanity and sociability than ever before; an infinite helpfulness and sympathy as between the children of a common mother.[18]

Swaraj and Sarvodaya

Swaraj also means sarvodaya: the welfare of all. Gandhi's social theory envisages well-being for all, well-being that is oriented to self-realization of one and all. In this new society economic relations are not controlled by market-forces, but by social affections.[19] Political economy gives way to 'affective economy'; a mother, though hungry, may go starving in order to feed her son. Accordingly, Gandhi argued that affective resources could enter into all economic equations, and produce the maximum. If the spirit of the worker is brought to its greatest strength by the motivating forces of affection, it can produce more.[20] Labor, with stable wages and constancy of numbers in employment, functions in terms of service, not in terms of profit, the wages being a necessary adjunct, not the object of life. But political economy is interested in production, preservation and distribution at the proper place and time of things that are useful and pleasurable, and the merchandising economy is interested in the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few, with legal claims and power over the labor of others.

Their vested interests create poverty and debt, on the one hand, and riches and power, on the other hand. Here riches or money means power over others, and this in direct proportion to the poverty of the men over whom power is exercised. The disgraceful record in human history is "Buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest." The chief value of money seems to be "having power over human beings." But power over human beings is available by other means than by money. In the ultimate analysis, we learn that persons are wealth, not silver and gold.[21] If persons are wealth, then modern economics is the systematic disobedience of the first principles of religion. Swaraj really means self-control, and the right perception of what genuine richness is: Sarvodaya

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[16] *Indian Opinion, 'New Year'* (Jan. 2, 1909); CW, IX. p.118. Indian Opinion is one of the papers edited by Gandhi in South Africa.

[17] *Young India* (21 May, 1919). As quoted in Raghavan Iyer, *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, 1-Ill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). (Henceforth cited as MPW), III, pp. 326-327.

[18] Edward Carpenter, *Civilization: Its Cause and Cure and Other Essays* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Ca, 1889), p. 41.

[19] M.K. Gandhi, *Unto This Last : A Paraphrase of Ruskin* (Navajivanz: Ahmedabad, 1951), p. 1.

[20] *Unto This Last*, p. 8.

[21] Ibid., pp. 41-42.

does not accept the utilitarian formula of the greatest good of the greatest number, but the greatest good of all and the readiness to die for it. It is possible on the basis of bread-labor and trusteeship whereby hoarding is avoided.

In the construction of a civil society, Gandhi introduces the quest for liberation or self-realization as the basic component. Search for liberation gives all the members a transcendent reference point and enables them to relativize everything else, and, at the same time, to be related to one another on a basis that is above themselves. By introducing a transcendent referentiality in the construction of civil society, Gandhi visualizes a civil society that is eco-friendly and theandric, not narrowly anthropocentric. It gives civil society a primordial character.

Pedagogy of Swaraj: Fearless Action and Selfless Suffering

Swaraj is a primordial vision of a civil society. Such a social vision is realized through relentless search after Truth, through continuous action. Resisting untruth while holding on to Truth becomes imperative in the very formation of a civil society. In this engagement Gandhi's innovative reading of the Gita provides the key. The Gita in Gandhi's interpretation says: "No one has attained his goal without action. If we were to cease working, the world would perish. People need to engage in action."[22] All actions do not lead to freedom. The uniqueness of the Gita consisted in providing the matchless remedy for attaining freedom -- the renunciation of fruits of action. Here renunciation means absence of hankering after the fruit. The renunciation in the Gita is the acid test of faith. Gandhi believed that he who brooded over the results was like someone given to objects of the senses, ever distracted and resorting to means fair and foul.[23] When there is no desire for fruit, there is no temptation for untruth or himsa. Take any instance of untruth or violence, and it will be found that at its source was the desire to attain the cherished end.[24] Such renunciation gives rise to fearlessness of action. "If we are unmanly today, we are so, not because we do not know how to strike, but because we fear to die. He is no follower of Mahavira, the apostle of Jainism, or of Buddha or of the Vedas who being afraid to die, takes flight before any danger, real or imaginary, all the while wishing that somebody else would remove the danger by destroying the person causing it."[25] Alluding to Chapter XVI of the Gita, where fearlessness heads the list of the divine virtues. Gandhi said:

Fearlessness connotes freedom from all external fear, fear of disease, bodily injury and death, of dispossession, of losing one's nearest and dearest, of losing reputation or giving offence, and so on….Some of us do not fear death, but flee from the minor illness of life. The seeker after Truth must conquer all these fears.[26]

Selfless and fearless action requires and results in suffering, Gandhi was less interested in solving philosophically the riddle of suffering than in involving himself in suffering in order to counter the manifold and engulfing violence. Differences, multiplicities and pluralists bring about violence when relationships are not for 'liberation' and when actions are 'result'-oriented. The single-mindedness of purpose in 'liberation' and selfless action form the basis of civil society. Pain

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[22] "Anasaktayoga: The Message of the Gita," in *The Gospel of Selfless Action or the Gita according to Gandhi*, by Mahadev Desai (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1984), p. 131.

[23] Ibid., p. 122.

[24] Ibid.

[25] CW, XIII, p. 298.

[26] CW, XLIV, p. 114.

and suffering are not negative categories in the Gandhian vision, but agents in the formation of civil society.

In the context of satyagraha, Gandhi had spoken about the function of suffering in creating a moral community. Suffering is best understood in its historical and political context. However, without elaborating on the context, we shall dwell upon the function of suffering undertaken in the Gandhian vision.

(1) Suffering undertaken in the form of fast or self-discipline purifies the heart and makes one unattached: "Without inward purification, work cannot be done in a spirit of non-attachment."[27]

(2) In satyagraha, suffering would convince the agent of the power of injustice against which the struggle is undertaken and of the earnestness of the demand.[28]

(3) Suffering is the dynamics of human love. "Love does not burn others, it burns itself."[29]

(4) "Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means putting one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant."[30] Suffering is a program of transformation of relationship.

(5) Suffering is a more efficacious and more manly method of representation. "My faith in the efficacy of quiet but continued suffering is much greater than in negotiation and public agitation, though I am aware that both are part of the struggle, in so far as the struggle represents strong and weak parties alike."[31]

(6) The fearless self-suffering for a righteous cause overflows into infinite compassion (karuna) and benevolent friendship (maitri), doing good even to evil-doers and reaching out to all in love.[32]

(7) Fasting, as a protest against an injustice, awakens the sleeping conscience either of the loved ones, of the society or of the ruler (tapas = heat produced from single-minded devotion). Fasting is not a means to force someone into action. A genuine fast is a direct act of resistance to untruth; it is an immediate appeal to the conscience of the wrong-doer; it relies on one's inner spiritual strength. In this sense fasting epitomizes the meaning of suffering in non-violent resistance as an eminently "transformative pedagogic act."[33] The therapeutic value of suffering and of bodily inscriptions of freedom is matter for a full paper which we shall not attempt here.

In the immediate context of Gandhi's struggle against colonial power, suffering was aimed at convincing the imperial power of the earnestness of the struggle and the immensity of the injustice. However, already at that time Gandhi had employed suffering in bringing about a moral community out of the society shattered by immense oppression and communal violence. As Lord Mountbatten remarked at the instance of the immense communal violence and massacre following the partition of India, Gandhi and his fast was the 'one man army' between the warring communities and the nation. In the reconstruction of village communities, in the context of the many poor and the many religions, self-suffering love played the important role. For Gandhi, this suffering is not simply theoretical, but practical, and is undertaken in simple bodily actions or by undergoing physical pain. The body plays an important role in creating and forging communities.

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[27] *Mahadevbhaini Diary*, I, p. 378. As quoted in MPW, II, p. 109.
[28] CW, IX. p. 520.
[29] CW, XLII. p. 491; CW, XLIII, p. 380.
[30] *Young India* (11 Aug., 1920); CW, XLIV, p. 58.
[31] CW, IX, p. 400.
[32] *Young India* (25, Aug., 1925).
[33] Cf. James W. Douglas, *The Non-Violent Cross* (New York: The McMillan Company, 1970), pp. 48-76.

The violated bodies of satyagrahis during the salt march, or his own body during the Delhi fast played an important role increasing a moral community of the masses of India.

Moreover, in this non-violent, selfless suffering, Gandhi attributed a greater role to women in Satyagraha. Gandhi believed that women had a greater capacity for suffering and therefore a greater role to play in the forming of societies. The limits of this paper do not permit elaboration on these points. However, we need to take note of the role of suffering, of body, and of women in the composition of societies. Gandhian components of modern society are different from the philosophical categories, especially in the West. Swaraj is to be inscribed in the body, which is the primary swadesh.

In talking about freedom and selfless action and suffering, body and women as the components of a civil society especially in the context of many cultures and religions Gandhi introduced non-academic categories into academic discussion. That was Gandhi's strength and weakness: his strength because he introduced "human categories and affections" into academic discussion; his weakness because he was dismissed by the academicians as too moralistic and utopian. However, more and more anthropological studies on modern societies affirm the role and function of suffering and pain in forging communities. I shall briefly refer to one such study undertaken by Veena Das on the "Critical Events in India Society" and to the excellent concluding chapter entitled "The Anthropology of Pain."

Anthropology of Pain in Constructing a Pluralist Society

In her study of the critical events in recent Indian history, Veena Das holds that the voice of the victims is not heard through the language of the professional and of the state. They do not have the conceptual structures to hear the voice of the victims.[34] In the memory of an event, as it is organized and consecrated by the State, only the voice of the expert is embodied. From her analysis, Veena Das draws two important conclusions: pain often destroys the capacity to communicate, and pain creates a moral community out of those who suffer.[35] What is interesting for our purpose is the way in which anthropologists are bringing the categories of pain and suffering into their discourse. From a sociological point of view, it has been stated that pain is the medium through which society establishes its ownership over individuals, and pain is the medium available to an individual through which historical wrong done to a person can be represented either by describing individual symptoms or in the form of a memory inscribed on the body. Initiation rituals of various communities represent the former, while inflicted pain during a riot or suffering self-undertaken in a struggle exemplify the latter.

What is further interesting is the point that pain is experienced in and carried by the body. In the initiation rituals, through inflicting pain, the society integrates its members into a single moral community. It tests the capacity of the members to resist, and thus the quality of the members is reassured. The body becomes the memory of initiation. The societal law is written on the body. Pain inscribed in the body is the medium by which the individual is linked with society. Pain, as in the case of the totem, is the price for belonging. Pain in other cases can be the somatized form of social criticism.[36] It is the condensed expression of the trauma of the individual and is read as a "bodily criticism" of injustice. Somatic signs are signs of historical wrongs. Through these, the individual resists total incorporation into an "unjust" society.

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[34] *Critical Events*, p. 175.
[35] Ibid., p. 176.
[36] Ibid., p. 178.

In the case of the partition riots, names of the new nations were tattooed on the secrets of women -- where women's bodies were considered another territory. The Hindus for polluting the purity of Islam; Muslims for introducing foreign elements into the Bharat; each punishes the other by inflicting pain on women, so that the memory of the indignities would haunt the future as well. Torture claims their most precious possession, i.e., violent dialogue is conducted through the bodies of women.[37] Bodies of women marked by rape, or victims of industrial disaster -- all are evidence that the "body is the surface on which the political program of both the state and industrial capital are described."[38]

According to Veena Das, the partition discourse in the Constituent Assembly did not create public space (neither real nor theatrical) where victims could narrate the experience; acknowledge their suffering, or hear exemplary instances of altruism with redemptive possibilities. No therapeutic space was created to let the private experiences of pain move out into the realm of publicly articulated experiences of pain.[39]

Durkheim spoke of creating a moral community through the sharing of pain, where the individual pain is collectively experienced. Pain and suffering have the sociological function of inscribing memories in the body, of sharing the pain and forming a moral community. Pain can be communicated, and one can locate pain outside one's body.[40] Wittgenstein's analysis of 'pain discourse' contends that by relating pain to others, we create relationships with people, giving birth to moral communities. Through the sharing of pain, they create one body. When another consents to form one body, even if it is with an ill body, this exerts a healing force. The experience of suffering (if not done to consolidate authority or discipline) can be the occasion for forming one body and voice. Construing memory through the common sharing of pain can be healing and integrating.[41]

Pain and suffering, as experienced and communicated by the victims, contribute towards creating and healing communities. At the deconstructive phase of Gandhian struggle, this was evident. Besides, Gandhi in his body 'symbolized' the suffering of the colonized people and carved a 'moral force' out of the unorganized and dispersed millions of people of India. What is significant for us is to reflect upon the role and function of pain and suffering in the construction of civil communities. In Gandhian social theory, suffering and pain are agents in constructing civil society. Suffering is not a negative category nor is it glorified in an unhealthy way. It is seen as an anthropological phenomenon in the relentless process of engagement with a life of action that is oriented towards liberation.

In short, proceeding from a sociological starting point, we argued that in its search for identities in the wake of the emergence of a powerful and homogenizing nation-state, people are looking for ' primordial identities' where there is space for their transcendental aspirations and living pluralities. The Gandhian model was one such primordial vision. Its basic components were a search for total liberation and selfless action, leading to self-suffering love. Gandhi brings two non-academic categories into the discussion of the formation of pluralist societies.

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[37] Cf. Ibid., pp. 184-186.
[38] Ibid., p. 190.
[39] Ibid., pp. 191-192.
[40] Ibid., p. 195.
[41] Ibid., p. 196.

Part II
Classical Cultural Resources for Civil Society in India

<center>**Chapter IV**</center>
Models of Civic Awareness in Ancient India

<center>S.K. Pathak</center>

Buddhist literature proposes the following hypothesis. Nomadic human groups in ancient days used to distribute the necessities of life without discrimination. An individualistic egoism prompting the search for greater possessions than others occurred to the human mind. Hence, the above tendency toward equidistribution changed and cravings predominated over simplicity.

The above hypothesis requires further analysis with reference to other models of civic awareness which prevailed in ancient Bharatavarsa. It presupposes the following factors in the growth of human societies:

- Historically, the pre-Buddhistic models of Vedic society had a nucleus of civic awareness (*gana*) as the Vedic literature occasionally states.
- The Buddhist model originated out of the civic awareness of persons (pudala), in spite of social stratifications.
- The Jain model of individualistic identity challenged people to exert their identity (*anekanta-vada*).
- Besides these classified models, several unspecified groups in the ancient Bharatavarsa preserved their identity, assimilated under a wide banner of Tantra.

The motivation towards compromise has continued through trial and error till now.

<center>**Vedic Society**</center>

Historically speaking, a social model had existed in northwestern Bharatavarsa prior to Vedic society. The archaeological remains excavated in the Indus valley (Harappa and Mohe¤jodaro) manifest an adoption of agriculture for their socio-economic growth. Probably, the culture of persons involved in that socio-economic structure drew upon the proximity of the models of the neighboring peoples. In this respect the ancient geography of the inner Asia highland steppes was landlocked from the warm waters of the deep seas and oceans. On the other hand, Bharatavarsa -- not Bharat presently abbreviated -- was referred to as Indies by the Greeks. The sea coast of the Arabian Sea provided a gateway to the culture of northwestern Bharatavarsa, the subcontinent, which presumably had an impact on Inner Asia through the land route. However, our knowledge is still presumptive.

Comparatively greater resource materials of Vedic culture have come down to us where there is less scope for guess work. The archaic geography leaves room to hold that the Hapta-Hindu, i.e., Sapta-Sindhu in Sanskrit, might include the rivers Oxus (Vcaksu) and Jaxartes, included in the core region of Vedic culture. Greek belief supports the view that the rivers Oxus and Jaxartes used to flow into the Caspian Sea. The location of the Aral Sea and of Lake Lobnor might not then have been the same as now. Several studies have already been done on Vedic geography with reference to Saptasindhu. The culture core of the Vedic people might have originated in the Hapha Hindu area, as the Aversta claimed, and subsequently moved eastward into the Saraswati River, including the five branches of Sindhu in northwestern Aryavarta: *imam me gange yamune*.

Saraswati sutadri stomam sacasa parusnya
asiknaya marudvrdhe vistastiam yajirkiye
ssnuhya susomaya
Rg. Veda X 75.5.

The account of *Dasaronja* strife supports the view that the core region of Vedic culture was the landlocked area between the *Paravat* (Far) Sea and the *Aravat* (Near) Sea, that is, the region of Inner Asia beginning from the Oxus and Jaxartes River basins up to the Hindu (Sindhu) River. The g Veda referred to about fifty-five rivers in the area in which the peoples (*janah* in the plural) had built their pluralistic cultural identity. Several episodes of internal strife generated *gotra*-identity among the Vedic peoples. That area seems to have belonged to three allied chieftains who had scored a victory over the Karanja, Parnaya and Rijarsva (Arjaspa) peoples. The Rg. Veda mentions their release by Indra by the killing of Vrtra who had controlled that area.

Tam hatva himarimam sapta-sindhun
Yo ga udajadapagha valasya
Yo asmano 'antaragnim jajana
Samvrk samatsu sa janasah indrah (II. 12. 3)

The above citation supports the view that Indra, the Vrtrahan, was conducted by the community against the oligarchy led by Vrtra, *ahura* (*asura*) the opponent faction with stronger physical might.

Prior to the formation of *ranja* (*Rg. Veda* VII, 18, 33, *sukta*) Vedic peoples belonging to different communities, but not necessarily hetrogenous, had not been consolidated. Localities were mostly distributed in Vis jurisdictions administered by a protector (*pati*). *Visampati* was neither kingship nor oligarchic leadership.

In fact, the concept of kingship as a political force for state control occurs in Aitareya Brahmana which was probably compiled in 8-7 centuries, B.C. Presumably, the Vedic people, who might have come into contact with neighboring peoples claiming separate identity, were in teams or in clusters of persons having a common ethnic identity (*jana*). Some scholars identify *gana* with 'tribe' in the ethno-political context. Probably *gana* referred to something different in the Atharva Veda and the *Rg. Veda*. The concept of *gana* became more concrete among the Vedic people, when the kingship (*rajanya*) became challenged to *Vis* and *gana*.

Gana in the Vedas referred to an authority for conducting the cluster of people who might not be always homogenous in profession and livelihood. *Gana* was a body constituted by social agreement and contracted for the mutual protection and welfare of community members as the need occurred. The body was formulated by the community members, based either on a family unit or an individual who had some say in the administration of *gana*. In the Vedic model, the instances of *gana* are not so distinct as in the Buddhist societies.

The term 'tribe' for *gana* is not always appropriate. Each *gana* administered its own government and shared in the responsibility of the councils, i.e., *sadas*, *sabha* and *samiti sadas*, for the protection and maintenance of each member. *Sadas*, *sabha*, which appear to be synonyms in lexicons, were probably different in their composition and functions. *Samiti* suggested a greater body in which every individual member of the cluster or the heads of the family had direct responsibility and a voice.

In kingship, these associations which had a republican structure held a specific role in ensuring the administration of jurisdiction. Leadership or chiefianship of a *gana* was hereditary by nomination or elected by an assembly (*samiti*) according to the practice of the community.

Of the four Vedas, the *Rg. Veda*, refers to several cases of alienation and alliance which had been formidable in some instances. Broadly speaking, the diversity of communities and their indigenous social traits and behavioral mannerisms led to frequent confrontation. Moreover, the temptation to aryanisation by adaption of specific cultural homogeneity had been the cause of enmity in some cases. In this context, the invention of fire became a primary cause of strife and warfare. Hard competition, with struggles, probably continued among different groups in order to avail themselves of natural resources and deprive the opponents. The caste system was innovated when the social foundation was secure in imitation of the orderliness in the surrounding nature (*rtam*).

As regards the invention of fire, the Vedic *mantra* reads in praise of *Agni*,

tvamagne angiraso guha hitam
anvavindanchi sriyanam vane vane
sa jayase mathyamanah saho mahat
tvamahuh sohasasputramangirah
(*Samaveda purva* 108)

Angirasa was probably the inventer of fire, by rubbing together two pieces of wood (*Rg. Veda* V 11.6). He thus became the promoter of the cult of fire worship. Zoroasthra innovated fire worship in Iran. Besides, Angirasa, Dadhyan Athawan, Atharvangiras, and Bhargamgirasa contributed to the growth of the history of mankind. The concept of deva as a hallowed one with sparkling light and the tendency to think of divinities as promoting human welfare evolved.

Like Angirasa, Atharvan entered into human health management, using herbs, prepared, where necessary, by the use of fire. Atharva Veda thus promoted a new vista of human culture in the land of Saptasindhu; fire worship also advanced to ritual fire sacrifice.

Likewise, the other primary elements in surrounding nature were appreciated, among them being the sun which was regarded as supreme, according to some mantras.

Bramaham asi surya bala (vada) ditya maham asi.
Mahaste sato mahima panasyate ldha deva maham asi.
Vat Surya sravasa maham asi sacra devea maham asi.
Mahina devanamasuryah purohito vibhu rjyotiradabhyam.
(*Rg. Veda* VIII 101 11; *Atharva* 13.2.29, *Sama* 276, 1788)

As the guardian of the primary elements and derivative phenomena, the ethereal space was explored by the Vedic seers. The abyss of space coexisting with universal items was revealed to the seers as the universe (*visvam*) having immeasurable potential force in nature.

The means of livelihood were conducted in interdependent relationships between the individual and the group to which the person belonged, namely, the *grama* and *gramina*, the self-sustained village unit. In due course urbanization appeared, as Vedic society entered the later period narrated in the Brahmana and Sutra literature. On the other hand, the Aranyaka literature of this period was devoted to the *rsi*-culture (*arsa krsti*).

Thus, social order and political administration were ordered by *rtam*, a balanced status in which any deviation was regarded as *anrtam* (disorderliness) and *a-satyam* (lapse from purity). Here, *satyam* is not truth, as it commonly translated, but refers to psychic state of the individual in relation to social orderliness where no duplicity or hypocrisy prevailed, according to *rsi*-culture.

The terms *rtam*, *rsi*, *arya* are derived from the verb root "*r*" which suggests to change, to move and to be in motion. In spite of mobility, an orderliness pervaded a person's life in the community (*gana*). Human values depended on morality and self-purity.

Above all, the inhabitants of Sapta-sindhu who were the promoters of the Vedas had a spirit of integration and adjustment with various social forces, whether alien or allied. As result the scientific knowledge of the Vedic people spread throughout and with the least restriction and resistance. Cultural mobility holds a two-way movement: incoming and outgoing. Revelation to the Vedic seer spoke of mutual co-existence as articulated in phrases like *sangacchadvam samvadadhvam/sam vo manansi janatam/*. The value of orderliness was invoked.

Buddhism

As stated above, the Buddhists had framed a social model in which several autonomous clans (*gotra*) participated. Sakyautra Gautama the Buddha, appeared in the sixth century, B.C., when the Brahmana and Sutra injunctions were enforced in such monarchic states as Vasa, Avanti, Kosala and Magadha in the Gangetic river basins. Other autonomous clans, like the Sakya, Buli, Kalamas, Bhagga, Koliya, Moriya, Mallas, Vidha, and the Licchavi preferred the *gana* concept of socio-political administration.

The fourfold social distribution based on professional functioning turned to the birth-ight, by which a section cited purity of blood to claim superiority for the Brahmanas over the rest. Gautama came out of the Sakyakula (community) who were distinct from the Vedic *rsi-gotra* (clan). Actually the terms like *gana kula, gotra, grama, aranya, brahmana, ksatriya, vaisya, sutra* in early Vedic diction had changed their social context in the later Vedic society when the Vedic people entered a process of rapid urbanization. It is therefore difficult to find the appropriate correspondent term as they took on new contextual connotations. This is a serious problem in appreciating the societies and their mutual relations in ancient Indian literature.

For instance, *gana* is occasionally rendered as republic by some modern scholars. Immediately, the present day mind recalls the models of the Roman Republic or the Republics of India or of China. But none of these political frameworks agrees with that of the early Vedic period (C. 1500-800 B.C.) nor with that of the later Vedic period (C. 800-300 B.C.) when the Dharmasastras (C. 300 B.C. to 300 A.D.) shaped the life of the India people. Again, English terms like democracy, oligarchy, autonomy, tribe and individual in relation to society, tend to create linguistic communication gaps.

Moreover, the socio-political structures of the above-mentioned *gana* during the sixth century, B.C. were not uniform in the observance of morality and self-purity which had been the primary factor of social identity. An instance of Ambapali in the Licchavi *gana* may be cited here. His personality was respected. In spite of the unanimous opinion of the local *gana* council which never contradicted him a contrasting instance may be cited under the rule of Draipoadi who was insulted in the presence of the assembly (*sabha*).

The heritage of ancient Indian civic awareness was shaped anew after the Buddhist culture model, as preserved in the Pali and the Sanskrit Buddhist literature of India and their early translations into Chinese, Tibetan and Mongolian. Sakyaputra Gautam had laid emphasis on the

early Vedic concept of balance or equilibrium. Sakyautra laid emphasis on the observance (*carya*) of moral regulations (*siladharma*) at the individual level. His analysis of the relationship between an individual person and the society to which the person belongs was reciprocal, as usually envisaged in a *gana*. He advised that his sayings regarding one's life (*dgarma*) and moral discipline (*vinaya*) should guide his mopnastic organization. This was made up of persons who renounced personal family engagement in the service of removing the suffering of the many (*bahajanahitayu bahujanasukhaya*).

The sita-based model among the Buddhists took an unprecedented turn when Asoka decreed moral behavior in the public life through his inscription on stones tablets in the local languages, such as: "ultivate moral values" by citing that which he used to perform. The application of balance (*ritam*) in the reciprocal relations between the individual and society applies especially to the ruler. In that respect, the Arthasastra might have guided the ruler Asoka about royal conduct. The Dharma Sastras also laid down similar instructions, but few abided by them due to the allure of egoistic desire or thirst for self-gain.

The Buddhist model of civic awareness spread all over the world with its emphasis on moral discipline and its humanistic approach. Sakyaputra Gautama used *ariya* (*arya*) in the sense of being noble, superior, good and its opposite word *anariya* (*anarya*) signifying, mean, inferior and bad. In the socio-spiritual context *ariya* (*arya*) and *anariya* (*anarya*) do not refer to the ethnic discrimination of the Aryan (cultured) from the non-Aryan (uncultured) in the *sura* of white merits and the *asura* of black merits as referred to in the Vedic and Puranic traditional literature. As a result, the socio-spiritual uplift was enlivened when the Buddhists accepted the Tantric model with esoteric exercises.

Jains

Mahavira was a contemporary of Sakyaputra Gautama. He also endeavored to raise the individual awareness by self-development by describing it as an extension of mental capacity. Mahavira was of a ksatriya family of Kundapura where the Khatriya families lived. Like Gautama, the Buddha, Mahavira attained the supreme knowledge (*kevalajnana*) and became Arhat with omniscience and omnivision. He had eleven chief disciples who were described as *ganadhara*.

Vaisali was also strong in *gana*, and Mahavira encouraged autonomy and individuality (*pudgala*). Like Buddhism, Jain thought emphasized the moral purity of the individual in order to be freed from the bondage that led an individual to suffer in this life. No creator of this world exists. There is no transcendent *isvara* nor its *avatara* or incarnation.

The Jains hold the observance of *ayaradhamma* or ethical discipline as an important facet for the person to move towards liberation (*moksa*) in this life (*jivanmukti*). The Jain texts, therefore, stress the code of conduct (*vinaya*) to build up individual identity and a healthy society. *Vinaya* is defined as *vinayati apanayati yatkarmamukham tad vinaya*, i.e., that which removes, keeps away or destroys inauspicious acts in the Vijayodaya commentary of Aparajita *suri* (C. 800 A.D.) on *Mutaradhana* of *Sivakatyacarya* (c. 100 A.D.), a Digmbara work.

A Jain adheres to the basic laws of morality in his or her life, in spite of changing circumstances. Jains are strict in their observance of the discipline of *Vinaya*, especially the *Sravakas* and *Sravikas*. The Sravakacara deals with moral discipline with respect to the monastic members who are regarded as ideal personalities among the Jains.

With the aim of achieving social equity, the Jains stress *Samatva-yoga*. Unless there be mental equanimity and tranquility in the individual's mind, no social change can be realized. The elasticity

of the *samatva-yoga* allied with various facets of Jain thought like *dhyana-vada, anekantavada, karmavada* and *atmavada* was extended to all humankind in the past and is relevant in the world today. For the global consciousness of holistic living, a total education and transformation of consciousness is the sine qua non for a sane and meaningful human life. The Jain thinkers devised programs of self-development through personal restraint and altruistic service by right action and conduct.

In the course of time the Jain cultural model melded with the integrated model of Tantric practice. The mantra-ritual among the Jains took a new turn in subsequent days when the worship of deities was introduced owing to pressure from both Vedic and Tantric cultures. As a result the Jain icons and architecture enriched the Indian aesthetic arts through the centuries.

Tantra

Besides the above models which promoted the growth of civic awareness among different communities in Bharatavarsa, an integrated Tantric cultural model was generated indigenously among several communities. This gave preference to each and every individual with no distinction of sex, age, clan or caste. The contributors of this model came from all walks of life and were engaged in multiple job patterns which had prevailed in Bharatavarsa since olden times.

The Tantric model, with its specified nomenclature, appeared after the Christian era. Tantra was not begun by an eminent personality like Sakya putra Gautama or Ksatritya Mahavira, the Jina of Vaisali. Both the Vedic the Tantric models developed by drawing on groups as the Savara, Naga, Raksasa, Pisaca, Yaksa, Kinnara, and many others now lost.

With the passage of time, the Vedic model could not cope with the social needs of people from all walks of life. The learned group led by upper caste Brahmans used to direct the social life of other lower caste strata like the Ksatriya, Vaisya and Sudra. Moreover, pluralism in casteism formed into innumerable sub-castes of ascending and descending groups of touchability and untouchability, eligibility and non-eligibility. Moreover, the various peoples like Sakas, Pratiharas, Hunas, Yavanas who had entered Bharatavarsa each brought to the Vedic model their special characteristics. The Vedicists thus adjusted to them by using the wide adaptability of *lokacara, desacara* and *kulacara*.

As mentioned above, the Tantric, being an integrated model, became a social force against the orthodoxy of a section of Vedicists who favored the superiority of Brahmana with discrimination between high and lowborn. However, moderate Vedicists, led by Saunaka Rg. Vidhana and others, reached out to the Tantric fold by vedicizing the Tantra.

Against the passive encounter of the moderate Vedicists, the advocates of Tantric culture entered the inner chamber (*garbhagrha*) of the elite Vedicists who used to despise the Tantricisits as lowborn, outcaste, or *candala*. In the course of time, the Smarta lawmakers of Vedic society distinguished the potential efficiency of male and female with a psycho-somatic inferiority of the latter. The lowborn, despised women gained a higher position through various curative measures and occult practices (*Satkarma adhicara*) of the ritualistic Tantra (*kriyatantra*). In spite of multiple indigenous rituals and formulae belonging to various ethnic groups outside the Vedic fold, Tantra was regarded as a separate socio-cultural model for the Vedicistis, Buddhists and Jains.

The Tantra determines the cause and effect relationship of each psychic sensation with its physical reaction and the reciprocal effects between the mind and each physical movement, whether automatic or reflexive. The interdependence of the body and the mind is manifest in speech. The Yoga enunciated by Patanjali, being allied with the Sankhya (the knowledge about

the body and mind), opened a new horizon in Vedic culture. Applied Yoga was restricted within a group of practitioners who had less occasion to disseminate their experiences. While the Smarth teachers held the reins of Vedic society, experimentation on psycho-somatic actions and reactions had less scope of expression. The followers of Tantra took the advantage to extend their esoteric experimentations with reference to body, mind and speech. The Tantra ensured the stimulation of the neurons by the warmth of psychic exercise with particular physical gesticulation or posture according to Yoga practice.

However, the Vedicization of Tantra made a drastic change in the socio-culture spectrum of Bharatabarsa. The Tantra entered into a new chapter when five stipulated Vedic deities (Sunya, Ganapati the elephant headed deity, Siva, Sakti the mother goddess and Visnu) were recognized in the fold. The liberal approach of the Tantric model faced a setback when the oral tradition was codified in writing.

The social awareness of the individual involved in the ritualistic formulae of the Tantra leaves wide scope for civic awareness with strict moral discipline. Occasionally, Tantra is alleged to be sexual, secret, etc., but that is not so. The Tantra model imposes strict discipline and celibacy in order to achieve control over nature.

In a Tantra community, all women are regarded as Sakti, manifestations of the Functional Mother Energy, and all male members as Siva, manifestations of the Potential Energy. Both refuse cruel and ugly deeds. One should refrain from evil conduct which leads one's mind towards degradation when the ego of a person rules, it leads to passion, pride, anger, jealousy and delusion, which become painful. The Tantra thus lays emphasis on curbing egoistic I-ness by serving the good of others, as far as practicable.

In the civic context, the Tantric model was more effective as it faced no social gradation or political authority interfaced. The normal relationship among family members was not hampered, in case one or two members adhered to the Tantra. Moreover, the Tantra implemented its ritualistic formulae in daily life so extensively that no confrontation could arise. As a result, toleration of other elements was practiced from both sides, whether Tantric or Vedic.

Buddhists and Jains could not forgo the above-mentioned esoteric experience in cultivating the body, mind and speech simultaneously. Neither Buddhists nor Jains had any caste barriers; eligibility was not restricted for either male or female, nor for lowborn or highborn. Consequently, Tantra added greater socio-spiritual engagement by all sections of the society. Social order and mutual responsibility were readily ensured among persons involved in the particular lineage of the Tantra.

Moral conduct tends to promote the following qualities: piety, self-restraint, politeness, freedom from pride, self-sacrifice for other beings, truthfulness, non-attachment to alluring objects, greed for other's wealth and observance of rules of conduct.

In some rituals of the Sakta and the Saiva, a restricted use of alcohol was permitted with a strict warning against its abuse. It was similar with the use of sex with all possible restraint, in order to experience the mental states. This affected the social life of the individual and society, as any branch of immoral conduct in respect of a person involved in Tantra practice tends to his or her downfall. Thus, Tantric practice becomes restricted to those who are capable, and had greater impact on society since the Christian era.

In the maintenance of social reliability and orderliness, Tantra holds immense value for socio-economic development and cultural co-ordination among all sections of people, with no discrimination of sex, age, clan and caste.

Conclusion

In the cultures of the multi-ethnic peoples of India, the above four models have played an important role in promoting a spirit of individual tolerance with social flexibility. Some instances of strong conflict among the followers of the above four cultural groups may be cited in history. Despite that, each model holds merits and demerits in social life. The spirit of social flexibility always had welcomed change and accepted transformation in time and space.

Civic awareness among the peoples of Bharatavarsa occasionally faced setbacks and such a state of affairs was also reflected by the term *apaddharma* as a state of emergence or perilous situation. The political upheavals up to the 11th century in Bharatavarsa made no drastic transformation of the cultural model.

However, Islamic culture, modelled on a forcible tendency to bring uniformity at the socio-cultural level had not always been acceptable to the inhabitants of Bharatvarsa. This dichotomy has persisted since 1200 A.D. Again, the Christian cultural model, with all its purity, could not attract the inhabitants in spite of its humanitarian services against illiteracy and backwardness. In contrast, the above four models for raising civic awareness are benign but not intolerant, divergent but integrative and flexible.

Chapter V
Pluralism and Cultural Conflict: Rabindranath Tagore's View

Sibnarayan Ray

The issue of pluralism and cultural conflict occupied Rabindranath Tagore throughout his life. Several factors have to be kept in mind in trying to follow his view on this issue. I shall mention only two of the most vital. In the first place, he was a multi-faceted personality: not merely a thinker or philosopher, but also a creative artist, a man of action, and a man engaged in a diversity of pursuits. In each of them he reached new heights and opened new possibilities. Unlike professional philosophers he did not seek to construct a system. Instead, he brought to bear upon each issue a multiplicity of insights. It would be a grievous error to seek to present him as a one-dimensional intellectual to try to simplify and systematize what refuses to be simplified and systematized. In trying to understand his view on any issue, one has to take into account his different insights as expressed in his various works and activities.

Secondly, Tagore not only had a long life, but to the very end he also kept renewing himself through daring new experiments and explorations. This is most dramatically evident in his drawings and paintings which belong to the last phase of his life and which present a dark and disturbing Dionysian personality in sharp contrast to the Apollonian figure of sweetness and light with which people had been familiar for several decades. But the transformations, albeit somewhat less dramatic, may also be seen in his other activities and expressions. One has, for example, only to compare the poetry of Manasi (1890) and Chitra (1896) with that of Gitanjali (1910), then Balaka (1916), then Mohua (1929) and Sesh Lekha (1941) to realise how the world within him changed, time and again, without losing any of its richness of texture and significance. Again, the reverential attitude and idealized view which Tagore had towards Hindu India's traditional Brahmanical culture and social organization when he founded the brahmacharyasram at Santiniketan in 1901 changed almost radically by the time the foundation stone of Visvabharati was laid in 1918. The experiment in Sriniketan showed further shifts in his outlook and priorities. I refrain from citing examples from other areas, but the main point to keep in mind is that Tagore's views kept changing and developing, that his mind was open to new experience and ideas and did not confine itself to a narrow set of conclusions, and that, although he was basically an idealist, he was also very much alive to the actualities of life and responded to them with a liveliness that did not weaken with age.

Having said this, I must immediately admit that for all his multiplicity and transformation there would appear to have formed quite early in his life some central core which gave all a substantial measure of togetherness and a certain conscious direction. This central core is best indicated by the expression, 'Unity in Diversity', which he often used in his essays and addresses. Throughout his life he consistently opposed uniformity and contrasted it to the ideal of unity. But true unity, Tagore believed, gave full recognition to diversity and sought harmony which, instead of reducing diversity, enriched each one of the discrete units. A deeply religious person, he had an unshakable faith in the existence of a supreme being who was both immanent and transcendent, but he did not subscribe to the notion propounded by Sankara that the world is *maya* or illusion, that the Absolute is the only reality, that atman, in the last analysis, is identical with *brahman*.

I have already cautioned that to look for a coherent system in his works would be worse than useless. There were shifts and variations, ambiguities and contradictions, but I incline to think that

basically he believed that God, Nature and Man needed one another, that the endless variety of forms in nature was essential to the Supreme Being's self-realization, that between the Supreme Being and each individual self there existed an intimate relationship of playfulness which was inexhaustible and which gave meaning to both. God, Nature and Man formed a cosmic unity in which each retained its distinct identity.

I am quite aware that this is a very bald way of presenting a profound intuition which Tagore expressed in a thousand beautiful metaphors and analogies in his poems, songs, plays and expository prose. I am not a religious person and, therefore, I recognize myself as an outsider when I refer to Tagore's God. However, I feel at the same time certain that Tagore's core idea of unity in diversity has great relevance to the issue under discussion. Even to a non-religious humanist like myself that idea seems to be quite sound and has strong intellectual, aesthetic and moral appeal. The intrinsic worth of that idea may be considered, even if it is taken out of its religious or metaphysical context. I shall briefly indicate the relevance of this idea at two clearly secular levels and then close with a pointer to the tragic sense which a secular humanist shares with a religious humanist like Tagore.

The first of these secular levels concerns the relation of the individual to any reified collectivity. To Tagore every individual is unique and irreplaceable, and freedom is essential to every individual's survival and development. Creativity, inquiry, conscience all are rooted in the individual's freedom. The individual grows not by submerging individuality, but by relating freely to other individuals, to history and nature while retaining its distinct identity. Tagore was thus basically a libertarian. He was opposed to every form of authoritarianism or tyranny domestic, institutional, social, cultural, political and economic. No walls are to be raised to circumscribe the self, whether by others or by itself. It is through harmony with one's milieus social, cultural and physical that the individual frees itself from its initial narrowness and discovers the macrocosmic universe within its microcosmic self. The purpose of education is to cultivate this harmony by responding to the plenitude of forms in nature and their rhythm, by voluntarily engaging in a variety of cooperative activities with other individuals through love, creativity and knowledge. Humanity will continue to grow and discover its inner wealth not by putting everyone into a common mould which seeks efficiency at the cost of freedom and creativity, but by appreciating the variousness of individuals and the universe and by pursuing the ideal of harmony.

This ideal of harmony, of achieving unity in diversity, was, for Tagore, no abstract notion, but was rooted in his personal experience and intuition. Nevertheless, he could not but recognize the existing gulf between the ideal and the actual. This is less evident in his songs, poems or expository prose than in his stories, novels or plays. It is not always noted by Tagore's interpreters that in the majority of his works which deal with persons and events, those individuals who are enlightened or who possess strong consciences or fine sensibilities sooner or later find themselves in conflict situations which defeat their pursuit of harmony. Any number of examples can be cited, but a few should suffice. In Sacrifice, the King, moved by compassion, decides to abolish animal sacrifice to the dark goddess, and finds his wife, brother, the priest and the people turning against him. Joy Sinha, the young man of conscience, chooses to sacrifice his own life to achieve what seems to be but a fragile and temporary peace. The idealist Nikhilesh in The Home and the World is alienated both from his home and his people by his intellectual and moral integrity. Mrinal in "Strir Patra" had to choose voluntary exile from her family and community because she could no longer bear their mean, insensitive, custom-bound, oppressive way of life. I am not sure that Tagore knew any more than I do how to resolve such a conflict situation and achieve genuine unity or reconciliation. So, while pursuit of harmony remained the ideal (with Tagore, the ideal was grounded in the

cosmic order), in actual life it was discord which often proved to be stronger and prevailed. Exploration of the psychological and institutional sources of discord was central to his major works of fiction.

At the second secular level, it is not the relation between a plurality of individuals or between the individual and institutions, but between various cultures and collectivities which Tagore sought to understand, and to the regulation of which he offered guidelines. On the one hand, he perceived and appreciated the distinctive achievements of various cultures; on the other, he stressed the common nature and pursuit of the human species, the inalienable humanity of humankind. Time and again he warned against cultural chauvinism which pitted one culture against another, and he wrote and spoke in favor of a universal culture to which the cultures of various peoples would contribute their finest achievements and from which they in their turn would draw nourishment. He was passionately opposed to nationalism, chauvinism, xenophobia, cultural aggressiveness and every form of imperialism or dominance of one people by another. The culture of a people is formed by history, geography, ethnic factors, language, religious beliefs and forms of social organization. It is not static, but capable of growth.

We have now reached a period of history where it is possible to evolve a universal culture without destroying or weakening the various indigenous cultures of the world. However, as in the case of individuals, here, too, the gulf between the ideal and actual proves to be very great. At one time Tagore had believed that India might provide the model where a diversity of peoples and cultures would be reconciled, and that they would evolve a unity where plurality would not be a source of conflict. But he lived to see the growing division in India between the Hindus and the Muslims, and among the Hindus between the traditional upper castes and the lower castes. He had at one time greatly admired the aesthetic refinement and the tradition of chivalry in Japan. And then Japan completely disillusioned him by launching a war of aggression against defenseless China. The removal of illiteracy in the Soviet Union had elated him, but its bombing of Finland exposed to him its aggressive and ruthless nature. He had publicly opposed Gandhi's non-cooperation, because he wanted reconciliation between the East and the West and believed that Europe, with it modern knowledge and democratic institutions, had much to offer. But in the end he saw the West bent on destroying itself and with it the fabric of modern civilization. The contrast between the spirit of hope in his lectures on The Religion of Man (1931) and the sense of dark despair in Crisis in Civilization (1941) is a revelation of the great tragedy of our time. "I had at one time believed," he wrote two months before his death, "that the springs of civilization would issue out of the heart of Europe. Today, when I am about to quit the world, that faith has gone bankrupt."

Nonetheless, being more than an idealist or an artist, Tagore did try during the last twenty years of his life to create an institution which would embody some of his basic ideas. Visvabharati was to be a place where, in a rural setting, many cultures will meet, enrich each other, and help in the evolution of a universal culture appropriate to our age. He invited scholars, artists, scientists, philosophers from different parts of India and abroad to meet young minds who also came from distant places with a genuine keenness to learn. At the same time, he wanted the university to relate intimately to the rural community, and established Sriniketan as complement to Santiniketan. He sought to remove the old walls of distrust, ignorance and pride which separate the people of one nation from another, community from community, caste from outcast, city from village. Visvabharati was a unique educational experiment befitting a man of Tagore's genius and supernumerary energy, vision, and creativity.

However, Tagore's brave efforts to create an institutional model which would approximate his ideal and inspire others to make similar experiments met with serious problems and obstacles even while he was still there to guide his associates and followers. The interwar decades in India saw the high tide of nationalism, and his vision of universalism and cultural unity between East and West provoked strong and widespread opposition from his own countrymen. In fact, the last twenty years of his life were also the loneliest; and his anguish and sense of alienation cried out from many of his paintings and a good part of his prose and poetry of this final period. The 30s were a dark decade when the world was moving inexorably 'towards the most devastating war in history'. It was hardly a time when people were in a mood to listen to the voice of reason or any message of reconciliation and peace.

Moreover, Tagore did not succeed in achieving harmony between Visvabharati and Sriniketan. The deeply rooted hierarchical and elitistic tradition of India's brahmanical culture stood in the way of the university people appreciating the vital importance of education for rural development. Despite Tagore's strenuous efforts, Santiniketan never accepted Sriniketan on equal terms. Besides, scholars who came from abroad, attracted by Tagore's ideas and personality, found it difficult to win friendly acceptance from their local colleagues, and most of them left after a little while. Weakened by age and illness, harried by lack of adequate financial resources for running the institutions, unable to find colleagues and followers who genuinely shared his ideals and visions, struggling against powerful currents of contemporary history, both Indian and international, Tagore witnessed the beginnings of decay set in at Visvabharati before his death in 1941. In the last more than half century, the situation has gone from bad to worse. His ideals today are hardly more than a memory. The institutions remain, but with neither vision nor dynamism of spirit.

And here lies the heart of the great tragedy which is as much Tagore's as it is ours. Pluralism is a fact of life, and so is cultural conflict. It is also certain that the road to survival and growth stretches along tolerance of differences, reconciliation, harmonization of different cultures and pursuit of unity in diversity. But there are dark forces and urges in the human psyche which are destructive in nature the Instinct of Thanatos or Death. Unless effective ways are found to regulate and subordinate them to the instinct of Eros or Life, the ideals of humanism, whether religious or secular, have hardly a chance to materialize. The problem is both psychological and institutional, or situational. What Freud called "deafness of mind" has to be cured, and the aggressive tendencies in man have to be successfully controlled by cultivation of the spirit of reason. On the other hand, our civilization has to be radically reconstructed so that it incorporates everyone in its benefits, and its fruits are not unjustly distributed.

This involves a two-fold revolution one within the human psyche, the other in the structure of societies and civilizations. It seems to me that while humanists have rightly focused their attention on the ideals which humanity must adopt and pursue to survive and grow, neither Tagore nor any other humanist could formulate and substantiate effective methods which would bring about this twofold revolution. On the one hand, the lust for power and possession and the aggressive tendency inherent in that lust and, on the other, the iniquitous structure of our civilization, which deprives the majority of the people and ensures the control and enjoyment of the benefits of power and possession by a few, are the principal sources of conflict. Our tragedy is that despite the lifelong efforts of extraordinary persons like Tagore, these sources continue to dominate the contemporary human condition. I see it as a supreme irony of history that what is called "globalization" today, made feasible by modern technology, is only leading towards imposition of one dominant culture,

namely the American, on the rest of the world by a process of cultural cannibalism, instead of promoting the principle of unity in diversity.

Chapter VI
Rabindranath Tagore's Concept of Social Integration

Shyamal Sarkar

Civil society was one of Tagore's chief concerns. He repeatedly wrote and spoke of it, and in his own way tried to foster it by experimenting with institutions which would serve as the foundation of civil society. E.P. Thompson, in his introduction to Tagore's Nationalism observes, "For Tagore, more than any other thinker of his time, had a clear conception of civil society, as something distinct from, and of stronger and more personal texture than, political and economic structures." The Visva-Bharati he proposed (a far cry from the central university of today) was the growing concrete shape of the foundation imagined for the superstructure of civil society. We have to give the Visva-Bharati he proposed a close look; a few other things also deserve our consideration.

Tagore, says E.P. Thompson, 'was a founder of anti-politics'. This means that even during the phase of the most widespread political activities in India's struggle for independence Tagore continued to maintain that village reconstruction was a more fruitful activity for the purpose of the real deliverance of the Indian people. Not only Indians, but India survived in India's villages. The uninterrupted continuity of Indianness in the Indian villages was possible not because they could offer any effective resistance to the successive hordes of invaders and colonizers, but because these invaders and colonizers thought they could afford not to take their existence into serious account. Down the ages and stages of foreign rules, the Indian (but not exclusively Hindu) civil society survived the political upheavals and economic transitions without an impact of fundamental character. The trickle of benefits that accrued to the village society as a result of changing economic forces did not inspire the crossing of any technological border which could have exercised a decisive influence. Macaulay's ideas about westernization of Indians were true only about a fringe of Indian urban society. Outside the urban fraction, the plural civil society went on in Indian villages much in the manner of a hundred years ago. The British Indian army and the British Indian lower bureaucracy performed for British Imperialism whatever British imperialism desired to squeeze out of this sub-continent. Distance and discontinuity amongst villages were not annihilated, and the civil society in rural India remained more or less beyond the pale of impregnation of Western social, political and economic ideas and the consequent changes in structures which could have been induced by radically new ideas,

Tagore recognized this and was, in fact, pleased with this. But he did not idealize all aspects of living in this society. He was put out by the feudalistic limitedness -- economic, social and moral -- and repeatedly pointed out the need for reforms, and, in his own way, carried out some reforms on his own means in estates he managed on behalf of his father. He found in this plural civil society the seat of Indian creativity, the fountainhead of multifarious cultural manifestations which together constituted the unity of Indian culture. To respect the vitality and legitimacy of civil society is at one and the same time to discountenance the totalization, monopolization, mechanization, abstraction which are features of aggressive, neo-colonial societies. Neo-colonialism is the new economic mask of the belligerent nationalism of the recent past.

Tagore wanted to posit the civil society he experienced in Indian societies against the covert neo-colonial aggression making its appearances in his own day. He proposed another antidote in

the form of a new university that he conceived, his Visva-Bharati. The motto with which the university was founded included:

This is Visva-Bharati where the world
makes a home in a single nest…
We are of the faith that Truth is one and
undivided, though diverse may be the ways
which lead us to it. Through separate
paths pilgrims from different lands arrive
at the same shrine of truth.…
…
So unto this Visva-Bharati we render our
homage by weaving garlands with flowers
of learning gathered from all quarters
of the earth. To all devotees of Truth, both
from the West and from the East, we extend our hand with love,

Compared with the objectives of any institution of higher learning at any time anywhere, the motto of Visva-Bharati must be considered unique. Pursuit of learning is not acknowledged as an end in itself. It is set against the perspective of the achievable unity and solidarity of all civil societies, along with their distinct heritages of value and the perpetually active cultural and spiritual exercises. Tagore conceived of his institution as 'The Center of Indian Culture', but we need to know of the proposed activities in slightly greater detail than will be revealed by the mere name of the Center. In Tagore's own words, "On each race is the duty laid, to keep alight its own lamp of mind, as its part in the illumination of the world. To break the lamps of any people, is to deprive it of its rightful place in the world festival," The noblest experience is that of the ever brightening world festival of light, every ray of which is the effulgence of one national mind or another. The effulgence starts at the moment of origin of any particular society, and every contribution of undeniable value will be progressively added through the perpetually evolving life process of that society -- of every society. The attraction of the world festival of light is spontaneous and unquenchable in every human heart unless this be irredeemably brutalized. The love of this light is the urge for answers for all the problems of existence which agonize every human heart. The social mind, in a combined single and collective effort, thinks, feels and gropes. Education energizes this groping and helps find slices of truth. Society makes this slice of truth its own wherever it may have originated. What is of crucial importance is the perception of truth and not the source from which it arrives. Yet, the significance of the sources of the arrival of truth cannot be detached from the truths themselves, and hence education is a concourse of truth and the sources and processes of its arrival.

In more concrete terms he says:

My suggestion is that we should generate somewhere a centripetal force which will attract and group together from different parts of our land and different ages all our materials of learning and thus create a complete and moving orb of Indian culture.

At one and the same time he cautions:

We have come to understand in modern times that any special truth, or special culture which is wholly dissociated from the universal, is not true at all.

Indeed his understanding of the Indian past was that:

Our forefathers did spread a single pure white carpet, whereon all the world was cordially invited to take its seat in amity and good fellowship.

The basic impulse for Tagore's conceptions of ' The Center of Indian Culture' as a seat where all the distinct cultures of the world should meet and creatively negotiate at the level of equality and complete acceptance of one another was supplied by his vision of India's history. In ancient India, as perhaps in all ancient societies, social, personal life was lived at a safe distance from the political and revolved around features of civil society. Thoughts were directed mainly to the evolution of diverse aspects of the civil society. Hence, successive periods of the Indian history proved receptive to various groups of settlers or even invaders and assimilated all the novel and noble features of these peoples. Indian culture remained a developing synthesis, seeking harmonization with alien but welcome, distinct but absorbable elements.

In his interpretation of India's history, he undertakes to show how the history of India constitutes a process of assimilation through different epochs of history, through periods of trials and struggles with aggressive antagonistic forces. The specific historical situations which served as the objective basis for the two primary epics of India, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, give us an insight into the emergence of a new age, with a new outlook upon the life of societies, races and ideas which were initially hostile to each other, This remains the abiding spirit of the history of India. At that stage the achievement consisted in the reconciliation of two opposite principles, that of self-preservation, represented by the Brahmin, and that of self-expression, represented by the Kshatriya. When the first overtures towards social union were being made, it became necessary for the Aryans to come to an understanding with the non-Aryan strata of the population. At a succeeding phase, the Sakas and the Huns poured into India in repeated hordes, and this threatened that the very racial and cultural identity of Indians being would be swept away.

But an act of self-preserving resistance and sheer cultural vitality enabled India to assimilate the invaders. The retention of racial identity to the extent it is a reflex of a distinct cultural identity is a sine qua non for the synthesizing attitude and act. The urge for protection of cultural identity manifested itself through new compilations and collections of the extant cultural materials which served to define and preserve the synthesizing cultural identity. Visualizing the whole as complete made for a new, inspiring self-awareness. The surviving, as well as renewing self-awareness, is a condition of an ever-enriching culture which generates its own principle of creative continuity and its vigor for enfranchising others. Race-mingling and value-absorbing became a unified and unhindered process. Harmony of component differences came to be organically effected through a long history which confronted India with complex problems of meaningful adjustment. In a climatic passage in his A Vision of India's History (Visva-Bharati, 1962, p. 42) Tagore observes:

…The India of to-day has roused herself once more to search out her truth, her harmony, her oneness, not only among her own constituent elements, but with the great world. The current of her life, which had been dammed up in stagnation has found some breach in the wall and can feel the pulse of the tidal waves of humanity outside. We shall learn that we can reach the great world of man, not through the effacement, but through the expansion of our own individuality. We shall

know for certain that, just as it is futile mendicancy to covet the wealth of others in place of our own, so also to keep ourselves segregated and starved by refusing the gift which is the common heritage of man because it is brought to us by a foreign messenger, only makes for utter destitution.

Thus, vision of Indian history, as it has progressed through centuries of conflict and resolution in integration in a higher synthesis, is the broad perspective that has lent meaning and intelligibility to Tagore's conception of an international university which expresses the spiritual craving of an ancient civilization. This spirit seeks fulfillment in a complete freedom of creativity which alone assures individual as well as collective self-realization.

Part III
Civil Society and Modern Indian Political Life

Chapter VII
Civil Society and Basic Needs in the Public Sector: Economics in India

Anupam Gupta

The needs of health, sanitation, education, etc., cannot be satisfied individually. These are social needs unlike the consumption of food, clothing, etc., such needs can be satisfied only by social action. The market mechanism based on self-interest can allocate resources for the satisfaction of individual wants. But such allocation may leave unfulfilled even the private need for the basic means of livelihood of some people. Public finance assigns to the state the entire responsibility of satisfaction of social wants and assurance of the basic means of livelihood of the people. The state is to carry out this responsibility by means of a democratic political system. But in reality the need for social wants is felt by integrated social groups. If such integrated social groups, called civil societies, were granted an autonomous role in the determination and implementation of social wants, the social services could be shaped more according to the preferences of the people, and responsibilities could be better assigned to them in their role as members of such societies.

The political and economic history of India over the periods of British rule and especially after the independence of the country have led to the predominance of state and political parties and the marginalization of society. Unlike Western European countries, India neither went through a history of formation of civil societies under modern conditions nor experienced any interaction of social institutions with the democratic state for gaining autonomy. Through education and publicity, consciousness about the need for civil societies has to be created in India. A long term perspective regarding the self-interest of individuals may serve as a preliminary experiment for realizing the importance of civil society in the fulfillment of social needs.

The Economics and Politics of Public Finance

Any standard textbook of public economics starts with a description of various types of needs which cannot be fulfilled by the market. These are called market failure in the conventional jargon of economics. The three familiar cases of market failure are supply under increasing returns to scale, externalities in consumption, production and distribution, and the provision of public goods. In his celebrated book, The Theory of Public Finance, R.A. Musgrave used the term "Social Wants" in place of what is now commonly called "Public Good." The term "Social Want" made the social role of the consumer for these type of wants more explicit and could have been taken as a hint to the study of human behavior and institutions involved in their satisfaction. However, Musgrave went ahead by assigning the entire role of the satisfaction of "Social Want" to the state. The term "Public Good" originates from the dichotomy between private household and public household and does not leave any scope for considering the role of social institutions formed of private households and performing independently of the public household of the state.

The problem of public goods is sometimes shown as the extreme form of externalities. The conventional types of analyses and formalizations leading to optimal and market-clearing solutions

were described as an engineering approach by Amartya Sen.[1] In addition to the standard cases of market failure in the textbooks of public finance, arguments are presented in support of intervention in the functioning of the free market under certain situations. One such situation is the existence of a monopoly power on the part of some suppliers of commodities. In certain other situations people may consider it desirable to provide children some nutritious food or vaccine against a contagious disease at a price lower than their cost of production and, on a parallel logic, to charge a price higher than the costs of production on articles of addition. In all these cases, either the good cannot be provided by the market or, even if it is provided, the provision will be either inefficient according to the principle of allocation of resources or not optimum according to some standard of social welfare. The two fundamental theorems of welfare economics provide the economic criterion of efficient allocation of resources and scope for prior redistribution of resources among the agents, so that the ultimate efficient allocation of resources could also be socially optimal.

All these functions of redistribution of resources, correction of externalities, provision of the public good, promotion of consumption of merit goods, discouragement of consumption of demerit goods and, finally, moderation of the market for attainment of efficient allocation of resources are taken to be assigned to the government. The economic needs that remain unfulfilled in the market are trusted to be properly executed by the state. The standard textbooks on public finance do not raise any doubt over the capacity of the state in carrying out functions in the areas in which markets fail.[2] James Buchanan raised questions regarding the ability of the state to make arrangements for providing the goods and services and executing the tasks in which the market failed.

In economics the concept of market is based on transactions according to the self-interest of the agents. These same agents in their capacity as citizens constitute the state. The citizens are assumed to perform according to their self-interest in the markets and, simultaneously, as members of the state, they are to be assumed to correct the failures of the market for which the citizens themselves are responsible. The representatives of the citizens in the legislatures and the persons in the executive are also, in their individual capacity, economic agents in the market. So, Buchanan contends that assignment of the entire responsibility for the correction of the market to the state implies a dichotomy in the personality of the citizens.[3] On the other hand, avoidance of any question regarding motivations of the individuals constituting the state and the assumption of the state as a monolithic entity isolated from the self-interest of the citizens amounts to neglect of the political aspects of the problem. Buchanan advocated that, together with the assignment of functions to the state, it is essential to conceive of a structure of the state in which execution of the assigned functions would be feasible.

As a model of a political system for execution of the economic functions assigned to the state, Buchanan suggested administration based on various types of rules. The rules are framed by majority vote in the legislature. The scope of revision of the various rules will depend upon the social cost of such revision. The social cost involves the cost of time required and tensions and strains suffered in the resolution of the disagreements among different groups of people, as well

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[1] Amartya Sen, *On Ethics and Economics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), p. 8.

[2] R.A. Musgrave, *The Theory of Public Finance* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1959), ch. 1.

[3] James M. Buchanan, "Politics, Policy and Pigovian Margins," in A.J. Staaf and F.X. Tannian, eds. *Externalities* (New York: Dunellen, 1962). "The only behavioral model appropriate to the Pigovian analysis is that which has been called 'the bifurcated man'. Man must be assumed to shift his psychological and moral gears when he moves from the realm of organized market activity to that of organized political activity and vice versa" (p. 184).

as the associated financial cost.[4] The scope of revision of various rules could be variously restricted by specification of the qualification of the majority required for such revisions in the legislature and the minimum interval of time over which no revision would be permitted, and the rule would remain valid. This is the positive theory of public good of Buchanan. But such rules do not provide any safeguard for what is called "the free riders problem." The same person who had subscribed to the framing of a rule as a member of the legislature can very well evade the rule as an individual agent in the market. The required payment for a service can be evaded and a free ride may be taken on a public service. For this purpose, if necessary, collusion can be formed between the agent in his capacity as individual consumer and representative of the state administration.

Buchanan also indicated that the chance of detection of evasion is higher in a small community than in a large community.[5] Where there is higher risk of detection, an individual would realize that fellow citizens in the group would also withhold their contribution to the cost of the public service and thus the entire service would not materialize. This brings the matter down to the basic issue: civil society, politics and the state.

A public service can be provided through the initiatives and supervision of small beneficiary groups. Different beneficiary groups formed for the realization of various aspects of social welfare are the civil societies.[6] These groups constitute the social entities and are not to be identified with political organizations. Political organizations crystalize into political parties recognized by the state. Their ultimate aim is to control the center of power of the state. Any activity at the local, or grassroot level of a political party has to be consistent with decisions of the central committee of the political party. On the other hand, civil societies can function on particular issues or for the realization of particular objectives autonomously, independently of any need to maintain consistency with the motivations and interests of any central body.

Although the relationship between civil society, political system and economic development is a highly important matter and merits careful analysis, so far it has remained almost neglected in the various scientific disciplines. Classification of goods and services into public and private to some extent depends upon the social arrangements and political systems. Even for privates goods, the allocation of resources depends upon the definition of rights and the availability of information. The rights basically are defined in the constitution of a state, and in that respect these are political matters. But actual enjoyment of rights by the citizens to a very large extent depends on social awareness and an appreciation of the nature of interdependence between the individual and society in a state. Social awareness, the realization of the need for dissemination of information, arising out of a sense of interdependence between individual and society, are aspects of the culture of the citizens of a state. The culture of the citizens evolves through the historical experiences of the people and crystallizes into particular types of correspondence between economics, politics and the social situation of a state.

During the formation of the capitalist system and particularly under the industrial revolution, commercial and industrial towns were established and developed in Western European countries. The leaders of such towns formed enfranchised boroughs and purchased or won rights from the monarch for autonomy on various civil matters. The civil societies in Western Europe grew with

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[4] James M. Buchanan, *The Demand and Supply of Public Goods* (Chicago: Rand MacNally and Company, 1968). "In either small or large groups, it seems obvious that the recognition of the importance of decision-making costs, along with the expectation that similar choice situations will recur over time, may suggest the relative efficiency of institutions or rules of choice" (p. 155).

[5] Buchanan, op.cit, section on "A Probabilistic Approach to the Free Rider's Choice" in ch. 5.

[6] "Civil society describes the associations in which we conduct our lives, and which owe their existence to our needs and initiatives, rather than to the state" (p. 237). Ralph Dabrendorf, "Economic Opportunity, Civil Society and Political Liberty," *Development and Chance* (1996), pp. 229-249.

the growth of trade and industry and engaged in continuous conflict and negotiation for the sharing of power with the political authority. The question of the relative priority of civil society and the state in the determination and control of various rights and functions of the citizens engaged the scholars and statesmen in continuous debate in England, France, Germany and the United States in different periods of history since the early 18th century. The idea of the state as a dominant civil society, having priority over the various social organizations and groups, also emerged with the progress of democratic systems in the Western European states.[7]

Ralph Dahrendorf has recently expressed concern about the changing relationship between economics, politics and social situations in the wake of globalization in the economically developed Western countries. According to Dahrendorf, the problem of readjustment between these different aspects of a state are being resolved by particular types of authoritarianism of the state in the East and South-East Asian countries.[8] This type of general state in India has a different set of features from those of most of the East and South-East Asian states. These features are obviously historically determined. The change of culture following from the evolution of history that has led to the marginalization of civil society and predominance of the political factors in India merits a thorough analysis.[9]

State and Society in Indian Politics

Among civil societies, political organizations and economic forces, political organizations have achieved predominance in India. The economic policies of the state are largely shaped by the political system. The social forces have almost lost their independent role in the system of management of the country. This development emerged through a monatomic, unilinear course of events of the history of India over the last two and a half centuries. The British colonial government organized the state of India in a manner such that the coordination of activities of the whole country was entirely brought under the control of the center of political power. The nationalist movement for freedom of the Indians against the British rulers was mainly directed towards winning over that centralized control of congress by the Indian political party from the British colonial power. Before the advent of British rule in India, political activities were limited to the relationship of the monarch to the people. There was no political party and no movement for delegation of political power to any group of people. Rajni Kothari wrote the following about the role of politics and social aspects of life in pre-colonial India. Under the Hindu social order:

Changes in political fortunes did not greatly affect the business of social living. Dynasties rose and fell, empires spread and collapsed, but much of Indian society went on its own way…. Development of political dominance and administrative hierarchy (in the Muslim period) had no great impact for local institutions and village affairs, and still less on habits, beliefs and traditions of the masses of people that lived in the villages. For the most part, old forms of social and occupational organization continued.[10]

Monarchs had their seat of power in the very few towns which were of comparatively smaller size. The overwhelming majority of the population lived in the villages and were guided by a

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[7] John Keane, "Despotism and Democracy," in John Keane, ed., *Civil Society and the State. New European Perspectives* (London: Versa, 1988).

[8] Dahrendorf, op.cit.

[9] Rajni Kothari, *Politics in India* (Orient Longman, 1994), p. 31.

[10] Kothari, op.cit., pp. 32-33.

cultural milieu of social customs and practices. These social customs and the associated culture were founded on the value system of the people. Many of the services nowadays called public good in the theory of public finance were mainly provided and regulated by the village societies. To some extent the values that determined the culture and shaped the social system were derived from the various concepts of Dharma or principles of human behavior as laid down in the epics and in the basic texts of religion and ethics. Concentration of economic power at the center of political authority by the British colonial government led to a shift of wealth, as well as the literate upper section of the society, from the villages to the towns. Some of these towns were newly established by the British colonial power, the remaining were selected for their advantageous location for British interests of commerce and administration. The rest of the country, consisting mostly of villages and some old towns, which were deprived of their importance under the new system of coordination of activities for centralization of power, lost most of their traditional control over the public goods.

During the independence movement there was a considerable amount of debate among the nationalist leaders on the need in the economic development of the country for centralized political power, on the one hand, and decentralized social institutions, on the other. This debate is often epitomized as the difference in the economic and social programs of Gandhi and Nehru.[11] Both Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma M.K. Gandhi, irrespective of their differences in matters of detail, upheld the need for a revival of village societies for the provision of such aspects of public good as health, sanitation, education, drinking water, irrigation and control of externalities for productive activities of cultivation, small-scale industries and trade. Both tried to substantiate their principles with the examples of practices in ancient India and had high regard for the ways of life in the hermitages described in the epics and the classical Indian literature. British rule had introduced the poetical ideals of democracy and the welfare state in administration. The nationalist leaders of India were trained in the political ideals that emerged from the industrial revolution of Western Europe.

The freedom movement was mainly organized towards the mobilization of support of people for the achievement of political power over the state. British rule had consolidated the administration of various regions of the country into a centralized power. Regional political forces lost their importance and were subsumed under a central political force. The Indians inherited this centralized form of politics and administration, and all political parties, both before and particularly after independence, put high emphasis on their national character.[12] The nationalist leaders gave very little attention to the generation of a culture for assuming social responsibilities under changing economic conditions. The attempts of Gandhi, Tagore and a few other nationalist leaders for articulation and coordination of social forces and the development of a sense of social responsibility were isolated events. Notwithstanding the fact that in many cases these attempts were based on faith in the possibility of the revival of a pre-industrial form of social culture and values, there was no nationwide or widely proclaimed movement for adapting the culture and values of the people to a new sense of social allegiance. The recent trend of formation of regional political parties is a sign of awareness on the part of the various ethnic and linguistic groups of

[11] Anupam Gupta, "State and Society in Indian Politics; Review of Crisis and Change in Contemporary India," *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, New Series, vol. 5, mos. 3 and 4, Nov. 1994, April 1995 (Santiniketan). Articles by Bhikhu Parekh, Anthony J. Parel, Judith M. Brown and Thomas Pantham in Upendra Baxi and Bhikkhu Parekh, eds., *Crisis and Change in Contemporary India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1994).

[12] For a good view of the development of national institutions under various compulsions of legitimation and balancing in Indian politics, see Rajni Kothari, op.cit. Partha Chatterjee, "Development Planning and the Indian State," in Partha Chatterjee, ed., *State and Politics in India* (Delhi: Oxford University, 1997).

their share in the control of state politics. But such political parties cannot be expected to bring about the institutional changes necessary for promoting autonomous civil societies.

Civil societies are formed to achieve selected social objectives independently of the state. In a nation with well-developed civil societies, an individual can be simultaneously a member of various social associations and organizations. These different organizations are supposed to function for the fulfillment of different social needs. This is a system of pluralism in which no social formation is assumed to subsume the role of any other social formation. Thus, an individual as a social being, under such a situation, could be simultaneously a member of a labor organization for his sustenance, a parents organization for the education of his children, a community organization for the development and maintenance of facilities of sanitation and public health, and various other associations serving various other needs of the people in a society. Due to the attribution of excessive importance to the political power of the state for economic development of the country, the needs of civil societies and pluralism were completely overlooked in India.[13]

In order to pull the economy out of a low-level equilibrium, the state had to take a large role in the mobilization of resources and organization of economic activities in India. As a result, the state had to establish and maintain organizations and public bodies for providing various different services. The political parties, in their endeavor to gain control over the center of power, automatically established control over different aspects of the economy. Irrespective of the ideology of the political party, the direction flowed from the center to the local areas. The local associations and societies are manipulated for strengthening the hold of the center. The social organizations in the various regions and localities have to depend on the central political leaders for fulfillment of any local need. Thus the social organizations of laborers, parents, students, and residents of civic areas become affiliates of central political parties, completely devoid of autonomy. Here it is necessary to sort out the difference between the so-called control of political parties at the grassroots level and the autonomy of civil societies. Government will have to take a predominant role in the mobilization of financial resources in a developing country like India.

So, it goes without saying that most of the social services in India have to be funded by the public authority of the state. But public funding of an institution does not essentially mean abrogation of its autonomy. This matter has been almost completely lost from the consciousness of the intelligentsia. So much so that sometimes Vice Chancellors of state-funded universities put up signs stating "Government of India" on the number plate of their cars.

Basic Needs of the People

In a labor surplus economy like India, for quite sometime, economic development will mean satisfaction of the basic needs of the people. Around 40 percent of the population live below subsistence in India. The minimum nutritional requirements of these people for survival are not satisfied. Besides, for 90 percent of the population economic transactions are not supported by any legally defensible contract. Even most of those living above the subsistence level do not enjoy a standard of living that can be called good in any modern sense. For most of these people basic needs consist of food, clothing, fuel and shelter. These consumables, taken together, are conventionally brought under a homogeneous and measurable scale of per capita consumption in

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[13] Paul Seabright contends, "A genuinely pluralist theory must count it a social good that there may exist multiple views of the individual good that are not subsumable under an encompassing theory of the individual good." Does the very notion of an economic policy presuppose that the government has its own comprehensive theory of the individual good?" (p. 393).

For a discussion on the issues of pluralism and fulfillment of basic needs, see Paul Seabright, "Pluralism and the Standard of Living," in Martha C. Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, eds., The Quality of Life (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

monetary terms. For a long time, by economic development, people meant rise in per capita income in terms of money at constant prices. Since the mid-70s, increasing emphasis is being put on the different aspects that condition the quality of life. Thus health, sanitation and education are considered together with nutrition as elementary items of basic needs.[14]

The constitutional provision of equality of rights and opportunity restrains the state and the citizens from the violation of freedom of any person. But such legal provisions cannot ensure the existence of necessary conditions for enjoying freedom. Amartya Sen made a distinction between freedom considered as protection of rights and enjoyment of freedom arising from achievement of the rights. Freedom can be enjoyed by a persons if they can have initial access to the basic means of livelihood.[15] A welfare state distributes funds for rural employment in public works and also for generation of facilities of self-employment. However, the amount of funds is scarcely adequate for the magnitude of the needs. The quality of life depends on fulfillment of various other basic needs, besides per capita consumption. In order to assess the level of satisfaction of the basic needs and also the quality of life, several other aspects like life expectancy at birth, infant mortality rate, and literacy ratio are taken together with per capita consumption. Moreover, the potentialities of economic progress and opportunities for the achievement of the facilities of life may be assessed by indicators of transport communication, irrigation and energy. These various indicators, like per capita consumption, life expectancy at birth, literacy ratio, length of road per person, and so on, are separate items and cannot be put together into the construction of a common homogeneous index. These various items, even when kept separate as elements of a vector, do not provide any idea about their quality. The quality of education or quality of roads cannot be deciphered from the figures measuring ratios and lengths of the respective items. The above items are merely some examples of the public responsibilities of redistribution of income and public goods of various types. In India these services are provided by the state. They are considered as goods and services constituting the social want aspect of the basic needs of the society.

A question arises about the efficiency of the state in the provision of public goods. The quality of service cannot be maintained without social vigilance. Even the quantity of service would be affected by leakages in the process of transfer from the source of the service to the ultimate target beneficiaries. The particular nature of the services, such as sanitation, public health facilities, communication, social conservation, etc., cannot be properly selected and generated without participation of the beneficiary. Social participation in the generation of public goods at the local level helps to shape the service according to the preferences of the targeted population and can better promote social welfare. The system of financial audit simply checks whether the funds are utilized according to the norms of allocation which were set by the legislature. The executive has to take the sanction of the legislature on the broad outlines of allocation of resources, but the former enjoys a considerable amount of freedom on the matter of details of allocation and utilization.

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[14] Ashok Rudra, The Basic Needs Concert and Its Implementation in India Development Planning (Bangkok: ARTEP, 1978). "In the case of health, as in that of education, failure of the minimum needs targets being met arises less from any lack of financial, material or human resources than from an absence of the right kind of social ethos which is the result of not having been the right kind of social movements" (p. 46).

However, Rudra did not make any distinction between political movements and social movements, and to him social movements are motivated by an all-embracing political ideology. In this monograph, fulfillment of the basic needs of employment, primary education and health are taken as aspects of rights in the Indian Constitution. The matter actually is not so. These basic needs are incorporated in the Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution. An exercise on the role of civil societies in this realization of the goals laid down in the Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution would be useful.

[15] Amartya Sen, "The Concept of Development," ch. 1 in H. Chenery and T.N. Srinivasan, eds., *Handbook of Development Economics*, vol. 1 (North Holland, 1991). Sea, *On Ethics and Economics*, op.cit., pp. 56-57.

Moreover, assessment of the quality of service is completely beyond the capacity of the audit administration.

Political Control over Basic Needs

Political parties assume a major role in indirectly monitoring the generation and distribution of public services in India. The political parties utilize this power of control over the public services as a means of maintaining their hold over the people. For the fulfillment of basic needs, be it provision of food grains or ordinary textiles or construction of roads or running of a medical dispensary, the people have to establish links with the political parties. This leads to the formation of various types of nexus between the political functionaries, bureaucracy and the economic agents, and creates complications in the dispensation of the right kind and the proper quantity of the services. Sometimes the administration takes special steps for vigilance. But such steps simply increase the cost of services without any guarantee that the standards of quality and quantity will be maintained in the long run.

The amorphous entity of the state to which the entire responsibility of correction of market failure is assigned in the literature of public finance, in reality performs with the help of political parties in India. The political parties in India are historically oriented towards control of the seat of power at the center. The basic needs of the people, instead of motivating the political parties in the formulation of programs of social action, are manipulated for establishing control over the center of state power. Here the people at the local level, instead of registering demands for public services according to local preferences, depend upon the decision of the center. The demand, instead of flowing from the various local social groups of people to the different higher levels of administration, has to be adjusted to the services decided at the center. This is the form of authoritarianism that is found to exist in a country with a huge public sector like India. Here economic development in the form of the fulfillment of basic needs is supported by the political system. There is no doubt that this political system is based on the principles of political liberty. But political liberty by no means ensures social freedom in the determination and control of means for the fulfillment of social needs. The social freedom necessary for designing the public services according to the preferences of the social groups cannot be achieved without proper autonomy of the social institutions. The autonomy of the social institutions gives shape to pluralism in society. Formation of a society based on the principles of pluralism, consisting of autonomous civil societies has certain essential preconditions in the domain of the culture of the people.

Motivation of Achievement and Social Behavior

It has been stated before that prior to the advent of British rule politics did not play any important role in the life of people in India. Social and community services were provided by social groups according to the longstanding customs in the localities. With industrialization, a democratic system of government developed in Western Europe. British rule in India, on the one hand, led to dissolution of the earlier social institutions and, on the other hand, brought the ideas of modern political systems and institutions to the newly educated people of India. In the interest of economic development, the centralization of administration which was achieved under the British government, was consolidated further by the forces of state in India after independence. In this situation, revival of the preindustrial form of social groups in the localities, as advocated by

people like Gandhi and Tagore, appeared as utopian.[16] However, the basic principles of the development of a pluralistic society which was conceived by them may be cultivated for the derivation of new forms of social institutions that may be appropriate in contemporary economic conditions. Thus, the ideal of self-rule, "Swaraj," of Gandhi may be taken as the essence of the idea for the development of autonomous social groups.

Some people had doubted the relevance of continuation of rural reconstruction work in an educational institution founded by Tagore after assumption of the rural development work by the state as a part of national economic planning in India after independence. But the remoteness of the state from the lives of the village folk and the growth of political parties as intermediaries between the state and the various groups of people in their localities has upheld the need for the formation of civil societies. An educational institution situated in the proximity of a group of villages, following the experiments of Tagore, can very well undertake programs of rural development. Due to almost total denial of autonomy to the various publicly funded institutions by the state over the last 50 years, the scope of such activities appears to be totally lost in India. The political functionaires command control over various associations like trade unions, student unions, and other types of organizations of citizens formed for management of different local needs, and use such control as means of wielding power over the state. Due to the complete absence of a culture of functioning with autonomous bodies for providing public services, the above tendency has been sustained and crystallized into socially accepted forms over the 50 years since the independence of India.

The culture of autonomous civil societies, independent of political affiliation, can be developed through inculcation of a different set of values. A change of values from those of dependence on the state for personal gains to those of action for the generation of social services by the enterprise of autonomous bodies can be achieved through alternative motivations. In the interest of social reform and the economic development of India after independence, the government took upon itself the responsibility of large scale mobilization of financial resources. But it is necessary for the political parties to realize that public funding of services does not mean that the ownership or the agencies producing those services should essentially be vested in the state. The political parties will have to cultivate a set of values that would permit the existence of independent associations in the autonomous public bodies like educational institutions, hospitals and civic societies functioning with public funds. Civil societies, if properly empowered, can act much better as monitors of autonomous institutions funded by the government than the existing system of state audit. The members of civil societies should enjoy freedom to cultivate their motivations of achievement together with their self-interest. Amartya Sen discussed the various types of motivations starting from self-interest at one extreme to the urge for achievement on the other. In economic theory, only behavior based on the motivation of self-interest is treated as rational.

A method of derivation of conclusions based on maximization of a homogeneous entity like utility related to self-interest of individuals in a world without externality is highly valued in economics. Such a method is commended for its logical consistency. The conclusions are sometimes verified by aspects of real life. A person enjoys freedom in the pursuit of one's own well-being as well as in the pursuit of the interests of the society. The actions of a person for promoting the interests of a social institution need not have any immediate relevance to self-

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[16] M.K. Gandhi, *Hind. Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* (Ahmedabad: Navajiban publishing House, 1933). Rabindranath Tagore (Thakur), *Swadeshi samia. A Collection of Essays* in Bengali (Visva-Bharati, Calcutta: Bengali year 1393 [1987 A.D.]).

interest. In the book, On Ethics and Economics, Amartya Sen starts with the famous question of Socrates, "How should one live?" -- and concludes with the following statement:

Behavior is ultimately a social matter, as well, and thinking in terms of what 'we' should do, or what should be 'our' strategy, may reflect a sense of identity involving recognition of other people's goals and the mutual dependencies involved.[17]

One may think of establishing a link between self-interest and social interest through extension of the planning horizon of the individual. The matter can be demonstrated with examples from everyday life. Even educated persons are found to encroach on common goals through extension of the boundaries of their private holdings. Such activities are dictated by pure self-interest. With the increase of population, reduction in the size of common goods inevitably leads to problems of sanitation and creates health hazards. In most cases the educated and well-to-do persons who illegally annex areas of the commons do not themselves benefit from of this additional land during their life time. The motivation behind such illegal annexation is to bequeath a larger property to their progeny. Here they fail to understand that the welfare of the progeny would be served more by leaving room for better sanitation in the future than leaving additional land for them. One can find many similar examples of the short-sighted ways of functioning of the people. Most such people may be educated in the conventional sense. Personal alliance of individual customers with employees in organizations of public services like railways, telephone, public works, post office, etc., does not help in the general improvement of the quality of service. The customer establishing such personal alliance may have protection of his immediate service in view. But formation of a consumer's organization in such cases might help to simultaneously protect the immediate benefit and improve the quality in the future. Here the state should also provide status to the civil societies, like consumers forums, through framing appropriate laws. Educational reform through both formal instructions and informal publicity can bring long run interests into the cognitive world of the individual. Such change in consciousness that extends the time horizon of concern of a person might generate social interest out of the self-interest of the individuals.

The basic needs of public services including public provision of essential consumables to the poor can more efficiently be served by civil societies. The small social groups would, in such a case, on the one hand, be able to design the public good according to their specific needs and, on the other hand, closely monitor and regulate the performance in order to safeguard against "free rides" by any truant individual. For this purpose, civil societies of various forms should enjoy a reasonable degree of autonomy. A culture of "self rule" and sense of independence from political parties in the matter of the fulfillment of local needs will have to be developed.

Political parties should be concerned with the control and management of the affairs of the state. Various local needs should be regulated by different civil societies. Under such a system the generation and distribution of services for the fulfillment of basic needs of the people will be more efficient. Here the nature of pluralism will be multi-dimensional and every individual will enjoy greater freedom for exercising his rights of achievement. The political parties will derive legitimacy for their state programs from the harmony of their actions with free civil societies, rather than from dominance and control on of latter.

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[17] Amartya Sen, *On Ethics and Economics*, op.cit., pp. 2, 85. Amartya Sen, *Inequality Reexamined* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), ch. 4.

This will help to eliminate the maladies of overcentralization and allround dependence on the state that have developed in India over the last two and half centuries. The main program should be to encourage individuals to extend their time horizon of assessment of self-interest. Such extension of the time horizon may create scope for a transformation of motivation. The amorphous concept of the state in the theory of public finance will gain more concrete shape through such exercise.

Chapter VIII
Civil Society and Western Societies:
Tradition, Modernity and Communism

Sanjeeb Muirherjee

Traditional societies are suspicious of the idea of civil society. The dominant version of civil society is part of the Western imperialist onslaught on the non-Western societies under the aegis of colonial enlightenment. Civil society is contrasted with natural society, the primitive state of nature which provides the foundational distinction between culture and nature, and it became 'the white man's burden' to 'civilize' the non-Western societies.

Charles Taylor has read the European Enlightenment[1] as a project which redefined the self and established a new relationship with nature and society. The self was like John Dalton's concept of the atom -- the smallest, self-sufficient, indivisible whole which is the building block of society. Each self-pursues happiness, which it defines in its own way and uses the reason with which it is endowed to achieve its self-appointed goal. Hence, reason becomes the instrument of the pursuit of self-interest. And freedom is all about freely choosing one's goals and happiness, and having the ability and conditions to pursue them.

All rational beings desire happiness; they are equal and equally free to pursue and choose their life plans.

In order to remove obstacles in the pursuit of their self-interests, these individuals, being rational, enter into a contract to establish a society and state which will guarantee them the fundamental rights to life, liberty, equality and property. Thus civil society is born from within the state of nature. Like reason, civil society, state and government are not only products of human deliberation but are in the nature of instruments or means which enable individuals to pursue their self-interest -- all doing so freely and equally.

In whatever way we conceive of civil society, it presupposes the pursuit of self-interest by a free and atomic rational self. The essence of civil society means that the conditions and rights are guaranteed by the state and government which enable individuals freely to pursue their pleasures and interests either simply or in free association with others in matters of mutual interest. In liberalism, the freedom of, and freedom in, civil society is maintained as long as the state and government protect the fundamental rights of the individual and do not usurp power or dictate terms for the individual's conduct of his life or his free associations and institutions.

Liberalism claims that all humans are rational beings: this is what it means to be human. The abstract rational self is not bound to any culture, tradition or history. That is why all rational doctrines produced by the Enlightenment dreamed of society on a world scale, be it Locke's liberalism or Marx's communism. But throughout the world, liberal civil societies or communist societies are confined to the level of the nation. Why have all Western civil societies become national in character? What happens when a rational self becomes a national-rational self? And why does it so happen?

The concerted view of the universal theories of the Enlightenment led them to fashion all social life in the image of their theories based on a universal rationality free from all culture and history. This view does not give any content to the life plans of individuals or to such common

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[1] Hegel, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), ch. I.

affairs of society as education or values. It can only destroy the past in the name of freedom, but the same notion of freedom prevents them from giving positive content and values to any new institution or society.[2]

Secondly, confronted with these difficulties, liberal civil society and universal reason had to make a philosophical compromise. This gave birth to the modern nation and national civil societies. The idea of the nation solved both the difficulties.

Pre-modern societies are based on the idea of the community as prior to the individual and on the moral code of the community governing the life of the individual. Reason, self-interest and contracts do not tie the individual to the community. He is born into a community -- it is not a product of choice. The ties are of blood, kinship and love. The individual is not a self-sufficient whole or atom, but rather a part of the community and subservient thereto. There are multiple communities -- local, occupation-based, cultural, religious, et cetera. Partha Chatterjee[3] has argued that modernity dissolves these communities and liberates the atomic self. At the same time, modernity, per force, creates one single legitimate community, namely the nation. Out of multiple traditions, cultures and languages legitimize one core set of values and traditions and impose that as the authentic character upon the whole society. That is how a uniform, homogenous nation is born. The nation gives content to the abstract and empty rationalism of liberalism. This is the philosophical compromise between liberalism and nationalism, giving birth to the national civil society. In recent years, Michael Foucault's work on the homogenization, normalization and disciplining of modern society can be better understood as processes which actually produce a nation and its civil society -- its culture, values and ways of life and thinking.

This nationalism became a particularly potent force in the world arena, whereby Europe sought to conquer and civilize the rest of the world in the name of national glory, power and historic mission. This brings us to the question of modern man's relationship with nature. Modernity conceives of the self as an asocial atom, which constructs a society by contract. Similarly, it postulates that the self is outside nature and is entitled to conquer and harness through scientific knowledge.

The result is the familiar story of imperialism -- the political and economic conquest by Europe of the entire globe, together with the plundering of the world's natural resources. What is not fully realized is the gravity of the world's greatest genocide, whereby Europeans almost decimated the indigenous populations of not three countries but three continents -- North America, South America and Australia. It thus becomes imperative to ask and answer why modern Europe, in its belief in inviable and universal human rights and civil society, could deny these so violently to the rest of the world -- and in the name of civilizing it?

How does the non-West react to the onslaught of Western modernity? What options does it have? The dominant re-action has been to become like the West, to replicate the Western idea of the nation, civil society, state and economy or to adopt the dissident version of modernity -- the Soviet alternative. However, at a subterranean level, there have been attempts to draw upon traditional resources to confront modernity.

In Europe, civil society emerged from the womb of feudal society. Over time it strengthened itself and ultimately questioned and overthrew the old state to set up a liberal state compatible with the emerging civil society. In India, under colonial rule, the colonial state gave birth to a modem civil society -- one sponsored and controlled by the state. Moreover, it was an enclave; it did not

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[2] Ibid.

[3] "More on Modes of Power and the Peasantry" R. Guha ed. Subaltern Studies II (Delhi: OUP, 1983). See also his *The Nation and Its fragments: Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories* (Delhi: OUP, 1994).

cover the whole of Indian society. It was limited to the colonial port cities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. It was an enclave created by the state and its laws, and buttressed by such new institutions of colonial rule as universities, press and associations.

A fundamental divide came about in Indian society -- a state-sponsored, modern-arena, civil society based on modem individualism and a vast hinterland organized along communitarian principles and traditions. Partha Chatterjee[4] in his research on Bengal has shown how the modern sector has been unable to break up the community and establish its hegemony over the whole of society. This has been the main stumbling block on India's road to modernity, despite the efforts of the colonial state and some fifty years of independence.

In this essay, we shall explore the nature and limits of civil society in contemporary West Bengal, under communist rule since 1977. Bengal was one of the most important centers of colonial rule in India and its history reveals several peculiarities. Compared to the rest of India, colonialism made very deep inroads in Bengal, creating in the process a considerably entrenched civil society and a large, English-educated middle class -- the Bengali Babu Bhadralock.

Soon the Babu was disillusioned with the promise of colonial Enlightenment and embarked on a nation-building project -- it engaged itself with constructing an autonomous national society. Politically it sought freedom or the creation of a sovereign national state; economically, a technologically advanced industry and a modern agriculture; socially, democratization and equality which meant doing away with caste and traditions; and culturally, a rationality based on Enlightenment ideas of science and reason, together with a rejuvenation of a core national identity. In other words, the Babu strove to replicate the model of Western development in India, especially after India attained independence in 1947.

The strength of the Bengali Babu lay in the fact that he was largely autonomous of any of the basic classes of society, namely, the bourgeoisie, landlords, peasants or workers. After the partition of Bengal in 1947, and the creation of a Muslim majority state of East Pakistan, which later became Bangladesh, the Babu came to assert himself to attain supremacy over society. However it was not hegemony in the Gramscian sense.

Though in the first two decades after independence the Congress Party retained its political leadership both in West Bengal and in the country at large, in Bengal it faced a serious political and cultural challenge from the Bengali middle class, in alliance with other subordinate classes, especially in the sphere of modern civil society. The contest in civil society was between the old social and political elites, allied with the dominant classes and embarked on a project of building a modern capitalistic state, and the vast sections of the Babu in alliance with the people freed by dreams of a Leftist utopia.

Leftist-inspired social commitment and intense political participation in the form of ideological struggle and mass political movements in all spheres of the Babu's social world gave this class a certain cultural and political vigor and autonomy. In the process, Bengali civil society became rich and vibrant through endless debates and discussions and social praxis. Besides direct political institutions like parties and mass organizations, new institutions and spaces emerged within civil society like small magazines and neighborhood associations, theater groups, study circles, et cetera. Values, virtues, social commitment and political action and intervention, as against the ideology of individual success, came to the forefront. Serious attempts also were made to break the enclave nature of modem Bengali civil society by politically organizing and allying with the working class and the peasantry. This was a traditional communist (vandguardist) strategy where the Left sought to lead, educate and organize the masses by revolutionizing their

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[4] *Bengali: The Land Question* (Calcutta: K.P. Bagchi, 1981).

consciousness. The traditional values, beliefs and institutions, which enabled them to lead their lives over centuries was delegitimised and simply dismissed. Through it, came some changes in people's lives and ideas. No radical transformation occurred, nor was the divide between the Babu and the masses erased. Tradition proved to be more resilient.

The challenge to capitalist modernity and the Indian state reached a new phase in the mid-1960s. This was reflected in the 1967 elections, when the communists, in alliance with other parties, formed a United Front Government in West Bengal. This gave a further spurt to the process of strengthening and radicalizing Bengali civil society. Visions of a socialist utopia gripped the imagination of the Bengali middle class. A section of the Left, inspired by Maoist ideology, issued a call for armed revolution. Dreams of instant revolution swayed large sections of middle class students and youth. Sharp dissensions came about within civil society, which could no longer be held together by the ethic of debate and discourse. Resort to violence was of two types: one, traditional Maoist insurrections against the state and the dominant classes and two, violence within civil society to settle ideological and political differences.

In independent India, the Left in West Bengal in the latter half of the 1960s posed the most serious threat to the power and ideology of bourgeois modernity. To overcome this challenge, the Indian state engaged itself in counter-insurgency in West Bengal.

The Indian state openly flouted all democratic norms and unleashed open war on the Left, especially on the Maoists and the middle class and its allies. Mass killings, violence and torture were resorted to in order to quell the Leftist challenge. More than 25,000 radicals were jailed. Congress, the ruling party of the central government, organized lumens and small sections of the middle class to set up semi-fascist organizations -- the Youth Congress and the Charta Parishad. This two-pronged attack created near civil war conditions. Bengali civil society and its autonomous associations and institutions were battered and forcibly controlled by the forces of order and status quo. Against this backdrop the Congress won the 1972 elections, taking recourse to widespread violence and rigging.

This was a traumatic experience for the Bengali bhadralok. From this defeat it learned some far reaching lessons. Its republican virtues and non-conformism were quickly jettisoned. It could not recover from the assault during the five year Congress regime. In 1975 India, Gandhi declared a countrywide emergency and clamped a dictatorial regime over the whole country. She put an end to democratic politics by a reign of fear, violence and mass imprisonment. Ironically, West Bengal hardly experienced these emergency excesses as its democratic politics had been pulverized in the early 1970s.

Mrs. Gandhi surprised her opponents by calling for elections in 1977. She was led to believe by her official intelligence agency that her dictatorship enjoyed mass support. Under the conditions of censorship, she had no way to know the mood of the masses. Congress was simply decimated, and there was a revival of the democratic spirit and politics all over the country.

In 1977 in West Bengal the communists came to power and have won all consecutive elections to become the world's longest serving democratically elected communist government. The paradox of the Left victory came in the wake of the defeat and pessimism of the Bengali middle class -- the Communists defeated the Congress, not through any mass resurgence of its earlier strength, but in the secrecy of the ballot booth where singular rejections of the Congress spawned a collective verdict. Its pessimism and defeat had robbed the Babu of its earlier ability publicly to debate and collectively intervene in matters of state and civil society.

This was not a temporary respite, a step backward in order to take two forward. The communists who had earlier led the middle class and made Bengali civil society autonomous and

vigorous was now in no mood to revive the spirit of the 1960s. Rather, along with the Babu, the Left made a historic compromise with the state and capitalism, both indigenous and multinational. As a result Bengali civil society changed fundamentally.

The Bhadralok made a dramatic exit from civil society and the public sphere into domestic concerns, its self-interests and those of the family. Having failed to realize the Left utopia, now the Babu redoubled his efforts to make it within the existing system itself. Also, having lost the opportunity, the middle class now started making superhuman efforts for propriety. This meant costly and exclusive English schools where, more important than the formal course, a new ethic or weltanschauung is taught. They came to share as a new identity that of the most powerful class in India -- the English-speaking elite (ESE).[5]

Unlike the Bengali bhadralok which was bi-lingual, where English and Western knowledge and Bengali and traditional culture interacted, often to their mutual benefit, the ESEs of India are rapidly distancing themselves from their native tongue and culture. They are steeped in the American ideology of individual success and conformism. With the Babu joining the ranks of the ESEs, it is succumbing to the sway of the ideology of scientism and technical and managerial efficiency. Thus, politics and public deliberation, which kept alive Bengali civil society, is declining at a frenetic speed. This has led to the decline of liberal education in the human sciences and basic natural sciences. Rather, careers in modern engineering, medicine, computers and management are considered to be most attractive. This has led to the decline of traditional colleges and universities which were centers of intellectual and political debates in Bengal. From dreams of a Left utopia, now this class dreams of emigrating to America -- the land of opportunity and wealth.

These cultural changes, along with the economic decline of Bengal, have led to the disintegration of the bhadralok, its elan and political vigor. The dominant section has made it to the ranks of the ESE, but a sizeable section, unable to afford exclusive English education and being schooled exclusively in the vernacular, is being relegated to the social backwaters of Bengal. The social and political initiative has been wrested from the Babu by the bourgeoisie. In fact, the leading capitalists of Calcutta have set up a forum -- Bengali Initiative which meets regularly in plush hotels to deliberate on contemporary affairs and chart the course of government policies.

The erosion of civil society and the public sphere is closely linked to the loss of autonomy and initiative of the middle class. This is clearly evident in the decline of public debate and the small magazines, the withering of autonomous public institutions and the political passivity of the Babu. Thus we see the rise of glossy magazines guiding the awkward Babu to a new order of home decoration, fashions, sex and weight reduction. For long, Calcutta's leading football clubs and the soccer league, along with politics, were a Bengali passion which helped build solidarity and a healthy civil society. But now, due to the lack of public enthusiasm, which often bordered on madness, the fortune of football and the leading clubs has nose dived to such an extent that serious negotiations are going on to sell some of them to the leading business houses of India. More important, the Babu's addas[6] no longer linger; they are breaking up. The survival of civil society is now dependent on the forces of the capitalist market or the bureaucratic state.

Following the defeat of the middle class in the 1970s and its withdrawal from civil society, it made a historic compromise with the Indian state and capitalism. Ironically, this strategy came into its own under communist rule since 1977. The Babu had carved an autonomous space for

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[5] A regular gathering where intense conversations are held. A popular salon.

[6] See Sanjeeb Mukherjee, *The Bourgeoisie and Politics in West Bengal, Occasional Paper* (Calcutta: Center for Studies in Social Sciences, 1983).

itself in civil society through a protracted political and ideological struggle against the onslaught of the state and capitalism. This was largely inspired by the Left. The communists in power firmly kept the people under leash and, almost with a vengeance, upheld the legal and constitutional niceties of the state, reaffirmed its legitimacy and took great pains to stop the people from taking any popular political initiative. The emphasis was on order and legitimacy and efficiency of the state. Secondly, the Left strategy for economic, particularly industrial development, was entirely a policy to entice private Indian and multinational capital to invest in West Bengal. To make the investment climate conducive, it had to discipline the work force and trade unions, which in the past had played an important role in the affairs of Bengali civil society. In fact, Jyoti Basu, the communist chief minister of West Bengal, though not a party theoretician, was fundamentally in charge of the entire discourse of the Left. The key elements of this discourse were bureaucratic order, private industrial development, political passivity and a modicum of welfare measures under the firm tutelage of the communist-run government. The stress on order, efficiency and development made popular initiatives and politics illegitimate as they were sources of disorder. Basu's success in reestablishing the legitimacy of the state and capitalism through formal democratic means under communist party rule has endeared him to the bourgeoisie to the extent that in 1996, under conditions of political instability in the central government, he was offered the prime ministership of the country.

Communist regimes of Eastern Europe were characterized as totalitarian mainly because they destroyed the autonomy of civil society. In West Bengal, the communists are only running a provincial government in India's quasi-federal set up. Though the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM), as the major force of the Left, is openly run on Leninist and Stalinist organizational principles, it has limited powers in India's liberal democratic constitutional polity. However, in spite of its limited powers, and a civil society having already faced a counter attack from the state and the Congress Party in the 1970s, the CPM has made a concerted move to establish its strangle hold over Bengali civil society.

The Left has been able to overrun civil society because of three major factors: ideological, political organizational and social.

Ideologically, Marxism is deeply suspicious of the idea of individual rights, reducing it to a mere piety to protect bourgeois property rights. Secondly, Marxism claims to have discovered the science and laws of history which enable the communist party to know the Truth. This gives the Left a 'scientific rational' ground to legitimately crush all opposition as reactionary and against the trend of history.

In political-organizational terms, the most powerful instrument which can inaugurate a regime of Left fascism is a communist party built along Lenin's tract. What is to be done? It is a highly centralized and hierarchical organization where the central committee has total control over all units of the party from above, but there is no horizontal or lateral interaction among the different units of the party. Nor is there any free exchange of ideas and views within the party as a whole. The party, through an array of mass organizations, like trade unions, woman's associations, et cetera, aims to control every corner of civil society. Where it fails, it often resorts to open violence and intimidation. This makes the communist party a Foucauldean panopticon par excellence.

Through the mechanism of separation of powers and checks and balances, the liberal state prevents the usurpation of power and the overrunning of civil society. The communist party, through its centralized control over mass organizations like employees associations, has very adeptly undermined the legal constitutions mechanisms of liberalism. Though the police and other organs of the state enjoy autonomy, they are subverted from within through the powerful network

of party and mass organization nexus. As a result, there is no authority to protest the violation of human rights in civil society. The communists claim that these mechanism are mere stratagems of the bourgeoisie to prevent the people from coming to power.

There has been longstanding criticism by the Left of the Indian state and the bourgeois nationalist elite's inability and lack of political will to address socially the oppressive hierarchies of caste, class, culture, nationality, gender and age in Indian society. These hierarchies are an open invitation to political authoritarianism, which also poses a serious constraint on the functioning of a democratic civil society. The Left till the 1960s engaged itself in organizing mass movements against these hierarchies oppressive of democratic society. But after its defeat in the early 1970s and its realization of the risks which attend any radical social struggle, it has now compromised with these forces in the name of order and social and political stability. Having adopted the bourgeois development paradigm, it sees no reason to launch a radical democratic struggle from below. Rather, like the official policy of the Indian state, the Left, too, is now attempting to reform society from above through state and bureaucratic tinkering.

Both the bourgeois development model and the Leftist alternative seem to have failed to sustain and create an autonomous civil society which is not a middle class enclave, but encompasses the whole of society. Even if such a civil society is forcibly constructed, it would be a replica of the West and would involve a most violent and brutal attack on traditional society. Moreover, the civil society attained by the people of Western Europe not only was possible by colonizing the whole world and plundering its resources, but also involved the genocide of the indigenous people of their continents and mass emigration to these regions. Even today, the developed countries consume three quarters of the world's natural resources to maintain life styles of only a quarter of the world's population.

This simple arithmetic makes it ecologically impossible for the non-West to become like the West. Only a tiny Western enclave, based on a brutal internal colonialism, can lead to such development.

What, then, is the alternative for countries like India? Bengal underwent two centuries of colonialism; since independence it has followed capitalist modernity and later a communist government. Under all these dispensations, tradition was undermined, attacked and delegitimized. As a result, traditional society, as a complex and diverse unity, no longer confronts modernity, Left or otherwise. Rather, elements of traditional society, like caste and community, confront and negotiate with modernity, often to find a secure place. But modernity is united under the nation state.

In India's struggle against colonialism there was a strong current of thought and action anchored in India's myriad traditions. It sought to reinvoke traditions, to redefine traditions and to dialogue with modernity on an equal footing. Gandhi best represented this trend. Though India after independence acclaimed Gandhi as the father of the nation, his philosophy was cast into the dust heap of history by the new elite and the state. Krishna Chandra Bhattacharyya, 20th century India's foremost philosopher, in his seminal address, Swaraj in Ideas[7] criticized the national movement against colonialism as limited to only the twin goals of economic and political freedom. He called for freedom of the mind, freedom to think in Indian categories and dream, an authentic future of India rooted in her traditions, as against replicating the West by aping them.

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[7] S.h. Gosh, ed., *Four Indian Critical Essays* (Calcutta: Jijnasa, 1978).

George McLean[8] allays some of our suspicion about civil society when he follows Gadamer's reinvoked tradition in the making of civil society. If civil society is not limited to Enlightenment philosophy, then the non-West can imagine and conceptualize an alternative type of civil society, not out of the blue, but rooted in its own traditions, history and civilizations.

Bengal, like the rest of India, has a long, rich and diverse living tradition.[9] An autonomous and authentic civil social space still can be found here. Louis Duxnont,[10] the French social anthropologist, summarized one contrast between Indian and Western society. Western society is based on the idea of the free and equal self -- homo equalis, while India is hierarchical where the unit is not the individual, but the caste, ordered hierarchically. Dumont's essentializing of one aspect of caste has led to its wholesale condemnation not only by Western educated Indians. Caste has become almost a dirty word in modern Indian political discourse. Its only relevance in this world is to demand reservation in official jobs and admissions in higher education by members of oppressed castes who lack modern education and are economically under privileged. In this entire discourse, the underlying question is how to bring about equality, especially equality of opportunity.

But caste is much more than that, especially in its civil social aspect. There are several thousand castes in Bengal, not only among the Hindus but among Muslims and other religions as well. Each caste has an autonomy of its own, having a distinct culture, skills and tradition, but at the same time it is part of a larger social order defined in linguistic, cultural, religious and civilizational terms. Each caste is like a community, with a strong sense of solidarity. It deliberates in its caste panchayats or assemblies to govern itself. Each caste has a core set of skills which it cultivates and transmits across generations. A large part of India's economy is furnished by products and services which are not formally produced in the modern sector, but are contributed by these castes. Given the ecological impossibility of building a modern industrial economy, it is these caste-based crafts, services and products, which have been ecologically sustainable over the centuries, that hold some promise for the future.

But the modern Indian state seeks to undermine and delegitimise these traditional civil societies and to impose a homogeneous, faceless, impersonal national unity and an insipid and weak civil society. This leads to extreme individualism, alienation, a loss of control over one's life, culture and society and thus threatens to be the end of pluralism and diversity. Under its impact, castes are disintegrating.

But this account should not lead one to romanticize the caste system. Upper caste oppression and exploitation and the lack of respect for individual freedom have been the major fault of this system. On this count, the traditional caste system has much to learn from modern liberal ideas of individual freedom and equality. However, within tradition there is a powerful democratic trend in the ideas and social movements of India's medieval Bhakti poet-saints. It is through the revocation of tradition and dialogue with other cultures that an autonomous and vibrant civil society can be created.

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[8] George F. McLean, "Philosophy and Civil Society: Its Nature, Its Past and Its Future," in *Civil Society and Social Reconstruction*, ed. George F. McLean (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Philosophy and Values, 1997).

[9] The title of K.G. Subramanyam's book: *The Living Tradition* (Calcutta: Seagull, 1982).

[10] *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications* (Delhi: Vikas, 1970).

Chapter IX
Pluralism and Cultural Conflict in India

Dikshit Sinha

The 1996 UNDP report on development trends in the world points out that at the end of 1994 conflicts around the world had left nearly 27 million refugees and displaced persons (an 11 fold increase since 1970). Today, one of every 200 people in the world is either a refugee or displaced within his or her own country. This itself shows the endemic nature of various kinds of conflict in the modern nation-states which are democratic, heterogeneity is woven into the fabric of their socio-economic life. Heterogeneity in India too is an accepted fact,[1] but the pervasiveness of social and political conflict is recently showing signs of exceeding all known limits.

Sociologists, anthropologists and historians have advanced various theories explaining why conflicts arise. These are well-known and need not detain us here. Commenting on the nature of the Indian rural scene, M.N. Srinivas (1992) pointed out that it is hierarchical in more that one sense. This is based on such diverse factors as caste, land-ownership, patron-client relationship, dominant-subordinate relationships between various communities, etc. This pattern of relationships gave rise to every conceivable form of domination: economic, social or cultural. The multi-stranded nature of domination itself gave rise to fissures and contradictions in the regional societies which were exploited consciously or unconsciously by the dominant sector for the subjugation/coercion of a particular status group. Differences within the caste groups of Bengal villages into two opposite but juxtaposed status groups, Chotolok (the lowly) and Bhadralok (the gentry) is a case in point. The economically and socially superior upper castes (the Bhadraloks) used to dominate the Chotoloks (the untouchable caste groups) by using their dominant position. In this kind of dominant-subordinate relationship, a coalescence of all the three capitals -- economic, social and cultural (Bourdieu, 1993) occurred, resulting in two clear cut groupings and a horizontal division of the society, in the case inter-community relationship between the Muslims and Hindus or between tribals and non-tribals, domination was on the basis of the economy. Each community had a separate socio-cultural pattern, but, depending on the interplay of what Alexander (1987) called 'external factors' (such as degree of differentiation in terms of economy, nautical system, religion, language, etc.) and 'internal factors' (the degree to which the dominant group regard the other communities as complementary in terms of cultural system), inter-community rank was determined and the larger social order constituted. But this pattern of inter-community relationship remained at best partial, built on the basis of economic or cultural traits and mediated through a particular segment of the community.

Few studies regard the inter-community situation, especially in the context of building up the public arena at the regional level. Consideration of this aspect is important if we are to understand the process when two or more communities come in contact and build up various patterns of inter-community interaction. The existence of civil society, emphasizing citizenship rights (Marshall, 1973) and public morality, was virtually non-existent in India. What little public morality was there was co-extensive with the boundaries of individual societies and culture. Transactions at the

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[1] K.C. Malhotra (1992) demonstrates that even the assumed homogeneity of a particular varna in terms of their biological characteristic is not tenable. Biologically every caste has certain features conforming to the regional phenotypic and genotypic pattern. Socio-culturally too caste groups vary across regions although they may occupy similar position within the varna/jati category.

societal level did occur between the communities based on individual interest and rational choice, but the concept of equality, justice or public right stopped at the boundary of the community or even at still smaller borders of extended kin groups.

The French sociologist, S. Durkheim (1960), who examined the pattern of social solidarity in human society, pointed out that in a simple society, it is based on similarity and collective conscience, but that in modern industrialized societies the collective conscience is replaced by repressive laws and altruism. Peter Saunders (1993) commenting on the nature of public order in modern societies pointed out that it was far more logical and less costly to create an atmosphere of public morality by voluntarily entering into public cooperation and thereby sustaining public life, rather than enforcing it by state coercion. Stephen Kalberg (1993), on the other hand, pointed out the pattern of the development of public morality through the instrumental rationality of economy and warfare in medieval Europe and the separation of the private and public domain in these societies. In Asia and Africa, economic transactions remained merely an extension of the private domain and largely were carried through the patron-client relationship. Therefore, the ideology of kinship and culture continued to play a pivotal role. The appearance of a public sphere also necessitates the creation of certain values and behavior patterns such as duty, service, loyalty, obedience, trust, etc.

In India, the effort to create a public arena was experimented with in the Mughuland British period with different results. O'Hanloln (1993) pointed out that the emerging new rulership during the Mughul period was subject to contradictory pressures. On the one hand, they were identified and remained immersed in the identity of the ethnic group to which they belonged; on the other hand, their success depended on their being able to attract a key range of social groups for their military and religious legitimacy. This meant that no ruler could identify closely with any group. State patronage, positive political uses of religious identity and public ceremonies as a central part of the state strategy produced fierce competition over the control of particular pilgrimage centers and other symbolic resources and intense rivalries between competing religious patrons at the local level. The coming of the British and their so-called religious neutrality resulted in congealing the patron-client relationship of various natures which played an important role in shaping the public life during pre-independence India and continued to play a crucial role even in post-independence days.

Turner (1988) pointed out that all modern nation states suffer from contradictions between the politico-legal and the economic organization. The state intervenes in this situation in favor of various 'political clienteles' to redistribute various scarce resources. In so doing, they reinforce various ascriptive features of the society and give rise to "particularism as the basis of claims against society for reform" (Turner, 1988). In India we find that various communities which were at one time integrated through complementary relationships or through dominant and subordinate relationships are coming apart and asserting their polotico-legal status. This creates conflicts of various types throughout India. The tribal movements in eastern and northeastern India, conflict between various language groups, movements for autonomy as in the Punjab, etc., are some of the examples. At a different level one can also discern a development of horizontal ties between a particular caste located across one social space or between various castes opposed to caste groups above them in order to better their life chances as Pradip K. Bose (1991) has demonstrated so graphically in the case of Bihar. Here three intermediary castes -- Kurmi, Koeri and Yadavas -- have formed a caste association to improve their economic condition vis-a-vis the upper caste groups. In recent times they have been also responsible for violence against untouchables for standing up to them.

In the hierarchically constituted Indian society, the notion of power was also hierarchically constituted, the ultimate repository of power being beyond the grasp and knowledge of the ordinary people. This ultimate repository of power was looked on as the arbitrator in the redistribution of scarce resources. The political clienteles which state power create to perpetuate their hegemony at various levels down the hierarchy of power operate to redistribute resources and operate as levers of social control. The local patron, through whom various resources are distributed, built up a network of allegiances through carefully nurtured social relationship. Over time, when competing centers of power arise due to changes in economic or state institutions, the patron-client relationship creates an atmosphere of conflict in which the primordial loyalties play a significant part.

From the discussion, it is evident that pluralism in India is made complex by the many patterns of domination creating crisis-crossing fissures in the polity, by the presence of horizontal division, inequality of all kinds and social and cultural heterogeneity of every conceivable order. The coming of the colonial state system and, later on, of a democratic political system in independent India led to the development of political clientelism that did not render the situation conducive for the construction of public order. The latter has remained problematic even in Western democracies where rights evolved very slowly through many processes of class and genders struggle (Held 1989). In India the linkages with the center of state power are mediated through a network of ascriptive relationships governed by traditional cultural values and trust. The desired merging of the cultural or group identity with the shared collective identity of public order remained a distant goal. During the pre-British days, heterogeneity used to be absorbed by acculturation and assimilation. The instrumental rationality of market and state power effectively derailed the system and brought in the concept of individuality and rationality without effectively changing the importance of community life.

The distinction between private and public domain in social sciences has remained ambiguous. In anthropology the network relationship, beyond the domestic, is considered public, the former merging imperceptibly with the latter world of instrumentality and rationality. Elaborating on this Ross Poole (1991) writes:

The dominant conceptions of market activity, capitalist production and bureaucratic administration exclude the feelings of the relationships and commitments which are characteristic of familial, sexual and emotional life. Society can, therefore, only be rationalized, in the senses appropriate to these conceptions, if these relationships lead a marginalized existence elsewhere. This creates a conception of domestic life as a distinct social space which is the appropriate place for emotion, attachment and sexuality. These are now conceived of as non-rational -- according to Weber, irrational aspects of human life, and properly separate from and subordinate to the larger questions of production, distribution and social organization. It is this particular structure of exclusion and subordination which marks the modern form of the distinction between public and private spheres of social existence (p. 47).

In the Western notion, the public and private spheres are thought to be opposed to each other (Seligman 1993). The former is related to impersonal, rational, calculable rules of bureaucratic, market organization and the latter confined to the non-rational, domestic sphere. Poole points out that it is not necessary that these two spheres be opposed to each other is not the place to go into metaphysical aspect of the notion or the related concept of civil society. But in the Indian context, what is relevant is that, if disparate communities are to exist side by side and be anchored together

in a common polity, some form of shared collective life is necessary which will ensure an equitable, rational relationship. That is required not only as an impersonal concept of rights and morality, but as a proper institutionalization of the relationship between the different communities, so that it can have both impersonality or public life, as well as some degree of control over and regulation of individuals and different communities. The state power is too distant to ensure all the finer aspects of citizenship rights (civil, social and political in the Marshael's sense).

An intermediary organization like the Panchayat Institution which has been functioning in West Bengal can be developed as a kind of civil society regulating the transactions and social relationship between disparate communities and ensuring social and economic equality. It has the flexibility of an elected office and a bureaucratic structure. It is public, but nevertheless regulated by law. It is sufficiently large to encompass a sizeable portion of the communities and can regulate the economic and other aspect of public sphere. It has a structure which ensures that three or four contiguous villages, irrespective of their community structure, can come together to share resources, plan development, intervene in the social process and encourage people to participate directly in activities considered vital to their interest. Admittedly, panchayats cannot do away with horizontal relationships, such as those of class or community. But it has provided the people with a platform where class or community or other ascriptive attributes of individuals can be overcome. Although the village as a unit has existed from time immemorial, it was the horizontal relationship of intra-caste or intra-community relationship that became the regulator of village life. The vertical relationship between the villages became the important governing principle of public life only after the panchayat came into being. The panchayat system not only can take the power to the doorsteps of ordinary villagers, but has forced the people of a village to look at other contiguous villages as equal citizens and to share public resources, plan for a better future and bring in a sense of public morality with which they can readily identify.

The existence of plurality is an inescaple reality with which all modern nation states have to live. There is no unanimity on how to bring it about. But the multi-faceted nature of plurality in India requires that serious efforts be made to construct an intermediate public organization which can ensure an anchorage for the people in the impersonal, rational and equitable aspect of public life, which has been sorely missing from the Indian polity.

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