

India in the Age of Globalization

CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSES AND TEXTS



EDITED BY:

- Suman Gupta
- Tapan Basu
- Subarno Chattarji

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Nehru Memorial Museum and Library

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PREFACE

It gives me great pleasure to place before the scholarly community this book entitled *India in the Age of Globalization: Contemporary Discourses and Texts* which is being published under the auspices of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. This volume flows out of an international workshop organized by the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in New Delhi in March 2002 in association with the British Academy and the Open University, UK. This workshop was part of the international project entitled "Globalization, Identity-Politics and Social Conflict" which is financially supported by the British Academy and the Open University, UK. The articles included in this volume focus on a range of specific contexts which offer both variations and parallels in their experience of globalization, identity politics and social conflicts. The importance of this volume, however, lies in the fact that it seeks to explore questions and issues, not in terms of economic and sociological models, methods, or empirical studies, but with a particular attention to contemporary texts and discourses. The contributions included in this volume by scholars from abroad provide theoretical reflections based on observations from outside which are pertinent to Indian contexts.

I am thankful to Dr. Suman Gupta who is the Coordinator of the above-mentioned project for his initiative in organizing this workshop as well as for editing this volume along with Dr. Tapan Basu and Dr. Subarno Chattarji. My thanks also go to my colleagues in the Research and Publications Division and particularly Dr. N. Balakrishnan for seeing the book through the press.

Introduction

**Globalization and India : Social
Contemporary Discourses and Texts**

Suman Gupta and Subarno Chattarji

The concerns of this volume are obviously large and of great interest from a range of perspectives. None of the key terms that feature repeatedly in it – 'globalization', 'identity-politics', 'social conflict' – are the exclusive domain of any one discipline or specialist area. These are discussed, with varying nuances and connotations, from economic, sociological, historical, political and other perspectives. The connotations of these terms also differ according to the particular political and cultural contexts within which they may be located. However, it is undeniable that these terms do indicate something understandable to a widely dispersed and varied thinking population – despite the different nuances, despite the multiplicity of meanings, these terms are suggestive enough to provide a background against which discussion can be initiated between divergent perspectives and ideologies.

A cursory look at the titles of the papers that appear here reveals that no restrictive and narrow definition of these terms has been assumed. The papers generally focus on specific regions and issues that are of interest in India. The terms are negotiated and adjusted

according to the particular preoccupations that are addressed. When an author addresses the discourses of the Indian mass media the connotations of these terms are adjusted to that preoccupation; when another discusses the social conflicts of a particular region of India the connotations naturally shift a bit; and so on.

This volume is put together with the intention of opening discussion rather than closing it. The papers are not bunched together according to narrow specialisms: specialist topics are opened up to general consideration and interrogation. The subtitle – ‘Contemporary discourses and texts’ – indicates the direction this volume pushes toward. It is not the monolithic interpretation of terms that matter here; it is the manner in which these terms are talked about and written about from different perspectives that is of interest. The discussion sections that follow each paper give some indication of the directions that remain open to further consideration.

The GIPSC Project

This volume arises from a workshop held at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), New Delhi, India, between 26 and 28 March 2002. The workshop was part of an international project entitled the Globalization, Identity-Politics and Social Conflict Project (GIPSC Project), which also entailed organizing similar events in Lagos, Nigeria and London, UK. The project as a whole was financed primarily by the British Academy and supported by the Open University UK. The workshop in Delhi was sponsored generously by the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.

To put the presentations and discussions that appear in this volume into perspective it might be useful to have a sense of the GIPSC Project as a whole.

The general idea underlying the GIPSC Project is that the relationships between socio-political and economic phenomena such as globalization and identity-politics and different forms of social

conflict (which are widely studied in socio-economic and political terms) are usually most concretely, immediately and effectively encountered and responded to in social discourses and texts. The project aims to systematically examine the latter aspect of these broad-based phenomena. Pragmatically, this is approached by focusing in turn on a range of specific contexts which offer both variations and parallels in their experience (as manifest in social discourses and texts) of globalization, identity politics and social conflict – and then collating the comparative features between these contexts. The starting point of this project is specifically the contexts of India and Nigeria, which present broadly similar linguistic and ethnic/communal heterogeneity and colonial pasts, and interesting parallels and variations in their political/social/cultural negotiations with internal and international developments. The project also focuses on, at this stage, the manner in which Indian and Nigerian national politics impinges upon the Indian and Nigerian diasporas in the United Kingdom, and *vice versa*. The project consists in organizing workshops in each of the countries involved, and in the publication of volumes such as the present arising from these workshops. The following are the main organizational principles of these workshops:

- a. The GIPSC Project (and any other research group that works in partnership with it) in every context would collaborate with an appropriate institution within the country where the workshop is planned
- b. Each workshop would be attended by a core group of GIPSC coordinators (which includes colleagues from each of the countries involved), who would provide a common denominator for all the workshops. In each particular workshop appropriate contributors would be invited from within the country where the workshop is held to make a presentation on a theme relevant to the project. The point of the workshop is to enable the core group to interact and discuss common interests with scholars active within the country in question.

- c. Apropos the contributors who would be invited in each country – the emphasis is more on their ability to comment on ground level realities with empirical evidence (though relevant theoretical insights would also be welcome), than on their academic standing or reputation. Less-established/young colleagues in a position to make such contributions and those with serious research interests but without academic affiliations would be welcome. There would be no keynote speakers or leading sessions. No registration fees would be charged from contributors or participants.
- d. Of particular interest in these workshops are not only the presentations that are made by contributors, but also the discussions that follow from them. Discussions would normally be recorded and transcribed, and would be published with workshop proceedings and taken into account when comparative features are later collated by the core group.

Scope of the Delhi Workshop

Participants in the Delhi workshop, of which this volume is the result, were given some preliminary guidelines and research questions to delimit the scope of presentations and discussions. This included the following points :

1. Identity politics could be examined in terms of religious community, caste, gender, regional and/or linguistic groups, and economic class. The intersection of these would naturally be of interest. It is hoped that presentations would cover both the historical background of these identity divides (primarily post-independence), and more importantly the manifestation of these in a post-eighties context.
2. The analysis of the phenomenon of globalization could include the following: market liberalization in the post-eighties and consequent international economic and political exchanges

and transmissions; participation in and contribution to media and information technologies which have a global scope; cultural imports and the development of features which are culturally consonant with the so-called developed world.

3. To examine the manner in which the issues of identity politics and globalization may intersect the following kinds of questions may be considered: [A] How does a particular identity-based political formation that hopes to play a significant role in national politics negotiate with the forces of globalization? To what extent does identity politics tend to be exclusive in its agenda, and to what extent does it compromise with international economic and political expediencies? [B] To what extent does the so-called phenomenon of globalization contribute to the exacerbation of divisive identity politics? For example, is it possible that the increase of manifest outside commodities and influences encourages a reactive regrouping of local and traditional interest groups? In other words, does globalization by its own dynamic paradoxically encourage identity politics of different sorts? In addition, does the capitalist initiative of globalization deliberately play up to local and traditional alignments in a bid to serve its own interests? [C] How do identity-based political alignments use or hope to use the technologies and facilities associated with globalization? For example, by what means do different identity-based political alignments give themselves a persuasive or acceptable face to outside groups, both locally and internationally? [D] What sorts of groups are marginalised within and excluded from the phenomenon of globalization, how do they respond to such marginalisation, and is there any pattern underlying such exclusions?
4. The kinds of social conflict that may be relevant in this context are those between: [A] different identity-based political alignments (dominant and marginal) which may have existed traditionally, but which are increasingly exposed to international

media attention and the influences of a global economic environment; [B] local and global forces, for example, between small-scale/village industries, national corporations, and multinational corporations.

5. As far as this project is concerned the point is *not* to explore questions and issues such as those above in terms of economic and sociological models, methods, or empirical studies, but with a particular attention to 'contemporary texts and discourses'. This means that contributions should: [A] focus arguments in terms of such pertinent texts (literary, performative, audio-visual, propagandist, advertising, journalistic etc), or specific kinds of socio-linguistic practice (imported lexis and evolving jargons, hybrid language usage, 'text-messaging' syntax and condensations, official/specialist/utility-oriented discourses etc), as may be regarded as being revealing of a prevailing cultural ethos; and [B] provide a broad-based survey of and draw theoretical observations from existing research of the above description.
6. Contributions by researchers from abroad could provide theoretical reflections based on observations from outside contexts that may be pertinent to India, or could attempt a straightforward comparative study of some issue that is relevant to both India and their countries.

On the whole the papers that appear in this volume, and the discussions, go a considerable way toward covering the ground delineated by the above points and answering the questions raised therein. The following summary of the papers here gives an initial impression of the extent to which the areas and questions above are covered.

Summary of Papers

Jayati Ghosh portrays in detail the processes and implications of imperialist globalization. The era of globalization has increased

trade, income, and social inequalities and furthered revanchist cultural identities. She analyses the ways in which the global media marginalises the public sphere while seemingly integrating the world. Ghosh offers a way out of the seemingly inevitable hold of globalization through what she calls the process of deglobalization. This could include a refusal to repay debts and an establishment of major controls on capital flows to allow governments to re-establish autonomy and credibility.

P. K. Datta's paper is an acute theoretical disquisition on possible visions of global relations and the modes of resisting cultural autarchy. Tagore's alternative vision and critique of nationalism centres on the fetishising of the nation. A process of cultural exchange and mutually transformative relations allow for a resistance to 'hard' identities, the Huntingtonian clash of civilisations. Thus globalization need not be only spurred by a necessitarian agenda; instead, like the Zapatistas it can establish broad identities and a type of Rortyan 'solidarity'.

Suman Gupta's paper deals with the impact of Information Technology on academic institutions in India, pointing to the ways in which government policy is driven by an instrumentalist agenda where employment prospects are privileged over acquisition of knowledge. The consistent under-funding of higher education in India, particularly the humanities and social sciences, is a matter of concern and ideologically orients education towards a corporatist outlook. India's pride in its IT potential and its consequent claim to being a global player in this field is ironically played off against the paucity of basic IT resources and literacy in the country.

Tapan Basu's paper marks a return to the theme of education in India (raised by Gupta's paper) albeit in different contexts. He dwells on the project of localisation, anti-globalization, and the ways in which the BJP education policy is actually complicit with the processes of globalization. At the heart of this policy is a need to recuperate India's past wisdom and knowledge, a type of

indigenisation. This involves a rewriting of Indian history to reorient the past as well as the present.

G. Arunima writes about the ways in which the statistically positive picture of Kerala obscures specifically gendered inequities and violence. Links between the debate on 'women's writing' and cultural identity and cultural politics in Kerala are the focus of the paper, as well as the ways in which patriarchal attitudes are normalised in the critique of women's writing.

Venkatachalapathy traces in detail the processes, nuances, and implications of the Tamil literary canon and identity in the colonial and post-colonial worlds. The challenge to Brahmin hegemony located in Sangam literature significantly altered the canon in its recovery of older non-Sanskritic texts. He points to the collaborative work between Sri Lankan Tamil scholars and similar academics in Tamil Nadu. With the dispersal of the Tamil diaspora all over the globe the internet now functions as a mode of preserving and disseminating Tamil literature just as in an earlier period print was seen as a panacea for saving the palm texts. Tamil is one of the most widely used languages on the net and the virtual community is not constrained by national boundaries. Gupta's conception of distance learning as perhaps a refuge for the humanities and social sciences is extended in the Tamil web texts that sustains a global community.

M. V. Shobana Warriar dwells on the impact of globalization on women fish workers forcing them to migrate and work in terrible conditions. The caste-occupation network appears to collapse as this work is seen as 'respectable'. The women make not only an occupational choice but perceive this as an opportunity to break out of patriarchy.

Brinda Bose's paper on the negotiation of gender identities in diasporic South Asian cinema in Britain further problematises questions of identity, memory, location, and nostalgia within the matrix of dislocation and the immigrant desire for 'home'. Her interpretation of 'Bhaji on the Beach' and 'My Beautiful

Laundrette' emphasises the fact that there is no pure Britishness possible now, a point available in tope's presentation as well.

Nilanjana Gupta deals with a segment of Bengali cinema and music that incorporates the dotcom revolution as well as a return to traditional values. The low-budget Bengali films associate villains with the evils of globalization and display a complete lack of faith in the state apparatus. Just as diasporic South Asian cinema speaks largely to the immigrant community so too particular Bengali films address peculiarly Bengali attitudes and concerns.

Subarno Chattarji analyses the ways in which mainstream English media, *India Today* in particular, reported the Kargil War and helped to create and consolidate a sense of 'Indianness'.

The multinational corporation is, in some ways, the apotheosis of the impulse to wealth creation. Its seemingly transnational nature and power coupled with the possibility of industrial havoc were illustrated in the Bhopal Gas tragedy in 1984. Suroopa Mukherjee's paper on the medico-legal aspects of the tragedy highlights the collusion between the Indian government and Union Carbide in its settlement of compensation claims. The concept of a 'disposable community' aptly sums up the plight of the victims who have been silenced by the media and the government.

Sanjoy Hazarika touches not only on issues of land and migration but also on the vexed problem of insurgency in Nagaland, its contours, and the current possibilities of peace. He points to a blueprint for conflict resolution and a new federalism in India based on reconciliation and forgiveness.

David Johnson's fascinating delineation of land, identity, and social conflict in pre- and post-Apartheid South Africa dwells on the fact that land reform is still crucial for the poor in that country. Land is not merely an agricultural resource but a link between past and future, a forging of identity whether in South Africa or, as Sanjoy Hazarika points out, in Assam and the North East of India. In South Africa both white paternalism and black smallholderism

need to be challenged. In Assam the pressure on land from Bangladeshi migrants creates frequent situations of conflict and communal violence. In both locations the existing laws have failed to address particular problems related to relocation of resources and illegal migration. The laws need to be made consistent with the reforms desired and, in the case of Assam, help maintain a sense of Assamese identity.

Mollica Dastider deals with majoritarian discourses and xenophobia vis-à-vis the Turkish community in Germany, and the ways in which political discourses construct the us-versus-them framework to pursue an exclusionist agenda. The German political class insists on Turkish integration without equality or recognition of political rights and Dastider raises the vital problem of how democracies deal with the issue of majoritarianism.

Efurosibina Adegbija contends that globalization is anti-pluralistic and contra-ethnic identity. He specifically locates the questions of linguistic and religious pluralism within the 450 languages and 3 religious groupings in Nigeria highlighting how this is the bedrock of identity politics.

*tope Omoniye analyses the ways in which globalization has created a seemingly universal youth identity where satellite and digital information located in the South address issues and produce music and entertainment particular to various diasporic communities. At the workshop Omoniye played Apache Indian's 'Make Way for the Indian' which asks for space through the reggae form. As spokesperson and role model for Asians in Britain, Steven Kapoor represents not rootlessness but the occupation of in-between spaces, a vibrant hybridity. The second example, a programme called 'Groovoids' on Minaj Broadcasting Corporation, Lagos, taps into the same cultural pool as Apache Indian. These instances of global markers of youth identity create illusions of homogeneity and equality. While the flow of information from North to South has been partially stemmed and problematised, satellite channels

located in the South do not necessarily reverse the hegemony of the North or imprint Southern identity.

Acknowledgements

The GIPSC Project coordinators are very grateful indeed for the sponsorship of NMML in organizing the workshop in Delhi. Thanks are especially due to the Director of NMML, Dr. O.P. Kejariwal, and to Dr. N. Balakrishnan and Mr. Deshraj. Thanks are also due to all NMML employees, at every level, who have silently and uncomplainingly contributed towards the success of the Delhi workshop. The GIPSC Project coordinators gratefully acknowledge the generosity of the British Academy, which has made the project as a whole possible, and the support of the Open University UK.

The paragraph at the end of each paper preceded by ** is a summary of discussions that followed the paper presentation at the workshop.

Economic Globalization, Cultural Identity and Social Conflict

Jayati Ghosh

The most recent phase of international capitalism, which has been characterized by a new form of imperialist globalization, has been one of very rapid and dramatic changes. It is now clear that the more optimistic promises made about this process around the start of the decade of the 1990s have been belied by the actual outcomes on economies across the world. And in the opening years of the new century, the majority of the people in the world are living in countries where economic insecurity of various sorts has increased quite significantly, and has changed the ways in which citizens can react to both national and international economic forces. This has obviously affected not only material conditions but also social and cultural patterns, along with other processes. And it could be argued that it has also contributed to an exacerbation of social conflict, although of course it would be simplistic to attribute such conflict to economic and material processes alone. In this paper the chief features of international economic change over the past decade are explored, and then the links with cultural processes and newer forms of identity politics are briefly explored.

The world economy in the past decade

One of the more striking characteristics of the world economy over the 1990s is the very substantial increase in the economic vulnerability of nations. Such vulnerability has not been confined to the economies that have traditionally been regarded as more fragile, such as the least developed countries or those developing countries that relied heavily on external bank finance for their accumulation, but has affected even the largest and most powerful economies. Because of the sudden incorporation of previously 'socialist' countries into the international capitalist system, it has also penetrated countries that were earlier relatively insulated.

This enhanced economic vulnerability has taken several forms. The most obvious is the increased potential for sudden and sharp economic shocks, whether in the form of dramatic movements in exchange rates, large inflows or outflows of capital, or changes in trade flows. The greater volatility in foreign exchange markets is reflected in the increased variance of exchange rates in the 1990s compared to earlier decades, and is a predictable outcome given the sheer volume of such liberalized transactions. The daily value of total foreign currency transactions in just one such centre—New York—was estimated in 2001 to amount to more than \$1.4 trillion, of which less than 3 per cent referred to trade in goods and services, while the remainder reflected capital flows and other speculative transactions.

Further, shocks are no longer isolated in nature, or confined to particular countries, but tend to spread through 'contagion' to other countries. The transmission mechanism could be either real or virtual financial flows, but increasingly it has come to be recognized that short-term capital flows are now the primary *via media*. Contagion itself, which is qualitatively new, is something that is still little understood. Quite often it has been simply geographical proximity that has been responsible for the transmission of shocks from one country to another, while in other cases some assumed common characteristics (which the financial press has dubbed

'fundamentals') have been held to blame. But the lack of any systematic pattern which holds for all cases of supposed contagion suggests that financial markets do not necessarily operate according to any clearly defined rules, and this makes prediction very difficult. Once the financial contagion occurs, the transmission of other economic shocks and recessionary tendencies is easy to explain. This is why the possibility of even worldwide contagion is now taken seriously.

Another marked feature of this decade has been the sheer rapidity of the changes that are being generated within or being forced upon economies. Once again, large and highly volatile capital movements are associated with this, but that is not the only factor behind the greater speed of movements in various real and financial markets. Both economic expansions and downturns, especially in the developing countries, have become highly compressed and intense processes, and the turnaround has often been equally sharp and often unexpected.

In the closing years of the twentieth century, these processes reflecting greater external vulnerability assumed a greater significance because they occurred in an overall context of global slowdown in economic activity. In the heady days in the early 1990s, the explosion of the forces of globalization and the apparent triumph of capitalism over any rival economic system were taken as sufficient to establish more rapid and sustained material expansion in much of the world. That expectation has been tempered by a much more sober reality, in which it is now clear that these forces have actually been associated with a deceleration of economic activity in much of the developed world, a continuing implosion in vast areas of the developing world including the continent of Africa, and a dramatic downslide in what had hitherto been the most dynamic segment of the world economy—East and Southeast Asia. The later years of the decade brought the greatest disappointment. Global output growth, which averaged 3 per cent in the period 1990-97, was less than half that rate in 1998 and 1999, and as

many as 36 developing countries experienced declines in per capita income (UNCTAD, *Trade and Development Report*, 2000). And the early years of the new decade have been accompanied by crises of unparalleled severity in Turkey and most recently Argentina.

The causes for this increased economic fragility of both the entire world system, and of individual countries within it, are to be found precisely in the greater integration of the international system through the various forces which are collectively known as 'globalization'. There are numerous such forces, which can be briefly categorized as trade integration, foreign investment flows, portfolio capital movements, external debt transactions, purely speculative currency movements, and finally integration based on technological changes such as the spread of satellite-based media.

Consider first the growing importance of external trade. This is frequently cited as one of the more significant manifestations of globalization, and it is certainly true that for many economies the share of external trade in GNP is greater today than, say, half a century ago. Yet it is also true that when the yardstick of comparison is the relative importance of foreign trade during the late 19th century, the current period appears much less remarkable. Thus, the share of external trade in the GNP of the United Kingdom in 1870 was nearly 30 per cent, that is one and a half times the ratio prevailing more than a century later; while for the US the ratio was roughly the same as today, at around 7 per cent. The ratios of trade to national income were much higher for the African and Asian colonies as well, and typically ranged from one-fourth to one-third of national income, whereas for most countries in these regions today (barring the high-exporting East and Southeast Asian countries) they are around half that proportion. This is equally true for the Latin American countries (Maddison 1995).

The feeling that international trade has grown substantially comes about because of the massive decline in such trade during the inter-War years, after which they have recovered slowly in the second half of this century. What we observe today is a shift back

to the level of trade performance achieved by the international economy in the last decade of the 19th century. Then, as in the past decade, world trade growth was faster than world output growth.

However, one feature that economists typically expect to be among the first effects of trade, that of relative price equalization, has not really occurred. Instead of equating prices across countries through international goods arbitrage, today's external trade leads to a *lower* degree of correspondence in price movements than it did a century ago. This is partly a result of the greater volatility of exchange rate movements, which makes companies and traders less willing to react to short-run changes in nominal exchange rates unless they are assured that these reflect secular trends. There have also been changes in the internal structure of most capitalist economies which make them less responsive to international price linkages and more prone to pricing to particular segmented markets, largely because of the importance of oligopolies in production. Furthermore, multinational companies in their internal and external transactions now dominate an increasing share of world trade. This shift in the pattern of international trade away from being dominated by relatively homogenous products towards the greater role of product differentiation, means that oligopolistic rents absorb much more of the 'gains' from international trade than ever before.

But the other significance of external trade lies in the fact that since the 1980s, it has been seen as the basic engine of growth for developing countries, and the chief means through which rapid industrialization is possible. The incredibly high rates of export growth exhibited by the East Asian region pointed to the positive aspects of global economic integration through trade. It is now apparent that it was precisely such excessive export dependence that engendered a certain vulnerability in the region. Similarly, there is the other side of the coin: that all exports means some other country's imports and sometimes can be seen in importing countries as substituting for domestic production and employment rather than simply adding to consumption. In developed countries this perception has given

greater political weight to calls for protectionist policies, especially those directed against the manufacturing exports of developing countries.

The second important agent of globalization is foreign direct investment, which has expanded dramatically over the 1990s. Total FDI flows into both developed and developing countries surged in the 1990s, to reach more than \$ 700 billion by 2000. Consequently FDI has become the single largest item in net private capital flows. FDI inflows into developing countries have increased at an average rate of around 14 per cent per annum, well above the annual average increases in total gross fixed capital formation at 4 per cent and in exports of goods and non-factor services at 3.8 per cent (UNCTAD, *World Investment Report*, 2001).

Once again, there is need to put this into perspective. These flows certainly appear large today, but in terms of proportion of world income they are still relatively minor when compared to the enormous and prolonged flows that marked the late 19th century, when capital flows out of Britain amounted to between 5 and 7 per cent of GNP and flows into the US accounted for more than 5 per cent of her GNP.

Further, the dominant share of all FDI (more than 85 per cent in 1997 and 1998) was accounted for by mergers and acquisitions, which do not represent new investment or asset creation but simply result in changes in the ownership of existing assets. The major consequence of such a drive towards mergers and acquisitions is greater industrial concentration internationally in the hands of a few firms in each business sector. Thus, the sources of most FDI—the large multinational corporations—have become even more dominant in the control of international production and distribution. The top 100 MNCs, which are all from the developed industrial countries, have approximately \$1.5 trillion worth of assets abroad and account for more than one-third of global FDI stock. Their assets, sales and profits have all increased substantially in the past five years, but the same is not true for their total employment, which

has stagnated and even declined in recent years (UNCTAD, *World Investment Report*, 2001).

Even this FDI has been very unevenly distributed across regions. Developing countries received less than one-third of total world FDI in the 1990s, and, of this, around one-third went to China alone. Only a handful of countries in the developing world experienced FDI inflows of any significance, while most countries received capital inflows that are negligible in per capita terms.

Further, these FDI flows may have more than doubled over the past five years, but their share of total capital formation remains very small, at around 4 per cent for developed countries and 7 per cent for developing countries. It is only in some of the newly-industrializing economies of Asia that both inward and outward FDI flows were substantial in relation to domestic investment. But even in this region, the net effect on domestic investment was typically rather small as well as limited in terms of time span.

In some ways, the decade of the 1990s was an especially good period to study the positive effects of FDI, because throughout the world foreign investors and multinational companies have never had it so good. Everywhere in the world, including in developed countries, governments are vying with each other to attract such investment, and this has led to a progressive reduction of regulations and restraints that could have inhibited MNC freedom in any way. Therefore, it is natural to expect, especially with all the hype surrounding the decade of globalization, that both foreign investment and FDI would be quantitatively more significant than ever before, and that they would play much more important roles in furthering the processes of industrialization and structural change in developing countries.

In this context, the actual evidence on the role of foreign investment is quite different, as has already been suggested. Table 1 provides information on the aggregate net capital inflow into developing countries, as a share of their GNP, in three periods since 1975¹.

Table 1: Net capital inflow into developing countries
(as per cent of GNP)

	1975-82	1983-89	1990-98
Total net inflow			
Including China	4.91	2.87	5
Excluding China	5.45	2.97	4.22

Source: UNCTAD, *Trade and Development Report*, 1999

It turns out that aggregate net capital inflows into developing countries have not been all that significant as a share of developing country GNP in the 1990s. In fact, the average for the 1990s is only marginally higher than that for the period 1975-82, and only stands out because of the much lower net inflows during the period 1983-89, that is when the external debt crisis was working itself out. Indeed, if China is excluded, then it turns out that the 1990s show a lower quantitative significance for net foreign capital inflow in all other developing countries combined. The late 1970s turns out to have been the time when foreign capital was most significant relative to national income, and the globalizing 1990s comes a rather poor second.

The big change across the different time periods has been in the nature of the capital inflow. In the period 1975-82, fully half the net inflow consisted of bank loans; official flows, including development assistance, amounted to another 32 per cent. FDI and portfolio inflows together amounted to a measly 11 per cent. By the 1990s the picture had changed dramatically. All official flows were down to 20 per cent, and bank loans to 24 per cent. Instead, portfolio inflows had increased to 21 per cent and FDI to 34 per cent of net inflow.

However, even this net capital inflow does not give us an idea of the actual resource flows to or from the country. That is provided by net capital flows, which represent net capital inflows minus net capital outflows (that is, acquisition minus sales of foreign assets

by residents). For a genuine idea of net resource transfer, we need to look at the extent of net capital flow minus interest payment and profit remittances which emerge out of such flows. By this reckoning, external savings have contributed really rather little to the development process for all developing countries (including China) taken together. Net resource transfer was actually negative in the 1980s, but even in the period 1990-98, they amounted to only 2.65 per cent of the GNP of developing countries, just slightly above that ratio for the late 1970s and early 1980s (2.48 per cent).

One of the reasons for this less than wonderful performance of net transfer in the 1990s has been the change in the pattern of net capital flows over the 1990s. Around 1992-93, a number of developing countries across Asia and Latin America went in for substantial financial liberalization, including deregulation of capital account transactions. In consequence, while capital inflow increased so did capital outflow, as more and more domestic residents found it both more possible and more attractive to hold foreign assets. The effects of this were that in the period 1995-98, net capital inflow did certainly increase, by nearly 30 per cent compared to the earlier four-year period. But net capital outflow went up even more, by more than 200 per cent, as domestic residents rapidly (often frantically) acquired foreign financial assets. In consequence, net capital flows for all developing countries taken together in the second part of the 1990s were lower than they were in the first part, by 8 per cent.

The form of capital flow that is widely seen as responsible for the increased vulnerability of nations in the 1990s is of course portfolio capital movement, in the form of investment in domestic stock and securities markets by non-residents. Such flows registered a marked increase to developing country 'emerging markets' in the 1990s, as a result of a combination of factors. These included the wave of financial deregulation that has swept the developing world in the past decade; the increasing need of international asset managers, including pension funds which have been growing in

size, to diversify their portfolios in order to assure larger returns; and the economic slump in rich industrial countries, which reduced rates of return on capital investments made there and forced mobile capital to seek alternative avenues for investment. This wave has already diminished in strength, and most developing country equity markets have experienced the negative effects of decelerating net inflows of foreign portfolio capital. The current year (2002) in particular is a year of crisis in emerging markets.

Not only are international capital markets today very hierarchical, oligopolistic and skewed, they are also notoriously imperfect in their operations. And their behaviour over the past decade suggests that they are clearly not efficient in any sense of the term. This is evident in two important areas. While the mobility of capital internationally has increased considerably over the past fifty years and especially in the past decade, it has not resulted in equalization of rates of return on capital or of wage rates across countries. There is no indication that capital typically moves from capital-rich to capital-poor countries; rather, the evidence all along points to the geographical and income-wise concentration of capital. Similarly, the growing capital flows have not resulted in a substantial transfer of savings from high-saving to low-saving countries, even among the group of industrial countries (except for the much-publicized example of Japan's capital exports to the US). This is clear from the fact that while savings rates across countries show very wide variation, the range of differences in the ratio of current account to GDP is much narrower, so that variations in investment rates are not much different from those in savings rates. Even the favoured recipients of capital inflow in East Asia have been economies with very high domestic savings rates.

Most of all, however, such flows have tended to generate unparalleled degrees of volatility and uncertainty in capital and currency markets. These in turn lead to much more dramatic material changes as well as a much greater degree of volatility and uncertainty. It is now clear that the all too brief period when the financial markets of some developing countries and economies in

transition were seen as the favoured destination of international investors is over for the time being. The outlook for most emerging markets is muddy if not definitively negative. This is likely to imply significant net outflows of foreign capital from many economies, as already witnessed in the Asian crisis countries and in Russia. The growing fear and insecurity among market participants, which is reflected in the large yield spreads seen recently, could become self-fulfilling and result in the prolonged disruption of international financial flows with severely depressing effects on economic activity as well as on world trade.

What is important to note here is that the crisis—in the specific form of dramatic reduction in net capital inflows—can attack virtually all emerging markets, not simply those which have been identified as having specific domestic problems or which are perceived as particularly risky prospects. This is essentially a repetition of a historical pattern in international lending and portfolio investment which can be traced over more than a century, whereby problems of repayment or potential default in one recipient country have led to dramatic declines in all such inflows to all developing countries, rather than being confined to the individual transgressor.

This brings us to the other important form of capital flow which has generated very sharp cycles in the recent past—external borrowing. It is true that international lending to developing countries has always been characterized by boom-and-bust cycles, and sharp collapses in such flows consequent upon repayment problems of a small sub-group of debtors, were evident in the 1920s, 1930s, and of course in the external debt crisis of the 1980s. But while it has typically been in the nature of private international capital to move in such a manner, the current expansion of global finance has only accentuated such a tendency. This is because the wave of financial liberalization also involved easing restrictions on external borrowing by domestic private agents, and this has contributed in no small measure to sharp inflows and outflows of

resources in developing countries.

To these must be added those movements of capital which are purely speculative, betting on the future value of currencies or other financial assets. These are empirically difficult to separate from other capital flows, but the conceptual difference is important, because such speculative behaviour has played a major role in generating and worsening financial crises throughout the 1990s. Of course, it is worse than simplistic to blame currency traders for the problems of economies in financial crisis, but it is evident that their behaviour has not only accentuated market trends, but has occasionally created financial pressure greater than anything warranted by macroeconomic conditions in particular countries.

These aspects of global economic integration have led to the intensification of some features of 'traditional' capitalism, which until recently seemed to have become less relevant. Thus, one of the features of the workings of the international economy which had been much discussed by development theorists and third world practitioners was the squeeze on primary commodity exporters, typically through terms of trade movements. The sudden rise in primary commodity prices in the mid-1970s and then again in the early 1980s seemed to belie the existence of this secular trend. But the past decade has brought it back with even greater force, as international terms of trade have moved against primary commodity exporters, and prices of agricultural and mineral raw materials, as well as of petroleum products, have slumped.

The other features of the capitalist system which used to be much discussed earlier were the tendencies towards economic centralization and geographical concentration. In much Marxist or development literature, the nature of market functioning was held to be responsible for the first, while the second was attributed to imperialism. Yet even here, the patterns of development from the 1970s seemed to suggest that the relevance of these processes was now more restricted. Various types of economic and production organization got more attention, such as in the 'industrial clusters'

and 'flexible specialization' which increased the economic significance of small and medium sized units relative to large enterprises. And the changing world structure of production, especially the emergence of semi-industrial countries as major exporters of manufactured products, was highlighted to argue that imperialism was effectively a past phase, and that modern globalization would involve a much more complex dynamic between participating nations.

But by the closing years of the previous decade it had become evident that both of these conclusions were probably premature. If anything, international centralization of production and distribution has accelerated in the 1990s, and the wave of mergers and acquisitions which continue to sweep across all capitalist countries suggest that the process still has some way to go. And the economic and financial crises in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and other emerging markets, have brought into question the assessment of regions which were earlier seen as examples of the successful proliferation of capitalism as a means to development and transition to industrial country status. Throughout these continents today, imperialism does not seem dead at all for ordinary citizens; indeed, it may never have seemed so potent.

This emphasis on the continued, indeed accentuated, potency of imperialism obviously should not blind us to the role played by domestic ruling classes in thwarting or inhibiting the developmental and democratic ambitions of most of the citizenry. The success of imperialist globalization stems very largely from its ability to draw local elites (and even middle classes) into their own ranks, to offer part inclusion into a privileged international world where the travails of the local poor can be forgotten, even while their crucial role in generating productive surplus is not lost sight of. The incorporation of local elites, and the consequent interplay of domestic class forces with the requirements of global capitalism, make the political economy of the current phase both more complex and more striking.

There is one feature of current capitalism which is similar to a crucial feature of an earlier heyday of globalization in an earlier century: the dependence of the core economies on surplus extraction from the periphery. This was critical for core capitalism not only in the primary accumulation phase but also in financing and sustaining the industrial revolution and thereafter allowing for investment rates which ensured high rates of growth of economic activity in the core countries. The mid-twentieth century changed that relation into one in which (while resource extraction remained important) the focus shifted towards the importance of the periphery in providing markets. By the turn of the new century, the pendulum appears to have swung back again to a situation in which countries of the periphery are viewed in terms of their ability to generate surpluses which are to be consumed by the capitalist core, and especially by the United States. The peculiar circumstances whereby the US economy is on an extended consumption boom financed by the rest of the world's (including the developing world's) savings, is a reflection of this larger tendency.

Globalization and economic growth : the recent evidence

Globalization has been welcomed because it has been seen to provide an opportunity for the vast bulk of the world's population, many of whom still live in conditions that barely ensure survival, to 'catch up' materially with the more privileged richer minority. Yet the evidence that we already have suggests that this pattern of growth is one which is fundamentally inequalising. The process of global economic integration that we can observe thus far, has been one which concerns and benefits large international capital in its various forms, and increases worldwide economic concentration as well as greater inequality in incomes and in access to resources. This is evident from some of the data relating to patterns of growth and distribution in the past two decades.

Thus, purely in terms of geographical distribution, around 1.6 billion people (more than one-fourth of the world's population)

live in countries in which average incomes have actually fallen over the past decade or more. By contrast, the number of people living in countries where average incomes have risen in real terms is slightly less than that, at below 1.4 billion. In 70 countries per capita incomes are less than they were in 1980, and in 43 countries (many of which are in the continent of Africa) such incomes are less than they were in 1970. In the 1990s, average incomes have fallen by a fifth or more in 21 countries, mostly in the formerly socialist countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Countries like Russia have experienced historically unprecedented declines in average living standards, which have in turn precipitated major social disintegration and a collapse of demographic indicators, pointing to a severe crisis. Even in several countries in which average incomes have risen, including those in Asia, worsening distribution has meant that there are many more poor people in terms of absolute number than two decades ago (UNDP, *Human Development Report*, 2000).

The inequalising nature of the growth process currently in operation is revealed most dramatically in the worldwide gaps between rich and poor, which have widened even faster in the recent past. The gap in per capita income between industrial and developing worlds has more than tripled between the 1960 and 1990. Between 1960 and 1991, the income share of the richest 20 per cent of the world's population rose from 70 per cent to 85 per cent, while the income share of the poorest 20 per cent of population fell from 2.3 per cent to 1.4 per cent. In fact, the income shares of more than 85 per cent of the world's population actually fell over this period. The ratio of shares of the richest to the poorest groups doubled from 30:1 to 60:1. This has also been reflected in the growing concentration of assets. Thus, today the assets of only the three richest people in the world amount to more than the combined GNP of all the least developed countries put together. The net worth of 350 dollar billionaires, is equal to the combined incomes of the poorest 45 per cent of the world's population, that is 2.3 billion people, who are likely to hold assets worth even less than this. All

of these inequalities are estimated to have grown over the past decade (UNDP, *Human Development Reports*, 1996, 1999).

In the very recent past tendencies towards stagnation and enhanced inequality have become more accentuated. By the end of the decade of the 1990s it became obvious that world trade growth had decelerated and that major markets were experiencing falling prices and other evidence of recession or depression. The most striking feature of international economic trends during the 1990s was that the US experienced strong growth while most of the other economies in the world system languished. This was essentially because confidence in the US dollar had made American capital markets a haven for the financial investors. This fed a consumption-led boom within the US, and also caused growing current balance of payments deficits for the US economy (cf. Chandrashekhar and Ghosh 2002). The current account deficit of the US reached the record level of \$ 450 billion by the end of 2001.

These trends made the latter half of the 1990s unique in the history of post-war capitalism for another reason. In the past the country holding the international reserve currency did not face any national budget constraint because it could print money and spend it across the world, since everyone was willing to accept and hold such money. As a result, the government of that country routinely resorted to deficit spending to keep the world economy moving. That is, the US economy played the role of locomotive of world growth by sustaining deficit-financed spending. According to one estimate (published by Morgan Stanley) the growth in US gross domestic product was responsible for about 40 percent of the cumulative increase in world GDP in the five years ending in mid-2000, which is twice America's share of the global economy. In this period, demand growth in the US was 4.9 per cent per annum compared to 1.8 per cent in the rest of the world. In other words, US economic expansion pulled the rest of the world behind it, at least to some extent.

That process ended some time in late 2000. And with the US engine of growth slowing down, it meant that other countries—which had been relying on the huge demand for their exports from the US to keep their own growth rates positive—were adversely affected. This has been immediately evident in terms of world trade. WTO figures suggest that the growth of world trade in volume terms, which was more than 12 per cent in 2000, was only around 2 per cent in 2001. And when this is combined with continued deflation in terms of trading prices in world markets for primary commodities and many manufactured goods, world trade in value terms was stagnant.

In this context it is worth considering another point that is frequently made in such discussion, that 'sound' macroeconomic policies as exemplified in low deficit or surplus current accounts and low fiscal deficits are the key to investor confidence. Currently the only country in the world that can boast of continuously attracting international investors is also the one with the largest current account deficit (in excess of \$ 246 billion at latest count) the largest external debt and a large fiscal deficit—that is, the US. Despite this the inflow of the world's savings into the US economy continues unabated. And even within the industrial world, the countries with the most prudent macroeconomic policies and the largest current account surpluses—Japan and the Euro area—are those facing recession and falling investor confidence.

The fact of recession has been in the air internationally for some time now. And of course, after the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington, the US Government, the IMF and others were quick to seize on this as the excuse for predicting a future downturn, which could then be claimed as the adverse fallout of international terrorism. The truth is, of course, that the weakness in the international economy was already well advanced for some time before September 2001. In fact, much of the world economy had actually been experiencing a slowdown or recession for several years before the last quarter of 2001.

The effect on most developing countries, of course, has been more negative even before the latest recession in the major developed countries. And this was not an accident, rather it was a reflection of the pattern of global integration and inequality over the last decade. Even the UN has recognized this:

The pattern of output growth across nations is widening the disparity between levels of living and personal incomes in the developed countries and those in the rest of the world. [...] In the majority of countries, growth for the foreseeable future will fall far short of what is necessary to effect a substantial improvement in living standards and a reduction in the number of people living in poverty. [...] Thus, whereas in recent years many of the developed countries were able to take advantage of globalization, the effects on many developing and transition countries have been perverse. (*The World Economy* 1999, 24)

On the basis of a slightly longer look at the experience of growth and external imbalance in developing countries, it has been pointed out that growth in developing countries as a group in the 1990s has been at an annual average of around 4.3 per cent. This does represent a recovery from the levels of the 1980s, but it is still well below the average of 5.7 per cent per annum of the 1970s (UNCTAD, *Trade and Development Report*, 2001). Moreover, this partial recovery in economic growth has been accompanied by a significant worsening of external deficits. Indeed, if China (whose performance was exceptional for a variety of specific reasons) is excluded, then it turns out that the average developing country trade deficit for the 1990s is higher than that for the 1970s by almost 3 percentage points of GDP, while the average growth rate is lower by 2 per cent per annum. Of course, low oil prices in the 1990s (compared to high oil prices in the 1970s) have played some role in this average since a number of developing countries rely on oil exports. But the same pattern is evident, to almost the same degree, even for non-oil exporting developing countries, indicating that the basic problem lies elsewhere.

The pattern is also the same across regions. In Latin America, growth has been lower while trade deficits as a share of GDP have been the same. And recent trends in Argentina and some other countries have further reduced average rates of growth. In sub-Saharan Africa, growth has fallen but trade deficits have risen. Countries in Asia have on average run greater external deficits in the 1990s without achieving faster growth. The general tendency among the majority of developing countries over the 1990s, therefore, is of widening external deficits combined with stagnant or falling growth rates. This is precisely the opposite of what had been promised by the proponents of liberalization at the start of the decade.

Two forces were supposed to create a virtuous cycle of growth and (eventually) lower deficits for developing countries: the Uruguay Round of GATT, which was supposed to bring about a dramatic increase in market access for developing country exports; and the greater freedom accorded to international capital flows in the wake of financial liberalization, which would allow developing countries to finance deficits easily and increase their domestic growth rates. Obviously, neither of these forces has acted quite in the manner predicted by their votaries. What explains the more depressing reality?

If we eschew the simplistic explanations which have been all too readily advanced in the recent past, which tend to blame everything on 'over-hasty financial liberalization' or domestic problems like 'crony capitalism', then it is possible to identify some common features which apply to all or most developing countries, and which also reflect the general conditions of the world economy. There are thus two important factors behind the adverse combination of payments deficits and lower growth: terms of trade losses and rapid trade liberalization. Both of these stem directly from the attempts of developing countries—pushed by public international institutions like the IMF as well as private ones like the World Economic Forum—to integrate more closely with the world

economy in terms of both trade and finance, to make their economies more 'open' and to rely more heavily on exporting activity as an engine of growth.

Thus, the terms of trade losses reflect the growing numbers of developing country exporters crowding into already saturated markets, pushing down prices further, and reducing the income gains from additional exports. Interestingly, the process of relative price decline occurred for both primary and non-primary goods exported by developing countries. The decline in commodity prices (both oil and others) is well-known by now, reflecting both slow growth of aggregate demand in industrial countries as well as substitution away from use of such commodities because of technological change. But standard adjustment policies continue to promote reliance on these traditional exports for most developing countries, further worsening the problem. But even for manufactured exports by developing countries, relative prices fell. In fact, since the beginning of the 1980s, the terms of trade of developing countries relying mainly on manufactured exports have fallen by as much as 1 per cent per annum on average. This reflects the increased concentration of developing country interest on certain labour-intensive or natural resource based manufactured products, including low-technology inputs to the electronics industry. There is growing concern that such manufactures may be acquiring the characteristics of primary commodities in world markets. The fear that several analysts had expressed earlier, that all countries cannot play the same game of aggressive export promotion in labour-intensive manufactures without affecting international prices, now appears to have been justified.

The problem has been aggravated by inadequate market access for developing country exports in developed markets. This has turned out to be one of the major false hopes raised by the Uruguay Round and the formation of the WTO. While developed country markets have not become more open for developing exporters, the markets of developing countries have been significantly liberalized. Many developing countries opted for 'big bang' forms of trade

liberalization which drastically changed the structure of domestic demand in favour of imports, but even the more gradual liberalisers have seen imports make big inroads into their markets and erode the viability of domestic manufacturers.

In the past, it used to be felt that trade liberalization combined with currency devaluation would ensure that trade deficits would not get too large. Indeed, the inability to finance such deficits typically ensured that trade would eventually be brought into balance, even at the cost of domestic contraction. But the possibility of using private capital markets to finance such deficits, even if only for short periods, has meant that deficits now continue for slightly longer periods. More significantly, because trade liberalization has often been accompanied by financial liberalization, it has broken the link between the current account and exchange rate movements, which now get determined by the behaviour of capital flows at the margin. So the new scenario is one of exchange rate instability and currency 'misalignment' driven by capital flows that further cause trade balances to deteriorate.

Often, the imbalances can be sustained for some time, because of continued capital inflow. But the story of the 1990s has been one of increasingly rapid reversal of such capital movements, leading to boom and bust cycles. The Asian crisis and the ongoing difficulties in Russia, Brazil, Turkey, Argentina and elsewhere, are evidence of this. In the process, there is also significant damage to domestic industry, in many cases leading to effective de-industrialization because nascent manufacturers simply disappear in the face of severe and cheap external competition.

This is portrayed by some determined advocates of indiscriminate liberalization as bad for workers but good for consumers in the country. But it can only be good for consumers if domestic economic expansion is somehow sustained sufficiently to ensure that there is more purchasing power in the hands of consumers. The pattern of terms of trade movements along with effects on domestic economic activity and employment suggests

that this has not been the case for most developing countries. So the greater openness of developing countries in the 1990s has been associated not only with higher volatility and larger payments deficits, but even with inferior economic growth performance.

In addition, it could be argued that the pattern of economic growth that has occurred has been even more 'voiceless' than in the past, because it has denied true democratic voice to large sections of the population. This does not only refer to the authoritarian governments which have been associated with high economic growth. The unfettered functioning of markets in their desired fashion may actually require some degree of lack of democratic voice, simply because they involve growing inequalities. The denial of social and political participation goes hand in hand with the economic disenfranchisement of marginalised groups and social exclusion. In fact this is a tendency which is not confined to authoritarian polities, but is spread across many so-called democratic societies in both developed and developing worlds.

The global media: concentrating culture

By now it is almost a cliché that culture has become an economic good under late capitalism, or that globalization in the past decade has accentuated this process quite dramatically. Indeed, the very fact that it is already a cliché, even though the process is so recent, is a pointer to the extreme rapidity of social change in the current international context. But despite this speed, even sudden or short-term cultural influences tend to leave longer-term residues in society, and can have unexpected consequences.

One of the more significant aspects of the recent process of globalization of culture is the idea that culture can be identified and expressed in physical or other goods that can be traded and sold, such as crafts, films, books as well as music. Even tourism is often presented as the selling of particular cultures, the more 'exotic' 'unspoilt' or 'non-touristy' the better. Trade in culture has become

an explosively growing activity thanks to new technologies, such as satellite television, multimedia and the Internet.

Along with this, more and more culture itself is disseminated through communications media that deal with news, entertainment and other related aspects. And this area is one of tremendous and growing concentration in terms of ownership and control. Virtually all the major productive and service sectors in the international economy are currently undergoing a major process of concentration. To that extent, the media and communication industries are simply part of a wider trend which reflects both the requirements and the effects of global deregulation and greater freedom of private enterprise. But the sheer size of the mergers and acquisitions in this area, in the context of an industry that was already highly concentrated, suggests that what is happening here is of a different order. It is also qualitatively different, because after all the media industries do not just produce ordinary commodities; they produce the dissemination of information and cultural artefacts that determine how societies think, how much they know of and how they relate to the world around them, even how they dream.

That is why it comes as something of a shock to realise just how concentrated—and highly interlinked—the international media industry is, and how much of this has occurred in the last decade alone. The dissemination of information and culture has become one of the most potent sources of profit for today's large capitalists. Thus, the international culture industry is currently one of the largest and certainly the fastest growing in the world. According to a UNESCO study, world trade in goods with cultural content—such as printed matter, literature, music, visual arts, cinema, along with photographic and television equipment—nearly tripled in the period between 1980 and 1991, amounting to \$200 billion then. Since then, it has grown even faster because of satellite technology and other such vehicles. Internationally, the number of television sets per 1,000 people has nearly doubled from 121 in 1980 to 235 in 1995. In East Asia alone, the number of televisions per 1,000 people zoomed from less than 50 to more than 250 in the same period.

The number of hours of television watched globally nearly tripled between 1979 and 1991, and since then is estimated to have grown at an even faster rate (UNESCO, *The International Media Report*, 1999). Because of this, advertisers have also flocked to this medium—as they are now increasingly flocking to the Internet—and advertising expenditure in this sector in Europe and North America alone more than doubled in just five years over the late 1980s.

The multimedia boom has spawned large multimedia companies who can now be counted among the largest multinational corporations. This is really a phenomenon of the last decade, or at most the last fifteen or so years, as giant media firms have sought 'synergy' through not just vertical integration but by effectively 'acquiring control of every step in the mass media process, from creation of content to its delivery in the home' (Bagdikian 1997, xxv). The 1990s in particular have witnessed an unprecedented wave of mergers and acquisitions among global media giants. As a result, the top six multinational conglomerates—News Corporation, Time Warner, Disney, Bertelsmann, Viacom and TCI—now effectively own and control huge swathes of the media, publishing and commercial entertainment activities across the world. Competition between them therefore is also based on the use of monopoly power and the open attempt to link activities and consumer choices in different markets.

Many of these firms have explicitly rejected national identities and posited themselves as global or internationally based corporations, even though the dominant expression of content, the form of expression as well as the structures of ownership and management are really from the United States. It is true that the domination of US-based media programming has its limits, but the extent to which it nevertheless determines both format and content, even when the language used is other than English, continues to be significant.

Globalization over the past decade has been associated with the implantation of the commercial model of communication

wherever it did not earlier exist, and its intensification elsewhere. Insofar as this has meant a reduction in state monopoly over information and its dissemination, this is a positive thing. But it carries other, potentially even greater, dangers in terms of the replacement of the state-driven model of media control with one of control by oligopolistic private corporations. The expansion, conglomeration and subsequent activity of these large media firms have been closely affected by the changes in government regulation—and effective deregulation—in most countries of the world in the 1990s. It has been observed that, 'everywhere, governments are preparing new laws and regulations for the digital era, but in virtually all of these debates the superiority of the market and the profit motive as the regulator of all branches of communication is taken for granted' (Herman and McChesney 1998, 109). But there are important reasons why this need not necessarily be the case, and that is why the current processes of concentration of media ownership and greater control by some conglomerates of all aspects of the media and culture business, may have certain negative implications, which in turn impinge on the freedom of people in society.

The first important implication relates to the fact that markets, and media activities driven by the market, treat readers and audiences as consumers, not as citizens. Since what is being purveyed is not an ordinary good, but the very substance of knowledge which makes for informed politics, social consciousness and the ability to change the social, political and economic context, this matters a great deal. Indeed, in modern democracies, the media play a central role in terms of the possibility of creating an informed population making choices which are critical for their own welfare and for society in general. There are several aspects to this which in turn have significance for democratic practice. Thus, there tends to be a decline in the felt obligation to serve non-commercial information interests, such as those involved in public citizenship, or those which reach particular groups whose economic power is relatively limited. This effectively marginalises the public sphere.

On television, for example, when there is public debate on issues of major political or social importance, it is typically expressed in minuscule fragments or in such a frivolous manner that the content is really missed. This absence of knowledge or access to it only in truncated and potentially misleading form undermines democracy. As Bagdikian (1997) points out, a public which is inadequately informed about the substance of arguments that affect its most important social policies has effectively lost the substance of citizenship rights as well.

Related to this is the generally conservative bent of the 'information' and analyses that are consequently presented in such media. The crucial difference between what is good for private business (especially large, multinational private business) and what is good for the quality of life in a society gets ignored. This is not so much the product of an overt conspiracy as a more insidious system of shared values, in which the journalists, presenters and editors are all part of a system which promotes generally conservative economic philosophies. It also means that in general, most news, analyses and even entertainment programmes are presented in ways which support particular entrenched positions and are hostile to dissent.

Further, there is another sense in which the tone and content of media dissemination is not even innocently determined: that relates to the growing dependence of international media on advertising revenues for its very survival and profitability. In a sense, therefore, while international media is increasingly concentrated in ownership, it is actually 'owned' by the advertisers. What is notable is that the advertising industry itself is highly concentrated, even as it continues to grow in both expanding and stagnant markets, because the need to encroach on rivals' markets is never diminished. Global advertising expenditure growth has outstripped GDP growth in every year over the past decade and the trend is expected to continue.

This in turn means that advertisers increasingly determine the content of media service provision. And as their role in influencing

media content grows, so too the traditional notions of the separation of editorial and commercial interests tend to weaken. Also, because advertisers want affluent audiences who are likely to be influenced in the choice of their consumption, so media content tends to cater to the more affluent groups in society. This not only has a class bias, it reveals a basically undemocratic tendency.

This may explain why, for all that the new media seeks to make its content directed at consumers rather than at citizens in the more complete sense, it still does not accord its consumers complete sovereignty in terms of choice of content. Finally, the content of most media dissemination is determined by owners, managers and editors, often in conjunction with advertisers. And this in turn is influenced by perceptions of what would be the most arresting image to hold the viewer's attention or the reader's interest, the least demanding and therefore most likely to be indulged of stories, and the most facile of sound-bytes and printed epigrams. So the choices available to the consumer of the various media are limited to those which are consciously provided by those who purvey this service, and viewers or readers cannot hope to go beyond this. Numerous surveys among the television watching households of the US, for example, have found widespread dissatisfaction with the nature of the content of the programmes, the extent of gratuitous violence, and so on, and have expressed the desire for alternative programming—to little avail, because the basic pattern of the programming has remained unchanged despite such knowledge. Indeed, the plethora of television channels now available often serves only to underline this ironic lack of real choice.

Add to this the sheer effect of particular forms of programming and restricted information spread as well as so much directed advertising, on the consumption and lifestyle decisions of individuals and households, and the actual lack of freedom of the recipients of this process of cultural determinism becomes more obvious. Much in the frightening manner predicted by Aldous Huxley in his *Brave New World* (1932), what appears to be much

more choice and freedom for individuals in different societies ends up being predetermined aspiration without even the knowledge that it is unfree.

It should be obvious that one other important implication of the processes discussed here is that the media industry is less competitive than ever, and is increasingly founded upon a range of monopolistic practices. This too undermines its democratic possibilities. It has been pointed out that this coexists with very fierce competitive pressures for cutting costs and bringing down the bottom line, which in turn have meant the decline of professional objective journalism. To a large extent, the fact that profit motivation now dominates over any other focus in this major social and economic activity has contributed to this decline. It is not just that serious independent enquiry and investigative journalism may result in dissident or non-mainstream positions, it is also that such activity is more time-consuming and expensive than the quick and facile on-the-spot interpretations which are more commonly resorted to.

Of course, the entire picture is not as completely dire as may appear from this account. Just as technological change at one level has made the possibilities of and pressures for commercialization and concentration in the sector much stronger, so it has also created other possibilities of spreading information—chiefly through the Internet—which are cheaper, more open, more potentially questioning of the dominant paradigm, and thus more democratic. It is true that Internet access is still greatly limited, especially in the developing world, but nevertheless it does provide new opportunities for access to and dissemination of information, views and analyses which otherwise did not exist or were being increasingly squeezed out by the process of media concentration described above.

However, one further implication of the concentration of control over international media and the largely one-way transmission of its subject matter, has been that this aspect of recent globalization has been relatively rootless, in its largely unthinking elimination

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of various forms of social, cultural and economic identity. This is related to its celebration and encouragement of the market-driven *homo economicus*, working out all costs and benefits in rational choice-theoretic terms. One of the saddest and yet most frightening aspects of recent capitalist expansion is precisely this: that it reduces human nature to its most narrow and self-seeking aspect, and defines its goals in the most individualistic and ultimately non-creative way. As a result it has been able, through the sheer force of the economic incentives offered and the pressures created, to mould societies and people in this restricted image, whereby potentially vast motivations are squeezed into the straitjacket of purely material and commercial aspirations. Thus it is that, paradoxically, the process of capitalist globalization becomes simultaneously the celebration of economic self-interest; and inequalities are sought to be justified and made acceptable by holding out the slender hope that every individual has a chance to gain by winning out over his or her peers. It may not be surprising that the reaction to this in different parts of the world has involved responses privileging alternative cultural positions, which may in themselves be ethically problematic or even morally repugnant.

Economic processes and social tensions

Globalization does indeed create differences, even as it homogenises—but not in the positive form of encouraging genuine creative diversity. Rather, globalization creates far deeper and more pervasive inequalities—across regions of the world, within countries, across classes and income groups. These inequalities encompass gaps in wealth, income, access to productive employment, opportunities and a whole range of other material and social conditions. And they are made the more painful by the constant display of the advantages of being better off, emanating from both media imagery and actual consumption patterns of the wealthy.

The tensions and insecurities brought about by these widening inequalities cause people to seek refuge in particularities: political

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separation, regionalist demands, revanchist cultural movements, and so on. This may explain why Asian youth in particular appear to be so susceptible to social tendencies that tend to identify and blame some real or imagined 'other' for the harrowing gap between reality and aspiration. In India, we are familiar with the growing potency of fundamentalist and communalist tendencies and the support for such divisive forces even among the youth. In Indonesia, the response is taking the form of Islamicist reaction; in the Philippines growing support for populist and semi-mystical Christian cults has been noted; in Malaysia increasing friction between ethnic groups is observed. Everywhere in Asia, small-scale violence is on the increase, and in some countries it has unfortunately been matched by large-scale violence as well. In many countries, the latest social manifestation of economic crisis is the attack on migrant workers, who are being harassed and evicted from countries ranging from Malaysia and South Korea to Bhutan and India. Sometimes the response comes from poorer groups against those who are perceived as being even slightly better off, or have comparatively a slightly more secure position (the Christians in Indonesia; even, it could be argued, the Bohra Muslims in Gujarat). The point is that the real enemy of those who feel more insecure or frustrated seems too far off, or too powerful, or often cannot even be identified, so that anger is vented against those closer at hand, closer to one's own size, or those less able to react with effective force.

Of course, there are always some cultural roots to such social divisions, and it would be foolhardy to ascribe all social ills to material processes. But the role of economic alienation in generating perceptions of more fragmented and divided socio-cultural identities cannot be denied. Even as the American created 'McWorld' expands and, octopus-like, swallows up other cultures, it sows the seeds of divisiveness and suggests its own disintegration. This explains the paradox that the most prominent recent social result of globalization has been the assertion of narrow national identity in its least generous form. The negative sorts of reaction to this have come in

particularistic and tribalist responses that often hark back to some imagined glorious past of particular communities. The sociologist Benjamin Barber has called this the 'jihad' response to 'McWorld' (quoted in Martin and Schuman 1997).

It is obviously the case that all people have multiple social identities; which one is self-perceived as dominant depends not only upon the particular social and historical context but also upon the degree to which such perceptions have been played upon and manipulated by political forces and the extent to which states have been explicitly or implicitly complicit in the process. It is worth remembering that all politics has always been based on some notions of identity, the question of course is which identity and what form the assertion of that identity takes. Channelling frustration over the life-circumstances of individuals or groups into aggression towards others is not a new form of politics, but it is one which most conveniently serves the purposes of imperialist globalization, because it diverts energies, causes disruption among those who are all victims, and therefore prevents the emergence of more viable and threatening alternatives to the basic system.

Of course, this is the most pessimistic and extreme scenario, and there is much in today's world that is already fighting against such cultural hegemony. There are other, more inventive forms of cultural dissidence to a unifying pattern, which sabotage hegemony the more effectively because they reaffirm the basic creativity of human response. Interestingly, as mentioned above, these are often aided by new technology such as the Internet, which—at least for now—allows for an ease and freedom of information dissemination which was earlier unthinkable. But they are successful only because they resist the aggrandizing onslaught of one form of culture from a position of confidence and strength in their own, which in turn means with a basic sense of tolerance as well.

Indeed, that is the basic challenge today for those who want to resist the hegemonic onslaught of an international propagation of culture that is both unnecessarily homogenizing and essentially

undemocratic. The need is to forge not only new types of cultural and social responses without falling prey to reactionary fundamentalism, but also to work out more creative ways of uniting people across the world who can maintain their separate identities even as they forge a new and more participatory internationalism.

****** While most participants agreed with Professor Ghosh's incisive analysis of the economic effects of globalization, there were comments and queries on the bleakness of that picture and the seemingly deterministic nature of the processes involved. Discussions ranged over the particularities of industrialization – the differences, for example, between South Korea and India – a new imperialism inherent in the ways trade flows and global finance works, as well as the ways in which economic factors affect local/national electoral fortunes. Gujarat was seen as an exception in that an economically advanced state reverted to religious atavism. One alternative to the seemingly inevitable juggernaut of globalization is what Professor Ghosh defined as a process of deglobalization.

Notes

1. Some explanation of the term 'net capital inflow' is in order. This is defined as the acquisition of domestic assets by non-residents minus sales of domestic assets by non-residents. This includes categories such as official inflows (grants and aid), FDI, portfolio equity, bonds, and bank credit.

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Globalization, Tagore and Questions of Identity

P.K. Datta

I

It is often claimed that globalization poses a threat to the nation state. Indeed, to the degree that globalization raises hope and optimism, it is due to the sense that the future will see a world community free from the devastating inter-national conflicts that had beset the twentieth century. Clearly the processes of neo-liberal globalization—spearheaded by the transnational enterprises and governments of the advanced countries (mainly in the West), which seek to put into place a global economic and legal structure through agreements such as the WTO and GATT by which trade barriers are reduced, monopolies wielded on technology, easy flows of capital permitted but a corresponding mobility of labour prevented a point to which I will return—is producing an economic and legal structure that is weakening the hold of the nation state with its boundaries. Indeed, the binary twin of the 'global' tends to be the 'local' or in some cases the 'regional' (defined by trade blocs such as the NAFTA and EU), both pairs bypassing the 'national'.

Yet, despite the promise of the withering away of the nation, it has yet to begin. True, the nation state (except for a few such as North Korea) has renounced its ideal of economic self-reliance.

Against this must be reckoned the resurgence in nationalist sentiment today. The real difference seems to lie in that nationalism today locates itself in culture (normally of the majority) with little or no element of economic nationalism. This coincidence of globalization and cultural nationalism prompts a need to look more closely at how globalization processes culturally impact upon the 'national'. I would like to do this through a brief sketch of the ways in which promotional campaigns by transnational corporations—possibly the most visible and palpable sign of the global impact on everyday life—relate to national cultures.

It may be helpful to look at the historical shift made in our times to appreciate this question. Truth to tell industry did not bother itself very much with the problem of culture in the colonial period. This was given over to the State, a sphere where policy makers like Thomas Macaulay and W.W. Hunter operated. Dividing lines between the colonial powers and the colonized remained firm, buttressed by ideas of racial and civilisational difference. Consequently cultural divisions tended to reinforce oppositions at other levels, especially that of economics and politics. Advertising and promotional campaigns by (the then) transnationals was not sensitive to local needs. This was not only because of the small size of the non-colonial 'native' market. Promotion was simply regarded as an ancillary to the qualities of the commodity itself. Indeed advertisers often justified their trade by defining it as a form of imparting information to the public (Ray Chaudhury n.d.).¹ This meant that the commodity was not divorced from the factories, the workers and management who were located in a particular country; and its publicity generally took place on the basis of qualities and images associated with the place of its origin.

It was because of this mindset (along with production conditions) that this phase ended only in the 1980s, much after decolonization. 1977 was a major landmark when the Government of India terminated the operations of Coca Cola replaced it by a (short-lived) drink appropriately entitled '77'. It was not an

unpopular decision, for it rested on the identification of Coca Cola with American culture in a period that had inherited the anti-Americanism of the Vietnam War. The Coca Cola drink may have been popular but its promotional campaign tied it to a distinctively American way of life. It was also seen as expressing the power of American culture. Conversely this posed a challenge for promotion: the commodity needed to be dissociated from the culture of its place of origin without losing its distinctiveness. The questions raised by the 1977 event found a satisfactory answer in the following decades when there was, as Klein points out, a shift from the preoccupation with creating a product to promoting a 'brand' that involved concentrating on making images for the product. The product itself could now be produced anywhere in the world, as long as wages were cheap and workers could be easily disciplined. This coincided with the discovery of multi-culturalism as a profitable market strategy. Thus the 'black kids' could be enthused about Adidas shoes because Michael Jordan was identified with it (Klein 2001, chapters 1, 5). A new marketing strategy was then devised that could appeal to the cultural symbols of achievement of a people that had little to do with the production of the commodity. The commodity could erase its cultural otherness by the appeal to cultural pride even as the omnipresent logo indicated the enterprise to be the source and guarantee of that pride.

Its success with multi-culturalism has probably inspired transnational promotional campaigns in third world countries like India. The basis of this strategy, as seen in advertising campaigns, is to provide a patriotic spin to 'foreign' logos (which have originated in other countries, normally advanced western ones, and possess an international profile). Thus the soft drinks industry becomes a major sponsor for cricket in India, the patriotic sport par excellence, an initiative that removes the memory of the rapid disappearance of soft drinks that had been produced, marketed and owned here before liberalization. More interesting is the drive towards representing the non-global as ethnic. In such advertisements images of local ethnic culture are shown to be

actively consuming a 'foreign' product. Thus a motorcycle with a Japanese or German make kicks up dust in a Rajasthan hamlet leaving the village belles gaping in admiration – with some even breaking out in English. In these advertisements the transnational logo becomes a symbol of global culture by contrast with the ethnic image, even as the fact of sponsorship by the transnational indicates that the latter is committed to the projection of 'local' culture. Further, what is equally interesting is that the 'local' serves as an image of the national. Indeed, in various advertisements the 'local' functions interchangeably – villages of Rajasthan, backwaters of Kerala or the mohallas of Delhi – telescope into each other producing all of them equally as synecdoches of the nation. In short the 'local' provides a way of appealing to national pride.

This new successful strategy of appealing to nationalist cultural pride is one that corresponds to a different and more general sphere of the relationship of globalization to national identity. It is generally argued that globalization threatens the existence of the nation state. And yet what appears to be the dominant model of global-national relationship in the countries of the south is mediated through a nation state that legitimizes itself through a core of cultural authenticity while being an active component of the neo-liberal world order. This is the model that is being followed by a large number of countries in South Asia as well as China, India and many Islamic nations of the Middle-East. This model may not be contrary to the logic of globalization for, as I have mentioned, it requires an immobilization of labour to complement the fluidity of capital. And for this structure to be in place, the preservation of the nation state is crucial. Consequently, as long as nationalism legitimizes and articulates itself through cultural pride (instead of economic sovereignty), it can sit very comfortably with the rest of the furniture of globalization.

Cultural pride seems to be the only real sphere of national autonomy and self-activity left in a world that is consciously committed to economic integration on an uneven playing field.

Cultural pride allows the control of national images, spanning the spheres of self-presentation, behavioural and ritual acts to the ceremonies and objects by which the nation is presented to the 'world'. This can be extended to control the futures of minority cultures. The latter can be made to take on the burden of explaining the failures of the nation that haunt them on the dark side of pride, and one subordinated or even exorcised on these grounds. This pride is overtly potent, its power deriving from its ability to provide compensation to people deprived of their livelihoods or living standards by the policies of globalization, as well as inspiring the beneficiaries of globalization with a sense of mission and distinctiveness as they insert themselves in the fast moving channels of global capital.

At the same time such pride can introduce a deep instability within the system of globalization itself. Globalization would be destroyed by the possibility of inter-national conflict – although this eventuality seemed unreal to most. It has been argued that the weakening of the nation state has left it with only the minorities against whom they can define their boundaries and identity (Milbank 2001). As I have argued, nationalism is not threatened by globalization but enters into a compact with it. This means that wars between nation states cannot be ruled out. Judging from Indo-Pakistan relationships which have become more frighteningly tense than ever before, or religio-ethnic battles that raged in Bosnia and which take on nationalist colours, international violence seems as, if not more, threatening then before. Indeed, there now takes place easy and rapid transitions from the oppression of minorities to wars against a external enemy: the coincidence of the anti-Muslim and Christian activities of Hindu communal nationalists and the worsening of relationships with Pakistan is revealing. It is possibly for this reason that the European Union is so alarmed by the resurgence of right-wing movements that target non-white minorities, for it is the momentum provided by such attacks that can easily translate into suspicion and hostility to neighbouring European countries themselves.

II

It is from the context of this brittle and dangerous process of complementarity between the global and the national that I wish to enter into Tagore's notion of an alternate global order and the kind of identity that can be interpolated from his elaborations. Tagore provides a vision rather than a specific framework for this global order, in the sense that he sketches out what are really some broad principles of cultural and social relationship. His concern originates from his problems with nationalism, specifically with the nationalism of cultural pride. The most significant move he makes in this direction is his novel *Gora*. It's well-known plot features an intensely nationalist Gora whose commitment to cultural pride takes the form of idealizing Brahmanical orthodoxy which breaks up against the revelation that he is actually the adopted son of *mleccha* white parents. *Gora* represents the first attempt by Tagore to problematize cultural pride by emphasizing the welcome, indeed inevitable reality of cultural miscegenation that lies at the heart of nationalism itself. Further, freeing himself from cultural pride corresponds to a process whereby Gora, guided by the norms of justice and social commitment, begins to respond to a more complex reality that shows caste oppressions and prejudices as well as reveals the rich plethora of social connections, defining thereby the blindness of cultural pride to social life.

It is worth mentioning that *Gora* was produced by a deep crisis in nationalism that Tagore experienced during the Swadeshi movement. As has been shown elsewhere, his deep and creative involvement with the Swadeshi movement was rudely shaken by the outbreak of Hindu Muslim riots that broke out in its course. After a period of six months or so when he went into a shocked and self-reflective silence, Tagore emerged with a public criticism of nationalism, observing that 'Satan cannot enter till he finds a flaw...' (Sarkar 1973, 81). What he emphasized was its lack of self-reflexivity. Caught up in the celebration of itself, nationalism

was unable to reflect upon its cultural biases, specifically its Brahmanical contempt for Muslims. It is clear that the critique of nationalist pride developed through the writing of *Gora* deepened into the recognition of it as a mental prison, release from which involved the insertion into a many-sided relationship with the world.

It is in *Ghare Baire (Home and the World)* that Tagore launches his most scathing critique of nationalist pride. The story features Sandip, a ruthless Hindu nationalist who enters into a relationship with Bimala, the wife of his friend Nikhilesh, and succeeds, through the mobilization of cultural jingoism, in sparking off communal riots. The work is an overt fictional reflection on the Swadeshi movement. Important here is the psychic complementarity between cultural pride and the world system of colonialism (that is present in the novel by implication). Cultural pride takes the form of worshipping the nation and in this it complements the colonial system. The latter, Tagore suggests (more elaborately in his essays on nationalism), is an outgrowth of nationalism itself, insofar as it represents the success of the people of the countries of the West in coming together as a corporate body in order to compete more efficiently against other nations. The alliance between a subject country and that of colonialism through nationalism is one that springs from commitment to greed, competition and the instrumentalism that accrues from both.

The consequences of this complementarity, it may be inferred, are analogous: the period of its publication (1915-16) as well as the theme of nationalism and violence in *Ghare Baire* clearly suggest the contextual sub-text of the first world war as the unavoidable culmination of colonialism. The war is matched by the move towards internal cultural colonization of minorities (blatantly in the case of Muslims, in more complex ways with women and low castes) by Sandip and the Swadeshi activists, resulting in communal conflagration. Sandip's career represents the authoritarian and repressive implications of nationalist cultural pride for the victims of the superordinate power of colonialism. The full range of Sandip's

repression comes out via the contrary voice and relationships of Nikhilesh. It should be observed that Nikhilesh provides no easy alternative ethos to Sandip's, but represents a different idea of relating to the problems posed by the making of a nationalist community. These are problems that are created by the claims of justice and truth located in a web of social relationships. Specifically—carrying forward the ideas of *Gora* in a more elaborate and complex direction—this assumes the need to look at the nation in terms of its different collectivities (organized around gender, caste, religion) informed by an understanding of the ways power operates in and through them; and at the same time to critically examine the practices and assumptions of both nationalist activism and the subjects of the nationalist community.

Nikhilesh's loneliness and his final defeat by the communal riots that flare out around him signals the end of a long period of enquiry in Tagore that had sought to look at the problem of identities and their mutual relationships in the assumed context of a modern, globally integrated world from the viewpoint of the nationalism of the subject country. This critique of the consequences of cultural nationalism is however superseded and absorbed by another set of more general concerns that Tagore had already been tackling in his prose works. This was the relationship between East and West. As such, these categories emerged from what had become a common-sense conception of organizing the world. Nor does Tagore depart substantially from the other common-sense notion that the West was based on the organisation principle while the East was the domain of mutuality and co-existence. What is significant about Tagore's project is his concern with the ways in which East and West are internally constituted.

What makes Tagore's enquiry particularly resonant is the general question of relating to the 'West' with the asymmetrical relationship of global power that it indicates, in a way that is positive and appropriative instead of defensive cocooning within the authoritarian culturalism of nationalist pride. For Tagore the

solution lies in what may be said to be a located process of mutual transformation. This involves changes in both cultures that come into contact with each other, at their separate places of location. The privileged site of his enquiry is the 'East', especially the culture of the Indian sub-continent.

The most exciting element of Tagore's notion of global relationship is the idea of self-division. In his letter to Thomas Sturge Moore in 1914, Rabindranath declared that the value of literature lay not in its fitness for 'home consumption' but 'in the fact that it is imperatively necessary for the lands where it is foreign'. Its internalization would, he makes clear, introduce new ideas and dispositions into one's own culture, thereby producing a 'bifurcation' in the 'mental system which is so needful for all life growth' (Pal 1997, 7). What this involves is a radical distancing from one's culture in order to reconstitute it. Clearly Tagore is not arguing for an embedded identity but for a located self, situated in a culture, that allows for transformation. Crucial here is the fact that the other is not positioned as a presence that provides definitive boundaries with the self, but as necessary for the internal transformation of the self. Relating to the other produces a division within the self, which unlike Romantic and Modernist conceptions, is not seen as loss or a fall from a unified state, but as a necessary introduction to change. Nor is the presence of the other within the self simply additive, for it is critically engaged with the originary self that is reconstituted in the process.

There are two important assumptions that are involved here. The first concerns the nature of locatedness. For Tagore locatedness is a strong proposition, which is unsurprising given his intimate and creative positioning within Bengali literature. For Tagore what constitutes locatedness is not just what one inherits, but acts of deepening one's familiarity with it. For Tagore this act of familiarizing is related to acquiring cultural and intellectual knowledge. When discussing the rationale for Viswa Bharati in 'East and West', Tagore dwells on the importance of bringing together the knowledge of the

East first before broadcasting it to the West (Tagore 1922/1962, 174). Further, if one is to take into account the insights of *Gora* and *Ghare Baire*, familiarizing would also involve becoming intimate with the broadening spheres of social relationships along with the problems of power that they entail.

The second aspect is the notion of the West. The idea of internal transformation through the other assumes that it is not a monolithic other that is sought to be harnessed but a particular strand or tradition within it. This is the assumption that underlies his communication to Moore when he privileges the Romantic poets. He writes (in the letter cited above) that in India the youth look to Byron and Shelley, for what impresses a foreigner are the 'vivid and forceful' elements of English literature rather than the 'artistic'. The West is conceived as an internally differentiated entity. The axis of differentiation varies. Tagore was not an exact thinker. In another context he refers to Christianity as a spirit that goes 'counter' to the 'European temperament'. Its internalization, resulting in a 'sharp antagonism of ... intellectual direction', had a creative impact for it stirred the vernaculars to life (Tagore 1922/1962, 192-3). In other words, the West too is capable of fundamental changes that would alter the basis of its civilization.

The conceptions of East and West, it is true, binarises global culture and, it may be argued, thereby proposes a process of mutual transformation that may succeed in making both similar. However, there are other elements in Tagore's thought to suggest that these categories are really indicative of a particularly wide level of generalization. The East would contain a variety of identities within itself. The experience of *Gora* and *Ghare Baire* is particularly apposite here, for both novels turn on the idea of a society that is made up of different collectivities which can only be reduced to a single rubric at the cost of violence. It is also significant that Viswa Bharati, that was set up as a university of the East to gather together its knowledge so that the West could internalize it, carried a syllabus that disaggregated 'Indian learning' according to 'the Vedic, the

Puranic, the Buddhist, the Jain, the Islamic, the Sikh and the Zoroastrian', to which was also added the 'Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan... for, in the past, India did not remain isolated from her own boundaries' as well as the western so that it could be assimilated (Tagore 1922/1962, 195). One may disagree with the privileging of broad religio-civilisational classification, but what is important to grasp are the general principles through which Tagore seeks an alternate world order.

If one may crystallize Tagore's thought in a particular (and interested direction) then he may be said to propose a notion of processual identity. This may be distinguished from other notions of identity. It is different from the commitment to particular and incommensurable identities. It is not fuzzy, for it is not innocent of strong boundary markers nor does it inhabit an inherited condition of heterogeneity. It is an identity that affirms boundaries but only to provide a location to the process of self-transformation through appropriating traditions existing within the other. This notion requires, as I have suggested, a recognition of the disaggregated nature of overarching identities (such as 'East' and 'West' which Tagore deploys). The attempts by Gora and Nikhilesh to relate to other collectivities both in order to break down the exclusivism of the collective self (Gora) as well as to relate in a mutually critical manner (as Nikhilesh seeks to do) indicates Tagore's commitment to the processes of mutual transformation as one that ought to operate at all levels of identities. In other words, it is an idea of identity that is based on multiple levels possessing varying degrees of heterogeneity, with its bottom line in the commitment to self-division and transformation through relating to the other. It may be observed that this notion of identity takes into account the realities of a world where identity making has become a conscious project and often a political and social resource. This recognition, though unstated, is a point of departure to produce a possibilistic identity that acknowledges origins in order to go beyond them.

The notion of a processual identity can be rewarding for acts of envisioning alternate ideas of global integration. It may indeed

be necessary to think of it. Identities have a habit of hardening in inverse relationship with the degree to which they are undermined by social processes. Increasing globalization may, to echo a point made earlier, make identity-making a more intense and dangerous preoccupation. In this context it is a matter of hope that at least one active and popular movement has sought to present itself in terms of an identity that shares some common grounds with the processual. This is the Zapatista movement. The movement itself is that of peasants from different linguistic and cultural groups in the Chiapas mountains of Mexico who have created a new identity around their resistance to the Mexican government and the global agencies that they represent. Marcos, the Subcomandante of the movement who keeps his face covered so that no charisma can coagulate around his identity he sees himself as a conduit of the movement rather than its commander once said: 'Marcos is gay in San Francisco, black in South Africa, an Asian in Europe, an Anarchist in Spain, a Palestinian in Israel, a Jew in Germany ... a pacifist in Bosnia, a single woman on the Metro at 10 pm, a peasant without land ... an unemployed worker, an unhappy student and, of course, a Zapatista in the mountains' (Klein 2001). Structuring this utopian vision of multiple affiliations is the contrast and complementarity between 'Marcos' and 'Zapatista'. Marcos emerges as an identity that is general, a generality that is undoubtedly facilitated by the facelessness of Marcos the individual. It is an ideal identity based on ideas of norms of justice and solidarity, but one that is present only in different, local contexts. At the same time the 'of course, a Zapatista' indexes the locatedness of this identity. Marcos is what he is because of his moorings in the Zapatista movement, which is itself, one may be reminded, an identity created out of several micro-identities. In short what is involved in the citation from Marcos is the notion of multiple levels of identity formation.

Tagore's notion of identity extends beyond the establishment of multiple affiliations. But looked at in the context of the anti-globalization movement, the principles of Tagore's transformative identity can yield another, different consequence. It can supply a

principle of relating to other identities located elsewhere in the world. There is no reason to hope that the present phase of a happy co-existence of collective identities that have marked anti-globalization rallies can continue. Already activists have begun to revisit earlier debates about the need for co-ordination and organisation (necessary to face the synchronized counteroffensive of globalization) and the necessity of preserving the freedom of pluralism. The move towards creating tighter organizational structures, while possibly being necessary, is also a fraught enterprise. Among other things a problem that has plagued movements in the past (especially revolutionary ones) is that with coordinated organisation crops up the problem of the domination of a particular cultural bloc or group. It is here that a serious reflection on Tagore's notion of located transformation through the other may be able to address some of the problems of mutual relationships, even if it not able to preempt them.

****** The category of alternative globalization in plural terms as exemplified in the Zapatista Movement was discussed. This alternative moves beyond imitation, resentment, and desire. There is no blueprint but there is a sense of 'organic connections'.

Notes

¹ An advertisement for a 'world-renowned' Singer sewing machine in 1883 featured its trademark, which was an image of a recognizably western seamstress working at the machine, at the centre of the advertisement. See Ranabir Ray Chaudhury, *Calcutta A Hundred Years Ago*. In general the advertisements shown in this book of the late nineteenth century (and there is a representative sample) dwell on the place of production (if made by an international enterprise) and also provide the specifications of the product itself.

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Information Technology Provision and Development in Indian Academic Institutions

Suman Gupta

To offer to speak of information technology (IT) resources in academic institutions in these heady days of globalization is to raise expectations of a clarion call for introducing the exciting possibilities released by developments in that area wherever possible. A propagandist streak has characterized much of the academic and non-academic literature in this area¹: a large number of books and journals are devoted to enumerating the manner in which research and education could be enhanced by IT, and how academic organisation itself would have to inevitably respond to developments in IT and eschew traditional research, teaching, administrative, financial etc. procedures². Academic activity and institutions, we are constantly assured, would necessarily be transformed – revolutionized – in the face of IT developments. Since so many of these books and journals adorn the shelves of university libraries and other (to use the currently fashionable term) ‘learning resources’ establishments, I can safely assume that readers of this would have at least a passing acquaintance with these. I therefore do not intend to carry out another obvious propagandizing effort: instead my interest is with regard to the manner in which IT resourcing in academic institutions provides a cursor for

understanding current attitudes to specific areas of academic interest and delving the current condition of academic activity. Implicit in this is the discursive significance, almost magical potency, which the phrase 'information technology' and its acronym 'IT' appear to have acquired. Also, rather unfashionably and because it is so, wherever possible I intend to turn my attention to the Humanities and Social Sciences streams of academic activity apropos this area. I admit here, at the beginning, that much of this paper is devoted to delimiting its subject matter in different ways.

My context is academic activity in India. I approach this context with trepidation, partly because I have been physically at a distance from academic activities herein for a while, and partly because of the extraordinary complexities that this area presents (in terms of controlling agencies, involved subjects, impinging social and environmental factors, and financial arrangements and distributive procedures).

The funding of academic institutions is best gauged by the funding allocated to education—for our purposes particularly higher education. A survey of recent government documents suggests that considerations of IT provision in higher education have reopened debates about the budgeting of that sector. This might seem promising for those involved in higher education, especially given that the eighties and nineties in India has seen both tremendous growth in persons entering higher education (and institutions providing higher education) and substantial cuts in proportion of investment in that sector. The figures in Table 1 below give some indication of the manner in which numbers of students enrolled in tertiary education in India has risen in recent years and, in terms of all projections, would continue to rise; Table 2 presents some figures in the growth of numbers of institutions providing higher education; and Table 3 presents figures of growth in teaching staff in Universities/University Departments and affiliated Colleges in the course of the 1990s:

Table 1. Number of students enrolled in tertiary education

Year	1990	1994	1995	1996	2000
Number of students enrolled	4425247	4932669	5695780	6060418	7078000 (estimated)

(Taken from *UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1999*, also on UNESCO Institute of Statistics website)

Table 2: Number of higher and further education institutions

	1961	1971	1981	1991	1998	1999	2000
Universities/ deemed universities/ institutions of national importance	45	100	132	184	229	237	244
General education institutions offering degree standard or above education	967	2285	3421	4862	7199	7494	7782

(Taken from *Manpower Profile India Yearbook 2001*)

Table 3: Growth of teaching staff in universities/university departments and affiliated colleges:

Year	1971	1981	1986	1991	1997	1998	1999	2000
General Education	91297	137351	171780	204464	247750	256297	265159	271779
Univ. Depts. and Research Institutions	16314	26661	37472	58661	72873	74707	76587	78885

(Taken from *Manpower Profile India Yearbook 2001*)

Though in terms of absolute figures government (central and state) funding of higher education (which accounts for the bulk of funding—in the region of 86 per cent—in that sector) has gone up year by year, when the rate of inflation and growth of population and needs in that area are taken into account nothing but cutbacks are revealed for a sector that had suffered from severe financial shortfalls from the fifties. This is evident in every statistical index that is there to be consulted. Table 4 gives the total public expenditure as percentage of GNP: in brief this shows that while between 1970 and 1989 there was a steady increase (with occasional variations) of expenditure from 2.6 per cent to 4 per cent, from 1989 to 1995 there has been a steady decline from 4.0 per cent to 3.3 per cent—and it has stayed around the 3 per cent mark since. This might compare favorably with China (where since 1989 this has been between 1.9 per cent and 2.4 per cent), though there paradoxically the minimum education development indicator of illiteracy is substantially better than in India (at 16 per cent compared to India's 43 per cent for over 15 year olds in 2000). But India's spending on education as proportion of GNP is somewhat lower than that of other countries that have seen cutbacks in government education spending (in the UK, USA and Australia it has been over 5 per cent since 1989). Table 5 shows educational

expenditure as percentage of GDP; and Table 6 shows percentage of educational expenditure on educational department (state and central) to total budget.

Table 4: Public expenditure on education as per cent of GNP and per cent of government spending

Year	% of GNP	% of gov. spending
1985	3.5	13.7
1986	3.4	—
1987	3.2	8.5
1988	3.8	10.9
1989	4.0	11.2
1990	3.9	12.2
1991	3.7	11.6
1992	3.6	11.4
1993	3.6	11.8
1994	3.5	11.8
1995	3.3	11.6

(Taken from *UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1999*, also on UNESCO Institute of Statistics website)

Table 5: Educational expenditure as per cent of GDP

Year	% of GDP
1985-1986	3.19
1986-1987	3.25
1987-1988	3.54
1988-1989	3.52
1989-1990	3.74
1990-1991	4.34
1991-1992	4.10
1992-1993	4.01
1993-1994	3.66
1994-1995	3.60
1995-1996	3.63
1996-1997	3.57
1997-1998 (RE)	3.78
1998-1999 (BE)	3.79

RE: Revised estimate; BE: Budget estimate

(Taken from *Manpower Profile India Yearbook 2001*)

Table 6: Percentage of educational expenditure on education department (state and central) to percentage of total budget allocated to education

Year	State/Union territory % share	Center % share	% for education from total
1984-1985	20.8	1.6	11.2
1990-1991	21.2	2.2	11.7
1991-1992	19.4	2.1	11.0
1992-1993	19.6	1.9	11.0
1993-1994	19.3	1.9	10.7
1994-1995	19.0	2.1	10.8
1995-1996	19.3	2.4	11.0
1996-1997	19.2	2.3	11.0
1997-1998 (RE)	19.0	2.6	11.1
1998-1999 (BE)	18.7	3.4	11.4

RE: Revised estimate; BE: Budget estimate

(Taken from *Manpower Profile India Yearbook 2001*)

Within this diminishing quantity of government education funding the share for higher education has been diminishing itself as Table 7 indicates:

Table 7: Percentage distribution of budgeted expenditure by stages of education

	1985-86	1991-92	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Elementary	46.3	43.8	46.2	46.3	48.3	49.1	49.8	48.7
Secondary	30.8	30.5	31.4	31.4	32.8	32.3	30.9	30.1
University/ Higher Education	14.0	13.2	12.2	12.0	12.3	11.8	11.9	13.5

(Taken from *Manpower Profile India Yearbook 2001*)

Subsequent five year plans have seen substantial drops in higher education allocations: thus allocation for higher education was 20.29 per cent of the total allocation to education in the sixth plan, which became 17.6 per cent in the seventh plan, and dropped to 11.2 per cent in the eighth plan. Central government expenditure on higher education development (roughly indicated by the Plan budget in Table 8, where the Non-Plan budget indicates revenues for maintaining the existing provision) through the University Grants Commission shows slight increases (on average at around rate of inflation—see Table 9—and with little relation to changes in infrastructure and growth) and several significant drops:

Table 8: UGC funding in Rs. crores (1 crore=10 million)

Year	Plan	Non-Plan
1992-93	137.14	308.09
1993-94	141.50	336.95
1994-95	234.20	345.59
1995-96	207.79	450.82
1996-97	201.50	465.00
1997-98	352.20	545.00
1998-99	260.35	1009.00
1999-00	380.00	640.00

(From Education Department website of Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India)

Table 9: Annual rate of inflation as year on year per centage

Year	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
r.o.i. % average	9.9	13.0	9.8	8.4	10.0	10.2	6.9	6.1

(From indiainfoline website)

The 1998-99 Non-Plan figure in Table 8, I think, reflects the long overdue pay-revision for higher education teachers that took place with retrospective effect. That itself came with government pressure on higher education institutions to provide 20 per cent of salary costs by generating their own revenues - and a very significant drop in Plan allocation. For a sector that depends so heavily on government funding these figures have translated into some grim ground-level realities for academic activity (both in teaching and research, and particularly in the Humanities and Social Sciences) that I hardly need to reiterate here. It is evident from the available literature that economists who have followed the uncontrolled growth of the higher education sector and the corresponding decline in government allocation of funds for higher education (despite the dependence of the former on the latter) have gradually come to regard the unforthcoming nature of the latter as *fait accompli* (Agarwal 1993; Tilak 1993; Tilak 1995; Tilak 1997; Ansari 1994b; Ansari 1997; Qamar 1997; Heggade 1998). To some extent this perception is bolstered by a sense of the larger picture of government spending with relation to income—the commitment of government funds in other development areas, and especially in education as a whole (though education is the second largest area of government expenditure after defence), are also under constant pressure. Economists concerned with higher education funding have therefore rather hopelessly devoted their efforts to alternative modes of generating funds for higher education (e.g., by private sector input, a graduate tax toward higher education, marginal rises in student fees) and more efficient accounting of higher education costs and returns (i.e., principles of measurement of unit costs of higher education institutions, different indexes for accounting returns from higher education). Most of the prescriptions are replete with problems of principle (regarding fairness of access and academic autonomy, for instance), and are additionally complicated by the uncertainty of the projected outcomes. Nevertheless government funding has gradually tended to assume the imposition of some of these questionable measures. A series of committees appointed by UGC to make recommendations on higher education funding distribution—

the Justice Kotapalli Punnayya Committee in 1992-1993, and more recently the Mahmud-ur-Rahman Committee and the M.Anandakrishnan Committee in 2000—have effectively recommended significant hikes in student fees and greater professional orientation in higher education courses. Measures geared toward the effective privatisation of certain sectors of government-funded higher education have also been mooted with increasing frequency through the nineties (Ahmad 1996, Mathew 1996, Dubey 1997).

What appeared to be an unpromising scenario for higher education (and academic work in general in India) through the nineteen nineties appeared to get revitalized a bit—just the merest glimmer—by the Indian government's realization at the end of the nineteen nineties and more significantly in the early two thousands that IT is an area of especial promise for the economy, and that this involves reconsideration of higher education funding and provision in general. It became evident that because of several factors (cheap technologically-skilled labour and a necessary command over English among the educated classes mainly) that software companies in India were booming, and beginning to account for as much as 75 per cent of the total revenues from off-shore development. A NASSCOM-McKinsey report in 1999 projected export of software, software services and information technology enabled services from India of US\$50 billion by 2008 (NASSCOM website). Another Ministry of Communications and Information Technology sponsored report by MAIT and Ernst & Young released on 20 January 2002, entitled 'India: The Hardware Opportunity', found that the above mentioned had a potential to reach a size of US\$62 billion by 2010 (12 times the existing size) – with the domestic market accounting for US\$37 billion and exports accounting for US\$25 billion (see MAIT website). It could hardly have escaped the government that between 1995 and 2000 the Indian IT industry had recorded a Compounded Annual Growth Rate of 42.4 per cent. Such figures, and the promise they hold out, however need to be put into perspective in terms of the backwardness in

general IT development in India. According to 1996 World Bank estimates Indians had only 0.15 personal computers (PC) per hundred inhabitants, and a mere 1.54 telephones per hundred inhabitants. However PC sales have been rising at a rate between 25 per cent and 35 per cent per quarter. The development of internet provision and accessibility has been slow (Burkhart et al Nov. 1998, Agarwal June 1999). In 1998 it was estimated that there were between 300,000 and 400,000 internet users in India. Though internet connectivity in India started in 1989, it lags far behind China in this direction (where internet connectivity started only in 1993) – by 1998 China had twice as many hosts and three times as many users as India.

Anyway, in 1999 an IT Bill was proposed setting up suitable regulatory bodies and rules regarding electronic records and transactions, which was passed by the Lok Sabha on 16 May 2000. A Task Force on Human Resources Development (HRD) was set up in the first National Conference of Information Technology Ministers on 15 July 2000, which met twice in the course of that year (24 August 2000 and 16 September 2000), deliberated on a range of reports, and came up with an interim report of its own entitled 'Information Technology Manpower Challenge and Response' (Education Department website). It recommended that to meet the manpower needs of the future in IT development in India (that seems to bode so well for the economy), there is a need for injection of suitably directed funds into higher education. The target set in this interim report is a doubling of intake in IT/IT related programmes by 2001-2002, and a tripling of the same by 2003-2004, so as to reach a necessary IT manpower of 2.2 million by 1998. In view of this, the interim report recommends the spending of Rs. 2000 crores (central share only) over a seven year period (until the end of the tenth five year plan), suggesting that most of this capital outlay take place in the first three or four years. This is roughly the equivalent of the total Plan budget for UGC from 1992-2000. A Department of Information Technology paper of 8 March 2001 entitled 'IT Education in Schools, Colleges and

Universities' (Department of Information Technology website, of the Ministry of Information Technology and Communications, Government of India) usefully interprets what this recommendation means for the higher education sector :

To meet the [1999 NASSCOM-McKinsey report's 2008 projected] targets, the country would need an estimated IT manpower of about 2.2 million, including 1.1 million high level professionals at the level of B.Tech./MCA or above and the remaining 1.1 million at lower level coming mainly from Science and Humanities streams of Universities/Colleges with appropriate training in IT. Currently, about 340,000 IT professionals are employed in the software industry. Thus, there will be an additional requirement of 760,000 high level IT personnel to be delivered by Engineering Colleges and Universities over a period of eight years.

The paper notes also that at the current rate of investment and development in higher education only 2 lakhs high-level professionals would be generated as against a demand for 7.6 lakhs. Though all this is driven by the government's perception of IT manpower needs and would mainly benefit Engineering/Technology and some applied studies colleges, institutes, and university departments, it is not insignificant that some of the funding in this area may percolate to low level IT training for people in the Sciences and Humanities streams of universities and colleges. That could at least mean some investment in resources for higher education that may impinge in a salutary fashion on academic activity as a whole. A useful report of 'Statewise Initiatives and Status of Development in IT in Union States and Territories' on the Department of Education website (it is worth remembering that, as indicated in Table 6, education funding – including higher education funding – is more substantially borne by state budgets than the centre budget) also looks promising. Those state reports in this that are available (at the time of writing most were yet to be made available) often promised increased IT resourcing across the

state higher education sector and not just limited to Engineering and Technology sections thereof – especially in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Bihar (I will not speculate on the actual delivery of these initiatives). At a rough estimate, to meet these targets across all the sectors of education government spending would have to rise from the current just above 3 per cent of GNP to above 6 per cent of GNP in the short term.

But here's the question that inevitably arises given the concerns of this study: does all this really represent a glimmer of hope for academic activity in the higher education sector in India? The answer to this cannot simply depend on the above holistic statistical indicators. The answer to this is complicated by considerations of the nature of the influence of IT in academic activity and some consideration of patterns involved in IT development in Indian academic institutions.

There are three ancillary points about IT development in higher education that need to be made here:

1. As is evident from the above, the government view of IT development in India (not inconsistently with other parts of the world) is driven by the instrumentalist consideration of need for skilled manpower in that area. In considering extraordinary funding of higher education to develop IT provision the intention is not to facilitate academic activity as a whole and across all areas but to turn out a required number of skilled and semi-skilled IT personnel. There is no doubt that such funding would primarily enhance the Technology/Engineering sections and some applied studies (commerce, accounting, record-keeping etc.) sections of higher education, and only facilitate provision for teaching and research in traditional disciplines – the Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and Humanities (in that order) – as a secondary fallout if at all. It is perfectly clear that the entire debate about reconsidering higher education funding in the light of developments in the Indian IT industry and its potential is driven heavily (almost entirely) by the employment prospects in the corporate/public sector. This debate

has proved congenial to government attitudes only because it fits in with an ongoing drive to water down the knowledge-development view of academic activity (i.e., that academic institutions exist to develop cutting-edge knowledge and generate new ideas in all areas and for general access, and to develop an awareness of these amongst the population it serves) in favour of an employment-serving view of academic activity (i.e., that academic institutions would only produce knowledge and ideas that can be applied with distinct economic benefits for the nation, and would produce people who can be employed in economically beneficial activities therein)¹. This thrust – and the attendant reasonings and anxieties that explain it – were clearly evident in an approach paper to the Eighth Five Year Plan (1990-1995) that was produced by the government:

We need to make education less of a passport to privilege and access to white collar jobs and more as a means to enhance the capabilities of people as citizens and as producers. This calls for two simultaneous emphases. First, there is need to give greater priority to mass literacy and elementary and secondary education, as against the tendency to divert resources to ever higher levels of education which has produced the socially volatile phenomenon of educated unemployed. Second, there is need for greater emphasis on technical and vocational aspects of education in place of the present accent on general education which pushes the educated from rural areas to migrate to the cities. The economy suffers from both a surplus of the highly educated and major shortages of relevant technical manpower. (Cited in Heggade 1998, 6)

Prior to the recent surge in government consideration of IT development in higher education, the promotion of the employment-serving view of academic activity had gone hand-in-hand with moves to cut government spending in higher education. The idea was that increased professionalization of higher education curricula and research would help universities/colleges generate their non-government funds by both attracting corporate funding (always interested in new commodities and in finding and training

employees) and fee-paying students (who would be ready to pay because of increased job-prospects). An underlying consideration was also that increased professionalisation in academic activity would make accounting for government spending easier – investment could be accounted in clear indicators like human capital and employment figures rather than the fuzzier development of social awareness and of the knowledge base in general. The calls for professionalisation of curricula and research in higher education with a view to cutting government spending in the past (which often had a hostile reception from academics and students), has simply been replaced by a proactive investment in the professionalisation of these in the name of IT development in higher education, probably, in the long-term, with the same goal as the former—to over-shadow and erode the knowledge-development understanding of academic activity.

2. The development of IT provision in higher education with a view to producing IT manpower is an area that is particularly conducive to private or corporate input and government-corporate joint initiatives. This is noted, with some anxiety (a particular sort of anxiety which I come to soon), in the reports mentioned above. The 'IT Manpower Challenge and Response' interim report of the Task Force for Human Resource Development of August-September 2000, notes that in fact private self-financing institutions are already providing ostensibly high-level IT training for a substantial number of students. It observes though that the costs of such education are high and the quality of instruction suspect: 'In the years to come this high cost low quality education from many of the self-financing institutions is likely to create social problems'. It also concedes, however, that such self-financing institutions have been an area of 'major expansion in the technical education system in the last two decades' and need to be 'nurtured'. The Department of Information Technology paper on 'IT Education in Schools, Colleges and Universities' of 8 March 2001 gives the following indicative facts about such self-financing institutions providing IT training:

It needs to be noted [...] that the non-formal sector, particularly, agencies like NIIT, Aptech and the DoEACC scheme are playing an increasingly important role in providing IT education to a large number of college/university sector's students. Currently, there are 0.5 million numbers of students who are getting IT training through the non-formal sector. The non-formal sector has over 5000 training institutions which are still growing at the rate of 20% per annum. The total revenue being generated by this sector currently is around Rs. 1200 crores.

Rs. 1200 crores is a substantial figure—significantly above, for instance, the total funding allocation (Plan and Non-Plan) to UGC in recent years. In their reports in the 'Statewise Initiatives and Status of Resource Development in IT in Union States and Territories' (Department of Education website) several states indicate that collaboration with the corporate sector has enabled the setting up of IT training facilities in Engineering universities and colleges. More recently, extraordinarily, the government has sanctioned the opening of off-shore IT training facilities by the prestigious self-financing institution, the Birla Institute of Technology and Sciences. Anxieties about the quality of training being provided by the self-financing institutions combined with the determination to 'nurture' them expressed in the HRD task force's interim report of 2000 gestures in a predictable direction: it is expressive of a desire to bring government-funded institutions and self-financing institutions more in line by setting up similar validation and accreditation procedures; by facilitating the flow of student populations between these through similar curricula and assessment methodologies; and by, where possible, the sharing of resources and facilities in a planned fashion. The direction that the nurturing of self-financing institutions providing IT training may take is clearly indicated by the Private Universities (Establishment and Regulation) Bill of 1995. The very subject of this bill was, as Akhilesh Dubey observes in a study on the *Commercialization of Education In India*, 'to legalize the degrees which the self-financing

institutions will award and naturally they will award only those degrees which would earn money' (Dubey 1997, 75). It is also worth noting that the bill provides for the establishment of universities that shall provide instruction only in the disciplines of Science and Technology. So, such 'nurturing' of self-financing higher education institutions too, as I have observed above, has been on the agenda to offset shortfalls in government funding of higher education. Where previously it had seemed that such corporate collaboration and input and non-formal education providers were against the principles that governed higher education in India (raising difficult questions about academic autonomy and fairness of access), now it seems that the issue of IT needs has made this inevitable and normal—it is generally accepted that irrespective of questions of principle the growth of the IT industry in India has been such that such non-formal provision has grown spontaneously and uncontrollably. It is best to embrace it and make it coherent with government-funded provision, it is argued. It is also fortunate that this supplements the enormous demands on government spending on higher education. The question that naturally arises is that given this experience and precedent how is it likely to influence government policy on funding across the board in higher education and consequently affect academic activity in general? In view of the fact that such corporate input and collaboration and non-formal provision has long seemed desirable, indeed inevitable, from the government's point of view, it unquestionably is likely that the experience with IT training and provision would be held up as a model for academic activity and higher education as a whole.

3. Not unlinked to the above points, there is another area of influence of IT developments on higher education which seems bound to—sooner rather than later, I suspect—impinge upon the Indian higher education structure, though this is yet to be discussed in the Indian context in detail. Judging from recent studies (such as Cantor 2000, Harry ed. 1999), one of the more substantial areas of growth in a large number of countries in higher education, which benefits from

IT developments and has the potential to use IT in an intensive fashion (Laurillard 1993, Mason 1994, Bates 1995, Lau 2000, Lockwood and Gooley 2001), is distance learning. Though distance learning has seldom been regarded (this is especially true of India where only about 6.5 per cent school-leavers go to higher education through distance learning compared to figures between 20 per cent and 30 per cent in many countries) as being of equivalent status to traditional learning within an institutional environment, and distance learning institutions are widely regarded as lower down the academic hierarchy than colleges/universities, distance learning has some distinct advantages that makes it attractive from a government point of view and unobjectionable in terms of political principle. Higher education through distance learning is less burdensome on the government coffers while remaining appreciably within the domain of government funding (Dhanarajan et al eds. 1994, Rumble 1997, Hülsmann 1999; for studies of the Indian context see Ansari 1992, Ansari 1994a, Datt 1994, Naidu 1994, Panda 1999). In the 1991-1992 university budgets, the Indira Gandhi National Open University received 68 per cent of income from the government, Dr.B.R. Ambedkar Open University 27 per cent, the Kota Open University 48 per cent. Only IGNOU among Indian distance education institutions was just within the range of 60 per cent-95 percent government subsidy normally found in conventional universities (Ansari 1994). There are several reasons for this. Distance learning allows for a large number of students to be educationally processed in a wide range of disciplines through a relatively small number of academic staff or with the use of relatively small amounts of academic specialist time. Because of the kind of usually mature part-time or employed students who generally enrol in distance learning courses, because of the flexibility that curricula in such courses necessarily develop to cater to them, and because of less costly provision (since infrastructural provision for students on location, ongoing tutor-student contact hours and student maintenance are less of an issue), distance learning institutions can generally both attract reasonably high quantities of student fees and yet not seem to be too burdensome on students.

Thus distance learning appears to have a salutary effect on access, often attracting a wider range of students from unconventional backgrounds and age groups. A range of statistics from different countries shows that the cost of education per student in a distance learning context is substantially below that of a conventional university – the figures relevant to India appear in Table 10.

Table 10: Costs of distance courses and conventional courses per student in Indian Universities with Institutes of Distance Education (1988/89)

Universities	Per student cost for distance (Rs.) weighted total	Per student cost for conventional (Rs.) weighted total
Annamalai	1227	5143
Bombay	629	9722
Delhi	859	7637
Kerala	432	19786
Madras	1019	23404
Mysore	2067	9543
Punjab	1553	17915
Utkal	592	6036

(from Ansari 1994)

The promise of extraordinary access is a point of principle that appears to be in favour of the development of higher education through distance learning. Close links with the mass media that distance learning institutions sometimes necessarily develop enable them to have a demonstrable mass educational and socially

interventionist input. The promise of extraordinary access and potential for mass appeal and intervention has led to expectations (particularly in India) that higher education through distance learning might play an emancipative role with regard to certain disadvantaged groups – women, for instance (Kanwar and Jagannathan 1995; Prümer 2000), who are disadvantaged in India judging by any education index. There are more roundabout advantages to developing higher education through distance learning in the context of IT developments. The nature of distance education ensures that much of the effort devoted to delivering such courses has to do with developing means of communicating efficiently and constantly in both synchronous and asynchronous ways across distances. This is straightforwardly the province of IT development and provision. The development of higher education through distance learning is not only a fruitful arena for experiments in IT innovation, it is potentially one mode of opening up domestic markets for IT. The possibly large student constituencies which higher education through distance learning can more easily cope with, as well as the constant testing and trying out of IT innovations that can occur in a distance learning environment, is naturally of immense interest to the IT industry. Finally, it also seems logical that the corporate sector might be more friendly to higher education through distance learning than to conventional higher education, in that the former allows for the kind of flexible and tailor-made curricula that enable corporations to cede some of their staff development programmes (and costs) to it (Hunt 1995, Cantor 2000). Indeed, it has been clear for a while that as an enterprise the provision of distance education may have considerable financial rewards from a potentially vast market in India, and several private companies are already trying to tap into this by offering apparently prestigious foreign degrees through distance education. Taken together, it seems to me very likely that the recent government interest in IT in the context of higher education would necessarily translate into valorization of higher education through distance learning. Contrary to expectation this may apply also to the less

professionally-oriented and employment-serving, less amenable to corporate input and financing, traditional disciplines of the humanities and social sciences. In the long term, higher education through distance learning may well come to be one of the few areas in the publicly funded part of higher education where academic activity in such disciplines would be tolerated and perhaps even encouraged. This may happen because the expectation of higher education through distance learning is not simply to produce employable manpower but to mediate markets for the growing IT industry and to provide a field of innovation – and, of course, to be symbolic of good intentions in principle of government and therefore provide for a sound-in-principle use of government funding. This seems all the more plausible because India already has a burgeoning higher education through distance learning sector and a developed tradition of distance education provision. India had some of the earliest discussions on the possibility of higher education through distance learning in the late nineteen fifties; India was one of the first countries to offer distance learning in the form of ‘correspondence courses’ (first offered through the University of Delhi in 1962, then through Punjab University, Patiala in 1968, Meerut University in 1969, and Mysore University in 1969); and the higher education through distance learning sector in India has shown impressive and steady growth. From the first few ‘correspondence courses’ that were set up in the 1960s there are now 47 universities offering such courses. The eighties and early nineties also saw the establishment of six open universities. Table 11 shows the tendency and rate of growth in higher education through distance learning in India in terms of enrolment; Table 12 shows more recent enrolment figures in the most successful distance education institution in India, IGNOU:

Table 11: Enrolment in distance education courses as percentage of total enrolment of higher education

Year	Enrolment in d.e. courses as % of total h.e. enrolment
1967-1968	0.62
1975-1976	2.58
1980-1981	5.70
1985-1986	9.04
1986-1987	8.86
1987-1988	9.55
1988-1989	10.32
1989-1990	11.16
1990-1991	11.28
1991-1992	12.82
1994-1995	13.14

(from Kundalai Swamy 1993 and Panda 1999)

Table 12: Students enrolled and on roll in IGNOU

Year	Enrolled	On roll
1991	52376	112192
1992	62375	145000
1993	75666	182366
1994	84200	222815
1995	91400	242000
1996	130354	310000
1997	162540	394388
1998	163390	430830

(from M.S. and V.Reddy 1999)

Apropos the possible use of telephones and computers in distance learning, S. Bhatnagar, in a discussion of experience in this area in India, wrote in 1997: 'To us in India, all this sounds like a fairy-tale at least for the present' (Bhatnagar 1997, 117). Clearly substantial progress has been made since as the recent IGNOU initiatives described (Sharma 1999) show. It is possible that eventually, apart from distance learning establishments, conventional non-professionally oriented courses may only be offered by an elite minority of universities that sell their ability to provide a collegiate experience rather than act as a centre of knowledge-development (a possibility that Krishan Kumar has reflected on with relish [Kumar 1997]), and that therefore are not regarded as a burden on the government budget.

To draw together the implications of the above observations (on the direction of IT development in higher education in India) for academic activity as conventionally understood, I turn to a more detailed consideration of those disciplines that seem to be the least obvious candidates for benefits from the above – the Humanities and Social Sciences. Broadly speaking, the above observations suggest that Humanities and Social Sciences based academic activities for knowledge-development may gradually be eroded or redefined in favour of employment-serving academic activities in these areas, and mainly such as are likely to be friendly to corporate collaboration and support. This may be effected through under-funding for knowledge-development activity in these areas and the greater channelling of funds toward employment-serving corporate-friendly activity, which would be justified by the emerging models of IT development in higher education and the apparently greater on-paper accounting legitimacy that the latter present. Eventually knowledge-developing academic activity in the Humanities and Social Sciences may get relegated to the sphere of distance learning establishments and self-financing elite institutions. These potentialities had been manifest in a belaboured fashion in the period of government under-funding of academic activity in the eighties and nineties; now these potentialities are likely to be

strengthened and even receive approbation by the proactive investment in employment-serving corporate-friendly academic activity in the name of IT development in higher education that the government is focusing on. What this might mean for higher education in the Humanities and Social Sciences can be gauged from sentiments expressed by the former UGC chairperson, Armaity Desai, when questioned about funding cuts in 1999:

Question: It is felt that to raise resources the universities will adopt methods such as closing down departments in humanities and social sciences. How can the UGC prevent this?

Answer: Generating money to meet the payment of twenty per cent of enhanced staff salaries is a liability on the universities. I wrote a letter to the HRD ministry in January 1997 and it was referred to the finance ministry. Finance says there wouldn't be blanket cuts and has asked universities to present their cases individually. Humanities and social sciences departments must introduce job-oriented courses to avoid marginalisation. Literature departments can introduce courses such as journalism, scriptwriting, technical writing and editing. History departments can have courses in historical tourism, an untapped area with immense potential. (Abhilash 1999)

In 1999 this had seemed a fall-back measure, soon—with the gradual normalization of spending on IT development in higher education—this would seem to be the way forward.

For a more detailed consideration of the effects of the above on the Humanities and Social Sciences disciplines the status of these disciplines in the Indian higher education context, and in the context of IT development of higher education in India, need to be put into perspective. There is some evidence that generally the Humanities and Social Sciences disciplines in India have been and continue to be reasonably popular, despite the natural attractions

of areas of academic activity that promise better employment prospects (Medicine and Engineering in the seventies and eighties; Accountancy and Business Management for the larger part of the nineties; Information Technology and Communications from the latter part of the nineties). Table 13 gives some indication of the relative strengths of areas of study (very broadly described as Arts, Science and Commerce) in general higher education institutions over all of India; Table 14 gives figures for the stock of post-graduates in these areas of study at intervals of ten years; and Table 15 gives figures for the stock of graduates in these areas of study at the same intervals.

Table 13: Percentage of total enrolment in higher education (general) by faculty and level (I give the figures for 1971, and the latest available which is either 1981 or 2000.

	Doctoral/Research		Postgraduate		Graduate	
	Year	% enrolment	Year	% enrolment	Year	% enrolment
Arts	1971	97.50	1971	62.88	1971	51.23
	1981	53.34	2000	57.84	2000	56.35
Science			1971	26.13	1971	33.19
	1981	42.68	2000	26.83	2000	21.65
Commerce	1971	2.50	1971	10.99	1971	17.66
	1981	3.98	2000	15.33	2000	22.00

All 2000 figures are as on 30 September 1999

(Taken from *Manpower Profile India Yearbook 2001*)

Table 14: Estimated stock of post-graduates in Arts, Science, and Commerce

Years	Arts	Science	Commerce
1961	152,090	44,380	15,190
1971	438,820	134,910	48,270
1981	1,113,570	292,360	148,300
1991*	2,185,340	482,050	403,640
2000*	3,718,400	767,100	841,700

*projected stock at beginning of year

(Taken from *Manpower Profile India Yearbook 2001*)

Table 15: Estimated stock of graduates in Arts, Science, and Commerce

Years	Arts	Science	Commerce
1961	561,290	217,650	112,970
1971	1,339,400	625,590	318,560
1981	3,242,560	1,434,580	1,054,160
1991*	5,501,850	2,430,330	2,468,030
2000*	8,392,800	3,837,700	4,573,600

*projected stock at beginning of year

(Taken from *Manpower Profile India Yearbook 2001*)

These figures are not simply indicative of the popularity of subject areas; it is probable that greater selectivity in Science admissions, for instance, account for the differences (it is generally

the case that cut-off marks for entry into university for school-leavers is substantially higher for the Natural Sciences than for the Humanities; and in areas like Accountancy, Medicine, and Engineering entrance examinations usually determine entry into higher education whereas in the Humanities and Social Sciences this is seldom the case. Greater selectivity is itself to some degree conditional on resources: education costs per student for the Natural Sciences and Engineering/Technology are significantly higher than in the Humanities and Social Sciences (the infrastructural needs are greater), and consequently the number of available places are always limited by funding. Nevertheless, popularity is not entirely missing as a factor from the figures above. The enormous growth of entry into Commerce relative to Science in the nineties, for example, is generally understood to be indicative of the growing popularity of that area because of lucrative employment opportunities. The steady growth of entry into Arts throughout (proportional to growing numbers of students; as Table 13 shows, post-graduate enrolment in Arts has fallen only slightly between 1971 and 1999, and graduate enrolment has increased slightly between those years) could be interpreted as being the result, at least to some degree, of steady popularity. There are also other indications of the general popularity of Arts. In an examination of post-graduate enrolment in distance learning institutions (where entry criteria are less restrictive, and which are generally regarded as primarily serving those who need degrees for career advancement) S.Bhatnagar found that the Humanities and Social Sciences were the most popular (Public Administration and Economics first, History and Political Science second, English Language and Literature third), followed by Commerce and then the Sciences: 'One wonders why these degree level programme in arts, humanities and commerce continue to attract distance students in large numbers, particularly when the job market for them has shrunk considerably' (Bhatnagar 1997, 41). Bhatnagar gives several speculative reasons for this that I don't go into. He also notes that the courses offered by most distance learning institutions in India

in these areas (with some exceptions in IGNOU) are modelled on courses offered in conservative universities. At any rate, it is clear that the Humanities and Social Sciences (Arts) account for a significant amount of academic activity (research and education) in India.

To take a somewhat different tack: in what ways have IT development in Indian academic institutions facilitated academic activity in the Humanities and Social Sciences? Here verifiable observations are difficult to make, and there are mainly very rough estimates and doubtful information to go on. In general and everywhere IT development has affected academic activity at large most visibly in enabling the development of communicative networks at all sorts of levels (between teachers and students; between sections within academic institutions; between academic institutions both within and across national boundaries; between academic and other institutions both within and across national boundaries; between individual academics or groups of academics working in areas of mutual interest in different places in the world; between those within academic institutions and those outside; etc.); and in allowing for ever greater degrees of information access and sharing (through an enormous number of methods)⁴. The above question (regarding changes in Humanities and Social Sciences academic activity specific to India) could be approached in the light of these general changes (in academic activity more or less at large) at two levels:

- a. IT developments (in communications and information development and sharing) that enhance academic activity across the board, including the Humanities and Social Sciences: this can be measured to some degree by examining the kind of visibility that academic institutions as such are enjoying within and outside the country, the extent to which resources from different academic institutions (libraries, for e.g.) are linked and on open access (again from both within and outside the country);

- b. IT developments (in communications and information development and sharing) that are geared to specifically facilitate academic activity in the Humanities and Social Sciences: this can be gauged to some extent by looking at ease of access to persons involved in these areas, the visibility of online journals and resources specifically developed for such areas, evidence of software development specifically designed to enhance teaching and research in these areas.

These two broad approaches (a. and b.) can then be put into perspective from some such standpoint as an apprehension of how IT resources are being used to facilitate other disciplines within the same sphere (in India); and how these compare with the situation for Humanities and Social Sciences academic activities in relatively more developed and prosperous contexts (such as in Western Europe, North America or Australia). This sounds more systematic than I can actually be here: the distinction between a. and b. is far from unambiguous; there is enormously uneven development in these within India and across the world; precise indicators in these areas are difficult to conceive, and if conceived information on their basis is difficult to obtain; necessarily observations on these have to depend on the pragmatic experience of individuals and anecdotal evidence (both open to a variety of often contradictory subjective positions). The somewhat artificial systematic approach that I have outlined here is not, therefore, one that I strictly follow – but it is useful nevertheless for aiding reflection on the few, admittedly shaky, observations about the condition of academic activity in the Humanities and Social Sciences in India in the context of IT development that I can tentatively offer.

With the above broadly in mind, therefore, but without being systematically followed the following observations seem to me to be suggestive.

IT development to facilitate academic activity across the board

a. The Education and Research Network (ERNET) India, established in 1986 and developed until 1995 with UNDP financial assistance, is the primary academic and research internet provider in India – giving access to some 80,000 internet users (1998 estimate) through the Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd. (VSNL), including most such academic workers (teachers and researchers) in academic institutions who are given access to internet facilities. This is an indicatively small number in proportion to the total number of academic workers in India. ERNET also provides services for such autonomous government funded academic information development initiatives as are directed through INFLIBNET (to which I come soon). ERNET is directly under the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and its activities are heavily oriented towards research and development in the applied Sciences and Technology.

b. IT enabled access to information about library and archival resources at universities and higher education institutions are only just beginning to develop, and lag far behind such provision in Western European or North American institutions. There is little up-to-date research in this area (Jagannathan 1996, Vyas 1997) at the time of writing this, but the following points are worth noting. No academic institution in India with substantial library and archival resources, as far as I could determine, provides internet searching facilities such as WWW-OPAC (World Wide Web-Open Public-Access Catalogues). This includes such prestigious advanced academic resource centres as, for e.g., the National Library at Calcutta or the National Archives in Delhi or the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in Delhi. Such internet accessible information comes to some extent from autonomous service providers such as the Ahmedabad Library Network (ADINET) [begun as an INFLIBNET project], Bombay Library Network (BONET), Calcutta Library Network (CALIBNET), Developing Library Network (DELNET), all of which are regionally-focused and charge

for the service (therefore have membership access only). The Centre for Education and Documentation (CED) website provides an internet searchable database for their libraries at Bombay and Bangalore, which is limited to the specific areas of its interest. The only open internet accessible information provider tapping into academic institutions is the Indian Network of University Libraries (INFLIBNET), an autonomous UGC funded organisation, which both provides databases for library holdings, experts, projects etc. from about 123 university libraries (out of 237 universities, 47 deemed universities, and 10,600 colleges according to 2001 estimates), and assists in developing library software and runs initiatives for university library automation. This potentially enormously useful resource and networking facility is obviously yet to be fully developed or for that matter substantially utilised for academic activity. Information gleaned from INFLIBNET suggests that it is not just internet access to library and archival holdings which are undeveloped, the computerisation of these itself is enormously underdeveloped. INFLIBNET has, it appears, developed a standard library software package, Software for University Libraries (SOUL), which has just recently been installed in a small number (21) of university libraries – this includes OPAC (but not WWW-OPAC – I checked). INFLIBNET has also initiated library automation programmes by disbursing, through the UGC, Rs. 6.5 lakhs each to 123 university libraries until 1999-2000 (which is too little), and hopes to extend this to other such libraries in the ninth 5-year plan period.

c. The paucity of IT provision combined with the high costs demanded by service providers who give bibliographical and/or full-text access to international on-line journals means that the latter are rarely subscribed by academic institutions in India. I do not have specific information about such availability.

d. There is some evidence that the condition of the websites of academic institutions give some indication of the overall strength of these institutions (Chen, C. et al 1998). Such IT enabled visibility

of academic institutions in India is strongly hierarchical. At a rough estimate about 60 universities and major higher education institutions of the 280 or so have reasonably developed and appropriately hyper-linked websites. Most barely have a few basic information pages. Central universities and centrally-funded academic/research and development organizations/centres have on the average distinctly superior websites (the best among these are those of the Jawaharlal Nehru University and IGNOU), but none come anywhere near the standard of the Birla Institute of Science and Technology (BITS)-Pilani site. The number of independent websites for higher education colleges (usually under some major state or central university) is negligible – certainly less than 0.5 per cent of the 10,600 (2001 estimate). Globalization in these terms has not touched the great majority of academic workers in India where it might instinctively seem plausible that academic work is one area that is being transformed in a holistic fashion by these forces.

e. An exceedingly dull trawl through the web-pages of some thirty major universities which give listings of faculty members and contact details (a small elite), suggests that fewer than 10 per cent of academic staff at these institutions are given e-mail facilities through university servers. This naturally has very substantial effects on the networking abilities of those involved in academic work. I have found no evidence that any of even these institutions offer e-mail facilities to post-graduate and research students through university servers. I suspect that the bulk of ordinary IT enabled academic activity across the board that is conducted in even the elite academic institutions in India is self-financed. I have found no data at all as to how many academic workers in all India (clearly a small number in total) have regular access to a computer—perhaps with an internet connection—through, respectively, institutional and private funding: it would be interesting to know because it might give some indication of the degree to which the increasingly taken-for-granted IT enabled academic activity is being financed by academic workers themselves.

IT development to facilitate academic activity in the Humanities and Social Sciences

a. The underdevelopment of IT development for academic libraries and archives is especially bad news for those involved in the Humanities and Social Sciences, who use such material as are primarily (sometimes only) found in such places intensively. In the applied Sciences and other applied disciplines (Commerce, Management) the sources of information are generally limited to specific journals or are of an immediate nature – immediately available from a limited number of private or state or international internet information providers and mass media sources. Humanities and Social Sciences academic workers involved in academic activity in more IT developed information contexts often manage to be more productive in terms of academic output through less effort. This is to some extent a purely mechanical outcome of developments in IT generally: unequal IT development in access to information sources in the Humanities and Social Sciences could mean, for example, that the disadvantage of not having easy access to primary sources (books and manuscripts at hand) could simply get exacerbated, whereas IT development could have enabled the bridging of that disadvantage.

b. Of those academic institutions that do have faculty listings which I have consulted above for point c. fewer academic workers in the Humanities and Social Sciences (and extraordinarily theoretical Natural Sciences for that matter) have access to e-mail facilities through institutional servers, than for the applied Sciences and other disciplines. Roughly the disparity is something of the order of 40 per cent for Humanities and Social Science academic workers to 60 per cent for workers of other disciplines (without allowing for the often obviously larger numbers of teachers and researchers in the former). This is obviously not a surprise. There are also interesting inequalities within the Humanities and Social Sciences in this respect too which I do not go into here.

c. I have found very little evidence of software or hardware development to facilitate research and teaching in the Humanities and Social Sciences in India, even in areas of specific Indian interest (such as the analysis of Indian languages). The only project in this direction that I could find some information about is a collaborative ASEAN-India Digital Archive (AIDA) project, started in 1995, to create a multi-lingual and multi-cultural digital archive for India and certain ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) which would be accessible via the World Wide Web. I have not been able to find any archive arising from this project that is accessible on WWW. The lack of initiative in such software or hardware development is natural given the above-mentioned circumstances. Natural also is the fact that there are very few Humanities and Social Sciences academic on-line journals and e-journals that are suitably hyperlinked to institutions with academic interests in Indian or South Asian Studies abroad that carry listings (such as www.columbia.edu listings or www.uni-koeln.de listings). *Manushi* and *The Economic and Political Weekly* are notable exceptions. Crucially even fewer originate from academic institutions. I have found no website originating from an Indian academic institution that is simply devoted to providing the widest dissemination of area-specific information and knowledge in the Humanities and Social Sciences in the public interest.

None of these observations should be taken to suggest that there is a lack of academic activity in the Humanities and Social Sciences in India. That is self-evidently not true. In the Humanities and Social Sciences Indian academic workers have made a tremendous effort (against exhausting odds) to stay at the forefront of knowledge-development; it is widely recognized that in this area India has a particularly vibrant and dynamic academic community of students and professional/non-professional intellectuals. These observations lead toward a much narrower inference: that institutional support for this achievement has been weak and is getting weaker. The snail-like movement of IT development in these areas is a symptom of this, and in our time I feel an especially

revealing symptom. It marks a growing divide between institutional support for academic activity in developed contexts and less-developed contexts. The bald ground-level reality is this: in the midst of all the euphoria about government sponsored IT development in higher education and the spectacular successes of a young IT industry, the underdevelopment of IT provision in academic institutions – especially in popular areas like the Humanities and Social Sciences – is making the sustainability of academic knowledge-development at the level that Indian academic workers have achieved increasingly difficult. IT development in higher education in India hasn't meant improvement of institutional support for academic activity in large areas of research and learning; it has meant the exact opposite.

There is an underlying inference that emerges from a contemplation of the above observations: to some extent this situation has come about due to the nature of academic organisation in India. What most of the above observations also show is the comparatively low degree of autonomy of academic institutions in India⁵. This is not just a matter of government-controlled funding mechanisms (though that is undoubtedly the chief means through which this relatively low degree of autonomy is maintained); it is more importantly a matter of using economic organisation with ideological effect. It is government ideology, always simmering but starkly evident in the contradictions of its recent IT development policy in higher education, that is pushing for employment-serving and corporation-friendly academic activity at the expense of a rounded knowledge-development effort.

**** Queries related to the spread of Information Technology in India and what role the indigenous languages play in that development.** There were concerns expressed about the demise or marginalisation of the social sciences and the creation of a country of ill-informed, semi-skilled people. The knowledge base in IT services is narrow in the sense that a small corpus of people produce and disseminate information to the rest of the world. In a way the IT revolution

further power imbalances and does not contribute significantly to equality, whether economic or intellectual. The decline in state funding of education combined with the desire to be a global IT and economic player create a complex and somewhat paradoxical scenario.

Notes:

1. There have also, of course, been expressions of scepticism and doubts about globalization, significantly for this study in relation to higher education. For a broad perspective see Green 1997, Currie and Newson 1998, Daun 2001; for a range of perspective in the Indian contexts see Choudhury 1999 and Association of Indian Universities 2001.
2. Some journals in this area which provide a sense of developments are: *Education and Information Technology*, *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, *Australian Journal of Educational Technology*, *Interactive Multimedia Electronic Journal of Computer-Enhanced Learning*, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *Journal of Technology Education*, *Computers and Education* and *Interacting With Computers*. For a wide-ranging discussion of the possibilities, implications and perspectives of IT development in higher education see Oblinger and Ruch eds. 1997, Hazemi and Steve eds. 1998, Breen et al March 2001. For essays addressing the Indian context see Sondhi and Tyagi eds. 2001.
3. The distinction I have made here between knowledge-development and employment-serving views of education roughly corresponds to the distinction made between knowledge and skills in educational parlance. I think the distinction I am laboring is intuitively understandable. However, these are obviously not rigorously differentiable areas, and are informed by the kinds of distinctions made between 'information knowledge-skills' and 'tacit

knowledge-skills' by Stevens 1996; by debates about elite education and vocational education in, for e.g., Cornford 1998; by allusion to complexity of contexts as in Barnett 2000; or by the argument about commercialization of knowledge in Neuman and Beckerman 1999.

4. In making these very large generalizations I follow both usability studies such as Hazemi and Wilbur eds. 1998 or Mayes and Fowler May 1999, as well as user-perspective studies such as Breen et al March 2001.
5. Though I don't expand on what academic institutional autonomy is, how it relates to academic freedom, and how it should be manifested and regulated, this issue gestures toward a substantial literature on the subject. For recent discussions of the concept of autonomy in general see Boone 1991, Cunningham 1992, UNESCO 1993, Tapper and Salter 1995, Ball 1998, Hetherington 2000, Merikosku 2000. For discussions from an Indian perspective see Raza 1990, Jayaraman 1991, Majumdar 1994, Muthukumaran 1994, Kaul 1998. Academic autonomy is also linked to questions of academic identity – in this context see Henkel 2000 and McNay ed. 2000.

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Birla Institute of Technology and Sciences-Pilani (BITS): <http://www.bits-pilani.ac.in/>

Bombay Library Network (BONET): <http://www.bonet.ernet.in/>

Calcutta Library Network (CALIBNET): <http://www.calibnet.org/>

Census of India: <http://www.censusindia.net/>

Centre for Education and Documentation (CED): <http://www.doccentre.org/>

Columbia University: <http://www.columbia.edu/>

Developing Library Network (DELNET): <http://delnet.nic.in/>

Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resources,
Government of India: <http://www.education.nic.in/>

Department of Statistics, Government of India: <http://www.nic.in/>

Economic and Political Weekly: <http://www.epw.org.in/>

Education and Research Network (ERNET) India: <http://www.eis.ernet.in/> and <http://www.indiaeducation.ernet.in/>

India Infoline: <http://www.indiainfoline.com/>

Indian Network of University Libraries (INFLIBNET): <http://www.inflibnet.ac.in/>

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU): <http://www.ignou.org/>

Jawaharlal Nehru University: <http://www.jnu.ac.in/>

Manufacturer's Association for Information Technology (MAIT):
<http://www.mait.com/>

Manushi: <http://www.freespeech.org/manushi/>

Ministry of Information Technology and Communication,
Government of India: <http://www.mit.gov.in/>

National Association for Software and Service Companies
(NASSCOM): <http://www.nasscom.org/>

Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development
(OECD): <http://www.oecd.org/>

University Grants Commission: <http://www.ugc.ac.in/>

University of Cologne: <http://www.uni-koeln.de/>

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Re-schooling Society: A Study of the Education Policy of the BJP-led Indian Government

Tapan Basu

I

When the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) assumed the office of the Government of India in March 1998, educated observers noted that, amidst the bonhomie of a 'common minimum programme' and 'principled collaboration' between coalition partners within the alliance, the BJP unobtrusively appropriated for itself the two senior most positions in the human resource development (read education) portfolio in the new cabinet – that of Union Minister and Minister of State. Significantly, too, the BJP Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, allotted these two positions to two known 'hardliners' among his party leadership, Shri Murli Manohar Joshi and Kumari Uma Bharti. Both these persons had played a prominent part in the so-called Ramjanambhoomi agitation during the late 1980s and the early 1990s, sponsored by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), a sister organisation of the BJP, and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), 'the mother of us all,' as a RSS/BJP/VHP supremo once put it (Basu 1993, 12).

Clearly, education was to be an all-important priority issue on the right-wing BJP's agenda of governance – more important than it had ever been for the centrist formations of different flavours that had governed India during the first half-a-century of its existence as an independent nation-state. This should not surprise considering that the centrist formations concerned were invariably offshoots of the Indian National Congress movement which had evolved out of efforts at broad-based mass mobilization towards the telos of national liberation from colonial absolutism, eliding, as far as possible, all ideological angularities; the BJP, on the other hand, had emerged out of an insistently ideological inspiration which harks back at least to the 1920s.

The enterprise inaugurated itself formally with the founding of the RSS in Nagpur, Maharashtra, on the festive occasion of Vijaya Dashami in 1925. Interestingly, the backdrop for this event was neither an upsurge of anti-colonial sentiments among Indians against their subordination to the British, nor even any episode of Hindu-Muslim antagonism, but rather assorted acts of assertion on the part of oppressed lower castes against oppressive upper castes. It was, in fact, an anti-Brahmin animosity, articulated from the 1870s onwards when Jyotiba Phule had founded his Satyashodak Samaj, and continuing into the 1920s under the leadership of Babasaheb Ambedkar, the Dalit ideologue, that provided the context for the establishment of an organisation such as the RSS.

Since then, the RSS has travelled a long way, attempting to extend its hegemony beyond Maharashtra into other territories of India by advocating aggressively a cultural nationalism based on Hindutva, a militant and muscular pan-Hindu identification. The essence of the RSS enterprise – to rid the Hindu Rashtra (Hindu nation) of the 'blemishes' of foreign rule of the Mughal as well as the British periods of its history – is equally to draw away attention from its own upper caste character and constituency.

The RSS has always regarded itself as a 'class' organisation committed to the cultivation of a cadre of swayamsevaks

(volunteers) in the service of Hindutva. It is the responsibility of its offspring organizations in the various spheres of public life, of which the BJP is only one, to advance its agenda among the masses. A 'mass' organisation like the BJP, which operates within the province of parliamentary politics, thus seeks to utilize its political prerogatives to radically re-mould civil society in line with RSS ideology.

II

After appropriating state power in New Delhi, therefore, the BJP has unabashedly undertaken to work through the apparatus of the state to instill RSS ideology into the institution of education itself by intervening in the induction of infrastructure, faculty, and curriculum in any and every organ of the educational system under state purview. The government purpose was apparent as early as the Conference of State Education Ministers and Secretaries held in New Delhi between 22nd to 24th October, 1998. Attached to the agenda documents circulated among delegates, was a report by a 'group of experts' headed by P.D. Chitalangia, an industrialist from Kolkata, who also held an important position within the Vidya Bharati, the educational chain exclusively controlled by the RSS.

Among the many recommendations made by the Chitalangia group was one that the orientation of education from the primary stage to the higher education level should be 'Indianised, nationalized and spiritualized', and that courses at all levels, including vocational training courses, should incorporate the 'essentials of Indian culture' (Taneja 1999, 32-33). This recommendation seemed premised upon an understanding that the approach in education today is operatively un-Indian. It showed the familiar facility of the RSS's insidious imputation that the Indian state has supinely succumbed to the influences of alien cultures and in the process jettisoned the spiritual Indian national culture.

Yet, side by side with the Indianising project, there is the perplexing phenomenon of the BJP-led government proposing to open up the education omnibus in India to the processes of a market economy, now more and more manipulated and manipulable by the manoeuvres of economic globalization. On the plane of policies and programmes, at least two position papers presented to the government at the government's own requisition – *A Policy Framework for Reforms in Education* (April 2000) and *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan: Framework for Implementation* (December 2000) – perceive the nation's economic expansion as the framework for measuring and maintaining the nation's education expansion. Thereby, education is reduced to a mere factor of the economy and of the economic globalization manoeuvres mentioned earlier.

How to construe these apparently contradictory engagements, what Professor Anil Sadgopal has called 'the different strokes' (Sadgopal 2000, 8), of the Government of India led by the BJP in education activities? Where does the Indianising venture conclude and the globalizing venture commence? In an article on the economic agenda of the BJP entitled 'The Ethics of Hindutva and the Spirit of Capitalism', Thomas Blom Hansen has argued that the BJP agenda

is in many ways indicative of a conflict between two visions of politics.... one a pragmatic, pro-capitalist outlook committed to an often philistine middle-class vision of a 'clean society', to the good life with consumer durables and modern living; the other being the austere, ideologically pure, more socially conscientious outlook, uncomfortable with what it sees as the brutality, fragmentation and hedonism of the modern world. These two tendencies—car sevaks versus Kar sevaks—were for a long time united by a joint communalism and a joint commitment to assert a common Hindu consciousness. As the symbolic issues of religion and nation became less prominent items on the party's agenda and more 'profane' policy-issues have come to the fore, this long-standing difference has been rearticulated. (Hansen 1988)

Hansen's understanding of the economic agenda of the BJP is somewhat simplistic. Besides the fact that 'the symbolic issues of religion and nation' continue to be central concerns of the BJP, the BJP, as Hansen himself has pointed out at the outset of his essay, in its original incarnation as the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), had already successfully navigated the dichotomy between 'swadeshi' ethical principles and 'videshi' business practices (Hansen 1998, 306).

According to Deendayal (the President of the BJS during the 1960s), *swadeshi* and decentralization should be considered the cornerstones in an economic development which should be firmly embedded in a cultural ethos in order not to give rise to hedonism and selfishness. Similarly, foreign capital and technology should only be accepted as long as they were under firm national control, argued Deendayal (Hansen 1998, 294-95).

In my paper, I shall propose that the balancing of oppositions within the economic agenda of the BJP works as well within the BJP's education agenda. Thus, the discourse of globalization of education does not really run counter to the discourse of Indianisation of education.

III

The context of the rise of the BJP in the urban centres of India in the contemporary period has been a curious conjuncture of completely contrary social trajectories towards identity politicisation and towards economic liberalization. The connection between these two contrary social trajectories, though not immediately transparent, has been commented upon by Professor Jayati Ghosh, among others. According to Ghosh:

contemporary capitalist globalization...tends to create processes which divide economies and societies even as it supposedly brings the world together. These divisions find

many expressions, of which perceptions of difference based on various social/cultural criteria are some of the most important. The fragmentation that this entails, even when this spills over into violence, does little to improve either the situation or the perceptions of those who are affected by it. Rather, it encourages the perpetuation of a process of more inequality, division, and separation between people. (Ghosh 1999, 129)

If the perceptions of difference between people is accentuated by the globalization of capital, it also needs to be noted that the BJP, ever since it has taken charge of government in several states and at the centre, while aiding and abetting in the globalization of capital on the one hand, has, on the other hand, found it facilitating to play up the perceptions of difference between the people by deploying the so-called Hindutva card in every and any sphere of civil society.

IV

In the education sector, the Chitalangia report circulated at the Conference of State Education Ministers and Secretaries in 1998 represented the seed of an effort to seep the education system with the ideology of Hindutva. Chitalangia and his cohorts in the expert group which was headed by Chitalangia made it amply clear, for example, that the Indianisation of education which they recommended must be premised upon a recognition of the importance of the Vedas and the Upanishads, the sacred texts of Brahmanical Hinduism, which they insisted ought to be incorporated into the foundational curricula of schools. Against the submission that the scheme was sectarian and would violate the prohibition in the Indian constitution on religious instruction in schools funded by the government, the Chitalangia group defended its decree by claiming that 'the Supreme Court has already defined Hindutva as a way of life and not as a religion' – citing of

course a judgement of the Supreme Court passed in 1995 on a case of electoral malpractice, which incidentally is now under review.

The RSS and its affiliates have always viewed the special constitutional sanction allowed to minority communities to run their educational establishments as educational establishments of the minority communities, i.e. as minority institutions, as an act of antipathy towards Hindus. This constitutional concession committed to the minorities provides part of the platform against 'pseudo-secularism' of the Indian State that the RSS and its affiliates have constantly criticized.

The Chitalangia group sought to counter this slant by soliciting an amendment to Article 30 of the Constitution of India. Whereas Article 30 in its current structure offers the minority communities certain exclusive rights in the educational realm, the amendment advocated by the Chitalangia group wished to extend these certain rights to the majority community too. 'Every section of citizens, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice'. The amendment, if accepted, would, according to the Chitalangia group, arrange for greater harmony among all communities. 'It would be seen that the above amendments would remove a cause of considerable tension without in anyway taking away or diluting any of the rights of the minorities....' (Taneja 1999, 32-33).

The majority and the minority communities are all thereby homogenized within themselves into monolithic communities, and put on an equal footing as far as their identity insecurities are involved. Very adroitly, also, constitutional endorsement is demanded for religious instruction in publicly as much as in privately funded schools.

Although this recommendation, along with others made by the 'group of experts', was repudiated at the Conference of State Education Ministers and Secretaries due to pressure from representatives of the non-BJP-ruled states, who equally vehemently

protested the inauguration of the meet with the chanting of the Saraswati Vandana rather than the National Anthem, the BJP-led government has not given up its endeavour to engineer education in India. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and subsidiary bodies in charge of education, including the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) are being harnessed boldly to alter the education profile of the country.

The NCERT, for instance, formulated the notorious *National Curriculum Framework for School Education* (November 2000), another position paper which subtly but surely tried to broker the RSS perspective on education. The *National Curriculum Framework for School Education* was to be the framework for a new school syllabi for all subjects at all levels in all parts of the country. The Director of the NCERT, an appointee of the BJP-led government, through repeated statements, to the press and other fora, claimed that the NCERT had the mandate of the National Policy of Education 1986 (NPE 86) and its appended Program of Action (POA) to regularly review and revise educational curricula. As a matter of fact, the NPE 86 and POA ask *not* for a re-examination of the educational curricula *but* for a re-examination of the implementation of the educational policy and programme themselves in a time-bound manner. Further, the only brief afforded to the NCERT in the sphere of curricula alteration by the NPE 86-POA was 'to initiate the necessary changes in the curricula before the Eighth Plan period' rather than to change the curricula. Given these facts, the agenda of the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education* is rendered suspect.

The substance of this position paper of the NCERT was on predictable lines. The emphasis on Indianness which was so paramount in the agenda documents for the State Education Ministers and Secretaries Conference appeared again and again in this position paper in the context of constructing a changed

curriculum for schools. The paper began by belabouring the glorious past of Indian education.

India had an advanced system of education and the world's first universities which presented a consummate example of education based on philosophy and religion and at the same time stressed the study of mathematics, history, astronomy, maritime sciences, and even the laws of economics and public administration. The *Chhandogya Upanishad* (Chapter VII section 1) mentions eighteen different subjects of study including areas such as natural disaster management, mineralogy, linguistics, science of elements, and science of defence (*National Curriculum Framework 2000, 1*).

The need to recognize and recuperate this past glory was conceptualized as the leitmotif of the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education* :

Against this backdrop, it may be reiterated that along with the contribution of other countries, the contribution of India to the world wisdom also needs to be brought to general notice explicitly. Paradoxical as it may sound, while our children do know about Newton, they do not know about Aryabhata, they do know about computers, but do not know about the advent of the concept of zero or the decimal system. (*National Curriculum Framework 2000, 13*)

The NCERT paper, therefore, posited the need to sustain India's native knowledge nucleus by 'evolving an approach to curriculum preparation based on thinking, experiences and innovations rooted in its indigenous tradition'.

What, according to the author/authors of the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education*, comprised the core of this simple and single 'indigenous tradition' of Indian scholarship? In the chapter on 'Organisation of Curriculum at Elementary and Secondary States', despite the lip-service paid to 'the country's cultural plurality and the enormous amount of

wisdom and experience that can be drawn from the various regions and sections of Indian society', it is made more and more evident as to which direction the author/authors of the 'curriculum framework' look at in their search for the 'indigenous tradition' (*National Curriculum Framework 2000*, 37).

The privileging of Brahmanical Hinduism as the 'authentic' resource of Indian Studies was once more apparent in the apotheosis of Sanskrit (read Sanskrit) in the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education*. The *National Curriculum Framework for School Education* justified the stress on Sanskrit teaching and Sanskrit learning on five counts:

- (i) Sanskrit was part and parcel of everyday existence in ancient India and is still inextricably linked with the life, rituals, ceremonies and festivals of vast Indian masses.
- (ii) Sanskrit is a storehouse of the erudition of bygone ages which requires to be revived.
- (iii) Sanskrit has universal appeal all over the country.
- (iv) Sanskrit has very close structural, lexical and semantic relationship with Hindi and many other regional languages of India, and the study of Sanskrit therefore makes the study of these languages easier and richer.
- (v) Sanskrit has been 'internationally accepted as the most "scientific" language and is being increasingly acknowledged as the best suited language for computer use'. (*National Curriculum Framework 2000*, 53-54)

The *National Curriculum Framework for School Education* used all these reasons to rationalize a pre-eminent position for Sanskrit in the school syllabus at different stages.

Not satisfied with its espousal of Sanskrit through the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education*, the NCERT under the same BJP appointed Director, brought out a booklet captioned

Sanskrit: The Voice of India's Soul and Wisdom (May 2001), in the foreword to which the same BJP appointed Director extolled Sanskrit as having 'always been and continuing to be closest to the Indian psyche' (*Sanskrit: The Voice of India's Soul and Wisdom* 2001, Foreword).

Most of the premises for the privileging of Sanskrit in the publications of the NCERT are of course patently moot. It is well known that Sanskrit was never a mass language of India, not even a language of the masses who, over place and over time, loosely came to be designated as the Hindus. As against Prakrit, the mass language, at least in large parts of ancient north India, the equivalent of the modern Hindi belt, Sanskrit survived in this territory as the language of the Brahman-authored holy texts which members of the lower castes and women from any caste were not supposed to peruse. The substance of the Sanskrit texts, such as they were, therefore, could hardly have reference or relevance to the everyday experiences of ordinary people, women or men, in ancient India, and would be arguably, much less so in India today. Hence it is presumptuous to suggest that Sanskrit has universal appeal all over the country. Even in its heyday as a language of the Brahman elite, the usage of Sanskrit was confined to a few north Indian kingdoms. In the northwest and the northeast as well as in large portions of what in presently South India, Sanskrit was not current even as a classical language. As such there are numerous regional Indian languages which have absolutely no linkage with Sanskrit.

Similarly, it is over-endowing Sanskrit to say that Sanskrit is the most 'scientific' language and also the language which is most computer-friendly. On what basis, after all, are these tall claims made?

Yet, it is not just the NCERT which has undertaken advocacy of Sanskrit. In a scandalous more recent move, the UGC put out an advertisement in newspapers of widespread national circulation (August 2001) announcing the setting up of 'Simple Sanskrit Speaking Centres' at 'Selected Universities and Colleges in India'.

The aim of these centres, contrived without consultation with the educational establishments concerned, would be to increase and inculcate proficiency in spoken Sanskrit among students of all disciplines. The centres would be staffed by faculty with as little as a graduate degree and mere ability for imparting instruction in spoken Sanskrit.

The stress on Sanskrit as the 'mother language' of India (Murlī Manohar Joshi's characterization in one of his newspaper interviews) is not incidental. It is tied with the enterprise of reawakening and reanimating in the popular consciousness that 'Sanskriti' (culture) of which Sanskrit is supposed to be the representative language. Thus the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education* was replete with a Sanskrit idiom – Vashudhaiva Kutumbakam, Sarva Dharma Sambhava, Panthnirapekshta, Seva, etc. – which endeavours to invoke an 'ideal' ancient (read Hindu) India. The *National Curriculum Framework for School Education* consistently counselled the 'study of Indian civilisation and its rich cultural heritage'. Which civilisation and which heritage were left delightfully opaque, though the inclusion in the curriculum framework of disciplines such as 'yoga, vedic mathematics, astronomy and ayurveda', seemed once more to nod in the direction of Brahmanical Hinduism.

In a writ petition submitted to the Supreme Court of India 2002 by Aruna Roy and others on the matter of the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education*, the petitioners pleaded that the document be set aside on the basis of its anti-secular character, apart from the fact that it was authored without consultation, as per the norm, with the all important Government of India body, the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), intended to oversee matters pertaining to the development of education in the states as well as at the centre. The petitioners argued that their apprehensions regarding the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education* 2000 were founded on at least three aspects in which this document was different from its predecessor, the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education* 1988:

the special status accorded to Sanskrit alone among all classical languages; the emphasis on religion as a 'major source of value generation'; and a shift in focus from equal access to education for men and women to 'nurture the best features of each gender in the best Indian tradition'. (Writ Petition No. 98 of 2002 in the Supreme Court of India, 53-54, 56-57, 9)

The promotion of 'tradition' in the document notwithstanding, the document sidelined history as a subject of scientific academic study. The *National Curriculum Framework for School Education* abolished, up to the secondary stage of education, the discipline of history as well as other social science subjects. These would be replaced by a course comprising issues/ideas 'drawn from history, geography, civics, economics and sociology in a balanced manner and suitably graded'. For implementing the balance, history was isolated—the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education* threatened to substantially reduce 'the quantum of history' because 'the concerns and concepts of the contemporary world need to be kept in the forefront'. The 'major areas of study drawn from history' would be the (ancient) Indian civilisation and culture and its achievements, 'along with other world civilisations' (*National Curriculum Framework* 2000, 62-64).

A limited history assembles an appropriately limited nation, devoid of all the complexities and the contradictions of the formation of a national identity, and instead, invokes a simple and single civilisational consciousness. Dr. Rajput, the Director of the NCERT and a staunch defender of the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education*, would not agree. In an article published in *The Hindu* dated June 21, 2001, for instance, reflective of his position in several newspaper articles written by him over the last one year, he castigates the history text-books for the present curriculum produced by eminent historians such as Professor Romila Thapar, Professor R.S. Sharma, Professor Satish Chandra and Professor Bipan Chandra, of failing to instil youthful confidence in the nation and rather 'advocating self-flagellation'. Elsewhere—

The Asian Age, dated July 5, 2001—Dr. Rajput is reported to have remarked that he is not against the passing off of Krishna and Rama as authentic historical personages, even without adequate substantiation, in the proposed history text books of the NCERT to be prepared under the aegis of the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education*. 'If people believe in mythology, they should be allowed to' (Rajput 2001).

The intention to re-write history, which is implicit in Dr. Rajput's statement, was explicit in the state-sponsored Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR)'s decision to suspend publication of two pending volumes, by Professor Sumit Sarkar and Professor K.N. Pannikar respectively, in its *Towards Freedom* series on the Indian national movement. Though no reasons were given officially, un-officially it has got around that these two volumes as well as the already published volumes, by Professor P.S. Gupta and Professor Basudev Chatterjee respectively, have come under fire from the ICHR and the human resource development ministry of the Vajpayee government because of their showing up of the RSS's non-participation in the freedom struggle of India.

The RSS version of the history of India is of course freely taught in the schools run by the Vidya Bharti chain of the RSS. As of today, this chain manages about 14,000 schools at the primary, middle, and secondary strata, and has over 3 lakh pupils under its tutelage. The total aggregate of teachers in these schools is about 80,000. These schools exist in every Indian state except Mizoram. The Vidya Bharti chain also controls 60 colleges, which offer graduate and post graduate degrees, and 25 other centres of higher learning/teaching, of which two are educator training institutes, in Jaipur and in Ahmednagar.

The aim of all Vidya Bharati institutions is to impart a nationalist (read Hindu) education to its students. In the schools of this network, apart from the mandatory syllabi for mainstream subjects set up by the respective state education boards to which

they are affiliated, there is an uniform 'core curriculum' for all students, comprising six disciplines: yoga, physical education, music, Sanskrit, sanskriti gyan (knowledge of culture), and moral and spiritual education. It is through this curriculum that the Hindutva viewpoint is primarily pushed.

A study of school textbooks conducted by the NCERT in 1993 indicted, among others, the Vidya Bharati chain for publishing textbooks for school children which were oriented towards enlisting them in a communal commission. Nevertheless, it is not just the Vidya Bharati texts which can be held guilty of this mischief. The introduction of such texts in the state funded schools in the BJP-ruled states, through the 1980s and the 1990s has massively increased the number of children who are being made victims of this poisonous 'knowledge'.

Our land has always been seen with greedy eyes... This story of invasion and resistance is our 3000 year long Gaurav Gaatha. When this proud tradition began, it is difficult to say because no books were written at that time... but we believe that the first man was born in this land. (*Gaurav Gaatha for Class 4*, p. 8, prescribed at Saraswati Shisu Mandirs of the Vidya Bharati chain).

To our ancestors, these marauders were like mosquitoes and flies who were crushed. (*Gaurav Gaatha for class 4*, p. 9)

Lakhs of foreigners came during these thousands of years to India, but they all suffered humiliating defeat... Muslims and Christians are today some of the descendents of these people. (*Itihaas Gaa Raha Hai for Class 5*, prescribed at Saraswati Shishu Mandirs.)

Hindutva is a dharma (religion); Mohammedanism and Christianity are panths (sects). (*Akhil Bharatiya Sanskriti Gyan Pariksha Prashnotri for Class 8*, prescribed at schools run by the Vidya Bharati chain).

Bharat exists, has culture and civilisation as long as this Hindu Jati survives and remains dominant. (*Sanskar Saurabh* for class 5, p. 77, taught at Saraswati Shishu Mandirs).

Our culture is one. It is known as Hindu Culture. Everybody's heritage, tradition and beliefs are one. Everybody celebrates Holi, Dusshera and Diwali together. Our cultural symbols are one. The Gita, Ganga, Gayatri Mantra and the holy cow are revered by all equally. All subscribe to faith in karma and rebirth, and venerate the avtaars. (*Sadachar ki Batain* for Class 9, p. 11, prescribed at schools run by the Vidya Bharati chain)

Sati is a Rajput tradition that all Hindus should be proud of. (*Sanskar Saurabh* for Class 5, ch. 28, prescribed at schools run by the Vidya Bharati chain) (Taneja 1999)

Wisdom such as this is not just available in textbooks of the Vidya Bharati chain of schools. Many a textbook of state-sponsored schools, especially those in the BJP-governed states, is equally envenomed with 'Hindu' pride and prejudice. Here are some examples:

Krishna, Bhishma, Bharat and Nachiketa are cited as historical personages in a book on 'our ancestors' (*Hamare Pooraj* Class 8, prescribed by the Uttar Pradesh school board).

The Social Studies text book for class 9 students studying in schools run by the Gujarat school board lists among the problems faced by our country, the problems caused by 'minority communities' as well as by the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. The same book terms Muslims, Christians, and Parsis as foreigners.

The Rajasthan school board's textbook for political science, *Bharatiya Rajnitik Vyavastha* for students of class 12 accuses the Indian National Congress of complicity in the partitioning of India in 1947 and applauds the BJP for its various campaigns to rejuvenate Hindutva.

In the wake of the Supreme Court of India order permitting the NCERT to go ahead with the printing of its text books in various subjects prepared in line with the *National Curriculum for School Education 2000*, and also allowing for their dissemination among students all over the country, it is likely that the so far localized constituencies of an 'Indianised education' will soon acquire a nationwide spread.

V

But how sincere is the BJP led government in the pursuit of its project of Indianising education? Curiously, all its swadeshi rhetoric notwithstanding, the Government of India led by the BJP has been instrumental in slowly but surely instigating the market forces of a globalizing economy to impinge upon education. The Government of India, over the last four years, far from withdrawing from the moves towards commercialisation of education made by the two previous full-term governments, has sought to accentuate and to accelerate these initiatives.

Being a signatory to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreements, and especially its so-called Uruguay Round of 1994, the Indian Government is committed to not only the enhancement of goods trade liberalization, but the liberalization of trade in services as well. Service sectors such as banking, insurance, telecommunication, transport and housing, have already been liberalized, but the liberalization juggernaut threatens to soon overtake the social services such as education as well. The liberalization of education would entail the entry into the education sector of India of profit-oriented private parties plausibly from abroad, who would then inevitably begin to determine the contours, in every sense, of the education market within the country.

Certain documents emanating out of the government in recent years, viz. *A Policy Framework for Reforms in Education* and *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan: Framework for Implementation*, have indeed

tended to look at education in the light of market principles, as commodity as well as capital.

A Policy Framework for Reforms in Education, commissioned by the Prime Minister's Council on Trade and Industry, for instance, asks for a 'fundamental change (in) our mindset—from seeing education as a component of social development to realising that it is a means of creating a new information society.... It is not a social expenditure but an investment in India's future'. The 'reforms in education' propagated by the 'policy framework' comprise 'building knowledge for a competitive, information-based society... Education must shape adaptable, competitive workers who can readily acquire new skills and innovate' (*A Policy Framework* 2000, Preface).

Similarly, the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Framework for Implementation*, circulated for discussion by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, states that the need to achieve universal elementary education derives its greatest justification from the enhanced economic achievement which it inspires. Through the paper, enhanced achievement in the economic sphere remains the gauge for testing out the efficacy of universal education.

The linking of economic growth to education growth in both the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan: Framework for Implementation* and *A Policy Framework for Reforms in Education* is the hallmark of the BJP's efforts to liberalize education, which, if successful, will, more or less, render education too expensive and exclusive for the common mass of people. On the flip side of this education liberalization effort of the BJP is its Indianising education mission, which, in so far as it addresses itself to an audience of Hindus, and that too caste Hindus only, in the ultimate analysis panders to the same privileged constituency as its other. In other words, will not the Indianisation of education establish a philosophical premise for educational liberalization which will inevitably shrink the constituency of education to only the upper-class, upper-caste, Hindu citizen of a prospective Hindu Rashtra?

** The agenda of the Vidya Bharati, the contradiction between the cultural nationalism of the RSS, the Jan Sangh and the globalization of education, the anxiety that if one cannot get global one can at least get local were some of the points raised. The dialogue of globalization and Indianisation is also reflected in the debates centred on the school syllabi revised recently by the National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT) in India. The problem of Indianness as defined by the current government and its concomitant valorization of Sanskrit (as language and culture) are at odds with the pluralistic, secular sense of India. The former is a kind of orientalist version of India and its culture. It is a problem that arises out of constructing India in monolithic terms.

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Pennuezhuthu - 'Women's Writing' and the Politics of Gender in Contemporary Kerala

G. Arunima

He never felt that one needed to listen to a wife as she was a merely a tool for nurture and childbearing' (Amma 1946, 21-42). K. Sarasvati Amma, one of Kerala's most trenchant writers wrote these words in her dystopic story, *Veendum Jeevithathintte Mumbil* [Facing Life Again], in 1946. She adopts a popular literary trope of love, separation and reconciliation and subverts it by exploring the darker side of human emotions. The story is spare, and more of a comment on human experience. Prabhakaran Nair returns home to find his elder brother on his deathbed. He of a foster mother to him, appears fearful and distant. As his dying brother reveals his last will and testament to him, he realises the frightening changes that were about to overcome their lives. The entire property was to be bequeathed to Prabhakaran Nair, who was to marry the widow. 'You don't have to do anything. When I go, you replace me, that's the only difference... Anyway, you need not consult her on anything other than the kitchen. [She's] wife alright. But these women have no notion about anything at all' (Amma 1946, 28). Sarala, his love of long standing, was to be married off to Vikraman, Prabhakaran's nephew. So in one fell blow, his sister-in-law was to become his wife and his lover to be transformed into his stepdaughter-in-law. Prabhakaran, Gomati

Amma, and Sarala find themselves unable to resist these injunctions. Prabhakaran sees his own acquiescence more as a response to the call of duty. Gomati Amma, penniless and dependent, has only fear and resentment as her weapons, but these do not protect her. Sarala, mutely banished from Prabhakaran's life, attempts to start afresh with Vikraman. But as luck would have it, Vikraman dies in a fire accident and Sarala's baby is stillborn. 'A living corpse giving birth to another, she thinks'. Gomati Amma, weakened by circumstances, gives birth to a child conceived with Prabhakaran, who dies soon after birth. Ill health, and life itself, has reduced her to the state of putrefaction—she too dies. Prabhakaran and Sarala meet at her deathbed. 'At that moment Sarala and Prabhakaran looked at each other. They felt as though they were returning to life after a long, unconscious, spell. In the eyes of the world [they were her] husband's stepfather and [his] wife's daughter-in-law; in their own eyes, lovers waiting for a happy resolution. But even that must be immoral [*adharmam*]' (Amma 1946, 42).

Sarasvati Amma wrote primarily in the 1940s and '1950s. Mordant and acute, her stories have a certain modernity that is often missing from the writing of many of her contemporaries. Her idea of love is not romantic; it is painful, treacherous, and manipulative. Love and relationships become the site for contestation—between men and women; societal norms and changing practices; an emergent urban modernity and a not so romanticized rural past. Her stories are complex and contain several themes and elements. Here, however, I shall use one important element in her writing, that of the relationship between men and women, as the backdrop against which to think about writing, politics, and the question of gender. In the context of the themes of this volume—on globalization and identity politics—I shall also attempt raise certain issues, using the perspective of women's writing, to think about the relationship between culture and politics.

As elsewhere, in contemporary Kerala too there is an abundance of literary and cultural production by men while the instances of

women's writing is comparatively less. A substantial body of feminist literary theory and criticism, in other parts of the country and internationally, has dwelt at length on this difference and has found the power differences between men and women which influence the material conditions of literary production to be loaded in favour of men. This has implied that not only have women had fewer opportunities within the sphere of cultural production, but also that their efforts are largely overlooked or undervalued. One very common example of this in Kerala is to see women's writing as somehow unaesthetic, more close to reality than to art. This is in spite of the fact that imaging 'the real' has constituted a substantial part of modern literary activity. So the question to ask is what is it about the particular depiction of reality by women that brings about the charge of it 'not quite being art', and what is the implication of this charge. It is in this light that the battle on *pennuezhuthu*—women's writing—in the 1990s in Kerala becomes particularly relevant.

This paper has two parts. In the first I discuss the politics of gender in the public sphere in a 'local' area, Kerala, using the debate on 'women's writing' as the entry point. Here I suggest that this politics has two distinct manifestations—one of the growth of a politics of masculinity that influences the public sphere; the other the absence of a feminist movement that could counter women's marginalisation from cultural production and creating a political presence. In the second part, I locate this debate in the 'locality' within a larger, 'global', context of the relationship between movements and identity politics. Here my attempt is to look specifically at the changes in the women's movement, and the production of feminist theory. As it is, positions from wider theoretical debates, like postmodernism and French feminism, have been invoked in the debate on 'women's-writing' to either critique or support it. I use this as an opportunity to think about the relationship between theory and politics in a period of globalization.

***Pennuezhuthu*: a local debate**

Five decades after Sarasvati Amma was writing her wry, and sometimes sombre, stories, the term *pennuezhuthu*—or women's writing, a direct translation from the French *écriture-féminine*—was coined by the Malayali poet Satchidanandan to describe the literary efforts of a younger generation of women writers in Malayalam (Satchidanandan 1990, 7-43). In his lengthy introduction to Sarah Joseph, a leading contemporary Malayali writer's collection of short stories (*Papathara*), he uses the term *pennuezhuthu*, to describe women's writing. This term he attributes directly to the work of Helene Cixous et al. With this he drew attention, and inadvertently brought notoriety, to the work of a whole younger generation of women writers. The charges against them range from the accusation that they are bad writers saved through the aegis of a political statement, to wanting to achieve fame through easy means. In this context, let us examine briefly T. Padmanabhan's recent statement as an entry point into thinking about some of the questions relating to gender, politics and women's writing. In his essay *Sahitya darshanam puthiye nootantil* [Perspectives on Literature in the New Century] Padmanabhan categorizes an entire body of emergent literature within Kerala as a postmodern phenomenon:

What we have here today is postmodernism. Alongside, we have women's writing (*pennuezhuthu*) and dalit writing (*dalitezhuthu*) and so on. That men cannot authentically or forcefully express the problems of women, is what these women writers claim. That women have problems is true...Our literature, especially within the fictional tradition, has had so many well known women writers. Writers like Saraswati Amma, Lalitambika Anterjanam, Rajalakshmi, Madhavi Kutty, Vatsala. There are new comers like Chandramati too. None of them emerged victorious because of [the backing of] a "reserved constituency" [*samvarana mandalam*]. They all have a very high status here as writers. Let me say this with some sorrow,

that it is those who have faced disappointments in different walks of life... especially within the sphere of the family, that make such a noise about women's writing. Their numbers are very small today. No affliction can last that long, can it? (Padmanabhan 2000, 8-9)

It is important to contextualise Padmanabhan's anti-feminist statement. It is significant that this particular piece begins as an attack on one of Satchidanandan's poems (*Prabhashakantte anthyamozi*: a publicist's last call) (Padmanabhan 2000, 6). While I shall not enter that battle here, the reason for mentioning it is that according to Padmanabhan, Satchidanandan, amongst others, represents a modernist sensibility that has destroyed Malayalam. This 'literary modernism' he argues was a western import, leading to a lot of unnecessary 'existential angst' [*astitva dukkham*]. While modernism caused a lot of damage to Malayalam literature and Malayali culture, its proponents, he argues, considered it extremely fruitful. While it is amply clear that Padmanabhan's is but a polemical swipe against all that he considers to be the ill effects of modernism, and not a well structured or developed argument, it is still important to engage with this brand of Kerala traditionalism. Polemic of this kind, indicative of a strategy of normalizing patriarchal attitudes, undermines the substantive challenges posed by women's writing by subsuming it within a larger phenomenon, pejoratively described as postmodernism. In the battle for marking a masculine territory among literary adversaries women's writing is discredited as 'postmodern', and the inheritor in the end of a destructive modernism, that is significant only to the extent that its derivative position is being marked. The real adversaries here are the men within the literary establishment—women's writing really becomes a site for contestation—not about feminism or women's rights, but about what constitutes masculinity itself.

Here I wish to provide a slightly wider context for locating this battle of language, literature and gender. Kerala has always occupied a paradoxical position within Indian politics. On the one

hand, with the record of having had the first democratically elected Communist government in the world, it has represented for many a progressive hope within an otherwise sectarian democracy. Equally, the statistics of literacy (technically 100 per cent), health care and women's employment, along with a sex-ratio favouring women has caught the attention of academics and activists. On the other hand, an equally visible set of 'indicators' that is often ignored by academics, activists, and the media alike is the extent of violence against women (actually and in media representations, primarily television and cinema), the virtual absence of women in politics, and the left parties' or intellectuals' refusal to address these as 'political' issues. That left wing politics in large parts of the world has not been sensitive to issues of gender (amongst other issues of 'minority' groups) has been addressed politically and academically by feminists for many decades now. This critique is completely missing in Kerala. The sexual politics of Kerala needs to be linked to a larger phenomena from the early 20th century where the growth of nationalist (and later Communist) political activity was coterminous with the emergence of a discourse of masculinity. This discourse, especially in the early decades of the 20th century, was linked to a critique of matriliney, the dominant pattern of kinship in Kerala. The masculine idiom was 'progressivist' in many respects—it was to move out of the 'barbaric' past of matriliney into patrilineal modernity; it was the language of 'social reform' of this period that actually enabled the anti-matriliney legislations—but more importantly constituted the political training ground for the latter day 'communists'; finally, for many among them, it was the recovery of a 'masculine' identity, apparently shackled till now by the matrilineal (read 'women-centred') culture.

Political groups and caste reform movements, across the spectrum, soon shared the language of 'progress' and 'modernization' that started as part of the anti-matrilineal discourse. This had several contradictory effects that began to surface in this period. One was a desperate bid to construct a masculine identity, noticeable especially amongst younger men. The popular satirical

literature of this period, especially the work of Sanjayan and EV Krishna Pillai are examples of such attempts. In fact, Saraswati Amma's wry tone can be seen as a fitting response to such writing. The second was a concern with 'women's issues', especially within the social reform movements of this period. Despite the paternalist tendency within these, they did address certain fundamental issues, like women's right to education. Moreover, it also created an awareness amongst women about their own rights, which is clearly evident from the essays and polemical pieces within a growing number of women's journals in this period. In fact the sharp, critical and humorous voice of women writing in journals like *Mahila* and *Lakshmi Bai* attest to the fact of their growing sense of self. From issues ranging from education and employment to freedom, women expressed their views with clarity and forthrightness (Saradmoni 1999, 82-115). This early feminist voice clearly threatened many men, who either proffered paternalist advice about safeguarding 'women's roles' (i.e., within the home) or attempted to subvert women's activities by lampooning them. Significantly, women gave a fitting rebuttal to such attacks, and the history of women's education and presence in the labour force can at least be partly attributed to the crusading spirit of many of these women. Nevertheless, the battle for women's rights was successful in rejecting certain hide-bound values of an older generation, but did not question adequately the gender politics of what it was trying to replace. I would argue that while women won a right to education and work, this was not sufficient to check or subvert the politics of masculinity that was to shape the politics of the public sphere in Kerala.

Alongside, there was another development from the early 20th century in Kerala that seems to have created a special relationship between politics and culture. This was the growth of a literary sensibility that was responsive to political issues of the moment, from caste politics to the emerging left wing movements. Here I am not simply making a larger argument about the mimetic nature of modern literature, but a specific claim for reading certain writers

and bodies of literature. From the socialist realist era of the 1930s and '40s and the progressive writers movement, which found its apogee in the 1950s, we find a wide array of writers who seem to be using a literary canvas for exploring the complexities of social relationships. Writers like VT Bhattathiripad, Lalitambika Antaranam (who were inspired by the Nambudiri caste reform movement); Keshava Dev (socialist realism), Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai (progressive writers movement) and Thoppil Bhasi (communist movement), to take a few examples, came into their own as respondents to the social and political crises around them. Very often many of them were actually involved in these social and political movements, and literary, cultural developments (like the progressive writers' movements for instance) were an offshoot of such an engagement. Such a deep connection between culture and politics, I would suggest, created a special place for the artist in Kerala. In the post-Independence period, when Kerala, like other parts of India, witnessed the growth of party politics, it led to a greater distance between the formal political and cultural spheres. Yet, in an interesting turn, artistic creativity and cultural production became the cutting edge of radical politics; the political parties merely carried on the mundane activity of statecraft. From the 1960s to the present, be it in literature or in cinema (primarily), Malayalis have had a passionate engagement with aesthetics and politics. This could sometimes have been in response to international cultural or political trends, yet there has been a particularly Malayali idiom in its domestic rendition. This is true of OV Vijayan's prose, John Abraham's cinema or K. Satchidanandan's and K.G. Sankara Pillai's poetry.

These discursive practices, I would argue set the contours for the politics of the public sphere in Kerala—creative, radical, and distinctly male. Women, though constituting a substantial section of the labour force, were marginal in the public sphere. In a significant reversal from the decades of the pre-Independence period, the numbers of women's journals or writings with even a reformist edge were on the wane. Writers like Sarasvati Amma

and Rajeshwari, who are being invoked today as 'good' writers by Malayali literary establishment figures like Padmanabhan, faced innumerable difficulties and hardships as writers in these decades (Shashikumar 2001, 30-31). In part this myopia regarding women's cultural production is a universal phenomenon; however, while in other parts of the country, and the world, the feminist movement has been battling to rectify this situation, Kerala never witnessed the development of similar practices. The absence of such resources amongst women has also meant that they have been unable to create an alternative political culture. The cautious entry of a generation of women writers in the 1980s and 1990s who perceive their work in feminist terms is the first step in this direction. Unlike women writers of an earlier period who had written poignantly about themes like family, society, love and marriage, writers like Sarah Joseph and Gracy explore the complex connection between the body, sexuality, and erotic power.¹ They explore explicitly the relationship between women's bodies and writing, which acquires sometimes a dreamy, mystical quality and at other times the searing agony of labour pains. However, despite this growing body of literature, both the theorists and critics of this writing are primarily men. The identity politics of masculinity now finds feminism its new terrain. The implication of this for perpetuating deep gender imbalances remains unaddressed. It is the complex interaction of masculinity, 'progressive' politics and the cultural sphere that I wish to explore here.

It is interesting then to turn towards Satchidanandan's essay in this context, which appears to have inadvertently triggered off this controversy. This is his lengthy introduction to Sarah Joseph's collection of short stories, *Papathara*, where he applies the term *pennuezhuthu* or 'women's-writing' to an entire body of women's literary production in Kerala. Four issues need to be considered here. One, there is no effort to historicise the different authors mentioned in his essay, except in a most general manner (popular romantic fiction; women writing on social issues; feminist writing). Second, that while he refers to Virginia Woolf's discussion on the

material conditions of cultural production, there is absolutely no attempt to understand the distinctions between the contexts of cultural production between a Sarasvati Amma of the 1940s and a Sarah Joseph of the 1980s and 1990s. Third, this essentialising tendency is the result of a substitution of Woolf's or even Showalter's kind of literary criticism with a particularly limited reading of *écriture féminine* which seems to subsume gender (something constructed and contested) within sex (something that is given). And fourth, there is no attempt to negotiate the worlds of women's experience and cultural expression—one is taken to stand in for the other—which also leads to an unproblematic and undifferentiated idea of 'women's voice and women's writing'. Most importantly, where we find an overlap between Satchidanandan's literary criticism and Padmanabhan's polemic is where he identifies *pennuezhuthu* as a postmodern phenomenon, except that for him it does not bear any pejorative connotations. I shall return to this later.

It is not surprising that Padmanabhan, who differentiates writing into 'good' and 'bad', does not give any substantial arguments for why he considers contemporary women's writing as unaesthetic or lacking in creativity. Interestingly enough, none of the 'bad' women writers are named but we can assume that this would include writers like Sarah Joseph, Gracy, and Ashita amongst others. Also, most of the women he marshalls in his defence of 'good' writing like Sarasvati Amma, or the better known Lalitambika Anterjanam, wrote forcefully about what could be described as 'women's issues'. This sudden appropriation of these earlier writers, especially Sarasvati Amma and Rajalakshmi, who, by his own admission, had been ignored (and the latter hounded) by the patriarchal literary establishment, cannot be treated as an innocent act. This appropriation is a strategic tokenising by the establishment that claims to be the ultimate arbiter of aesthetic value and substance. To that extent this is also a battle about canon building, and brief affirmative gestures of this kind provide the establishment credibility.

While the impulse behind Satchidanandan's engagement with feminism is clearly not the same, it still needs to be emphasized that no where in his piece does he address how 'women's writing' transforms the mainstream literary culture of Kerala, which he himself is a part of by the 1990s. This ambiguous positioning—an atavistic claim to marginality and subversion from the history of one's own earlier literary/political presence—results simply in recognition and naming. By calling women's writing *pennuezhuthu* but not engaging with how it may contest or transform 'aanuezhuthu' [men's writing], he is simply replicating a mainstream position which can imply that there is *ezhuthu*, gender neutral, value free, and there is *pennuezhuthu*, which is simply a subset and a form of feminine expression. In Satchidanandan's case the contrast between his understanding of *pennuezhuthu* and his analysis of the contribution of the radical poets of the 1970s highlights his problematic political positioning. In an introduction to a collection of modern poetry he edited in the same period as his introduction to *Papathara* (Satchidanandan 1989, 5-18), he counters the charge that this poetry is not authentic and does not possess Malayali roots by looking at its complex origins. Describing the new aesthetics as one that combined the revolutionary spirit of international anti-colonialism (especially new African and Latin American writing, and a general Third World sensibility) with a long tradition of Malayalam poetry of which it was an inheritor, he claims for it an 'anti-bourgeois' sensibility. In a period that was beginning to witness claims to a Hindu version of Malayali tradition, his answer is that 'tradition', indeed language itself, is forged by the interplay of several traditions. The radical Malayali poet is at once sensitive to issues of injustice raised by class, caste (Dalit) movements and an anti-statist sensibility (notably the authoritarianism of the Emergency), which defined the contours of this new aesthetic (Satchidanandan 1989, 5-18). While I am in sympathy with the history of this modern Malayali poetic sensibility, I am struck by the absence of a single woman poet within this movement. Maybe there were none in the 1970s. But that absence

to me needs to be addressed by someone who is tracing the radical roots of modernist poetry within contemporary anti-colonial and subaltern struggles. Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, quoted approvingly in his own essay on women's writing, raises precisely this issue. The challenge of feminism is contained through naming and docketing. Moreover, by somehow blending gender with sexuality, women's writing becomes an essential expressive form located within an unproblematised sexual self, lacking in political content, and clearly one that does provide an ancestry to the cultural radicalism of post-Independence Kerala.

Here I have indicated the main contours of a decade long battle on *pennuezhuthu*. It is significant that throughout the 1990s there is hardly any intervention by any woman writer, feminist activist or literary critic in this debate. In a long and important interview, Sarah Joseph (Joseph, 16-24) describes Satchidanandan's act of naming a long tradition of women's writing in Kerala as *pennuezhuthu* as a response to a recent growth in women's sense of their own rights. She also clarified that any woman's writing could not be termed as women's writing, but only that which engaged with women's experience, and used a feminine idiom. 'Like any movement, any freedom struggle, women's writing is a struggle for women's liberation' (Joseph, 18). Yet she argues, in no compromising terms, that women (here I think she has Malayali women in mind) do not have an independent political understanding, but are always guided by the opinions of their fathers and husbands. While there are problems with this generalization, there is still a very serious political issue raised here by Sarah Joseph. Without quite stating it in this way, she's pointing to the absence of a political culture amongst women in Kerala. How do we relate this problem to the relationship between politics, the women's movement and feminist theory in the age of globalization and identity politics? It is to this issue that I would like to turn briefly here.

Women's writing and the women's movement : some questions

Here I wish to indicate some ways of thinking about the relationship between the idea of 'movements' on the one hand, and 'identity politics' on the other, with particular reference to the women's movement and feminist theory. One of the central concerns of identity politics is competing for resources on group lines, where one 'identity' becomes the defining principle in organizing the group. This is opposed to the idea of transforming the context that is central to 'movements'; while different identities are important in giving shape to movements they do not restrict their direction. Moreover, transformatory in spirit, they perforce need to go beyond any one defining identity. Therefore, while there are different identities that are forged, utilised or transformed within nationalist, or democratic movements (to use a couple of examples of 'movements') the spirit of these movements is idealistic, utopian, and even utilitarian in the best sense of the word. On the contrary, the means and ends of identity politics remain the same—of bolstering the identity of the group and safeguarding its rights. This while of tremendous importance in certain cases, and often a corrective to the blindness within larger movements to address these issues, does not share the same grounds as movements do. In other words, there is a difference in the spirit of democratic movements, and democratically inspired identity politics. This difference lies in my mind with an understanding of a generalisable notion of equality. While many movements have not been successful in their purported aims and have developed a variety of internal regressions—they still work with the idea of equality. Within many different kinds of democratically inspired identity politics this generalisable idea of equality itself has been under siege.

Here I need to pause and indicate briefly that I am interested in discussing the internal dynamics of progressive movements (left, democratic etc) and identity politics, as opposed to reactionary and right wing politics. There is only one, very important reason for that. We are faced with a global situation, especially in India where

right wing movements and politics of all kinds and description are on the ascendant. I think it is important to reflect critically at this moment on the shortfalls and problems that have affected emancipatory, radical, and democratically inspired movements. This becomes all the more pertinent in the context of Kerala which, while constantly being held up as an example of combining left and democratic politics in India, has possibly one of worst, and undocumented, records in terms of violence against women. While this has insidiously affected social practice, norms, and cultural values, it has until recently gone completely unaddressed. The reason for this, as suggested earlier, is the stranglehold of a male dominated left politics (which in patriarchal terms shares the same turf as the Congress) and the virtual absence of a women's movement in Kerala. While in most parts of the world, and in other parts of the country, feminism entered academia (or the literary establishment) from the streets, in Kerala it seems to be exactly the opposite—except that it does not seem to be going back to the people in the strict sense. This brings us back to the problem of the relationship between movements and identity politics and the crisis facing left or democratic movements.

To a great extent, it was the simplistic, homogenizing aspirations of bigger movements that led to an internal critique, that eventually led to what could be seen as a critique of universal values. A part of this is a particular reading of the effects of the Enlightenment philosophy, wherein the universality of ideas like equality and progress are in effect seen as repressive devices, exported globally through the mechanism of colonialism. There's a huge body of work on the critique of Enlightenment and therefore I shall not enter into that here. Suffice it to say that even as a critique of certain aspects of the Enlightenment is necessary, positive and valid, a simple denunciation of the Enlightenment, or indeed of important ideas such as equality—as a straitjacketing device—can be both simplistic and dangerous.

Within the context of international feminism—the issue of equality—the 'sameness' vs. 'difference' debate in its many forms,

especially from the 1970s—has had a deep impact on the changes within the women's movement and the idea of feminism. In its different moments and articulations, this debate has very different kinds of impact on the women's movement. Within the western context, three different, and very significant, kinds of pressures that came with the gay and lesbian movement, race (African American and women of colour) politics, and issues of class raised by the working class women's movement pushed what had been a white, middle class, heterosexual movement to question itself and redefine its parameters. To condense more than three decades of a debate to a sentence, this was also the time where feminism was confronted by a paradox. On the one hand, there were significant gains in terms of social and political rights, including academic recognition. On the other, in a world faced with more complex forms of capitalism, sectarian politics, racism and violence, or what is increasingly seen as the effects of 'globalization' today, articulating a cogent position about patriarchy became increasingly difficult. To a great extent this led to the kind of situation, palpable by the 1980s and definitely the 1990s, where the spirit of democratic transformation underlying the identity based pressure politics of the 1960s and the '70s became crystallized around identifying *difference* and *essence*. Therefore, what had been a dynamic critique within feminism that allowed for recognition of pluralities of forms of oppression and resistance—the many patriarchies, many feminisms idea—was now reduced to a critique of 'sameness'.

'Contemporary feminist theory is bordering on incoherence if it cannot clarify a consistent and intelligible view of agency and subjectivity' (Benhabib). Seyla Benhabib addresses the problem head on when she says that the insistence on fragmentation and difference of the self does not at all address the issue of the unity of the self. There is no attempt to understand the meaning that these multiple identities would have for a person; more importantly, would these 'constitute' her or would they be resources to be utilised? Moreover, different identities—like race, class, and gender are not simply additive—in fact often they are conflictual; so it is

all the more reason to work out how these could come together, and how they could strengthen the subjectivity and agency of women, and not be restricted to working out a theory of 'constituting' identities.² One of the influential forms of theorizing that comes out of the 1970s identity politics is *écriture féminine* and the politics of difference espoused by French feminists like Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous. As the idea of *pennuezhuthu* claims its origins from this theory, it's worth looking at it briefly. *Écriture féminine* ('feminine writing'), was a project that began in the middle 1970s when Cixous, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and Catherine Clément, among others, began reading texts in the particular contexts of women's experience. Their ideas, which contested the biologically based readings of Sigmund Freud, reflected a notion of femininity and feminine writing based not on a 'given' essence of male and female characteristics but on culturally achieved conventions, such as 'openness' in feminine texts as a lack of repressive patterning. This prompted questions about how 'writing' deploys power, how to read a feminine (nonpatriarchal) text, and, what the 'feminine' is. The exclusion of women from writing (and speaking) is linked to the fact that the Western history of writing is synonymous with the history of reasoning and with the separation of the body from the text. The body entering the text disrupts the masculine idiom: the feminine is the 'overflow' of 'luminous torrents' (Cixous 1976, 876), a margin of 'excess' eroticism and free-play not directly attributable to the fixed hierarchies of masculinity. It seems to me that despite the attempt at reflecting on femininity and feminine writing as not constituted by a 'given' essence of male or female characteristics, Cixous et al end up doing precisely that. What is lost, despite all the laughter, excess and luminous torrents, are the questions about subjectivity and agency.

Conclusion

As with the transformation in Western feminism, within India too the women's movement underwent many changes from its

inception in the nationalist period to the post-colonial. In recent times, issues of class, the engagements with new social movements based on questions of the environment, land, territory and tribal identity, dalit politics, and the predominantly urban challenge from groups working on questions of sexuality and the rights of lesbians and gay people, has raised serious issues for Indian feminism. This has both broadened its concerns, yet created differences and tensions within the movement. Nevertheless, I would still argue that these are productive and energizing tensions and could possibly lead to strengthening the movement.

Kerala however is marked by a singular absence of a women's movement that has dealt with any of these issues. While a few of the older trade union organizations addressed some questions, especially to do with wages and maternity leave, on an average the Communist party did not address any questions based on gender inequity. In fact, it was in 1995 that the CPI(M) in Kerala officially stated that two areas that they had hitherto sidestepped—religion and women—had now to be taken on board. However, this lacuna is true for all political parties in Kerala, as also of the left-inspired 'cultural revolution' of the naxalite period in Kerala, as is clear from Satchidanandan's inability to address his own poetics or politics through the lens of feminism. In this light, I see the adoption of the identity politics based *écriture féminine* as an empty gesture. This is not simply a problem with 'travelling theory', or the use of insights developed in a different cultural or political milieu. Clearly, as Edward Said argues, 'cultural and intellectual life are usually nourished and often sustained by this circulation of ideas' (Said 1984, 226). Indeed, theory, like movements, could have no validity if it were not universal in its appeal and applicability. But then the politics of difference and postmodernism, as also *écriture féminine*, do not have any faith in an emancipatory politics. Feminism, in this globalized, identity politics based form, sadly enough loses its cutting edge. It becomes obsessed with its own embodiment and can safely become yet another 'point of view', named, recognized, and delegated to the separate sphere that it created for itself.

The *pennuezhuthu* controversy is a political battle in the Malayalam literary, cultural establishment. Its adversaries are men; it is they who have invoked it, named it and denigrated it. When feminism thus becomes the arena for enacting turf battles between men, I think there is a very serious need for alarm. And in a 'post movements' period of globalization and identity politics, I think there is a very urgent need for feminists, Malayalis and others alike, to ask whether one can afford to jettison the idea of the women's movement.

Sarasvati Amma was once asked on the impact of her own writing. She said categorically that she believed that her stories had helped to transform Malayali society's attitudes towards women (Shashikumar 2001, 31). I think it may help to keep faith with a radical woman writer's belief in the power of her own pen.

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****** Questions of 'travelling theory', the importance of stories of Dalit women, the ways in which women's writing is instrumental as a mode of social action were raised. There were observations on the seeming paradox of a developed state like Kerala displaying large degrees of violence towards women, as well as the intersection between matrilineal discourses and progressivist ideas. One mode of progress perhaps is to move beyond the borderism of the matrilineal.

Notes

¹ See Sarah Joseph's and Gracy's stories; Madhavi Kutty (Kamala Surayya) is amongst the earliest Malayali women writers to explore such themes with candour and subtlety. However, as she does not see herself as a feminist writer in any sense, and periodically makes vitriolic statements about such writing I do not wish to include her here. However, it is still possible to do a very effective feminist reading of her texts.

² It needs to be added here that all forms of 'othering' and difference are not positive, but in fact can have very dangerous consequences. Contemporary communalism in India is the best example of the debilitating impact of the politics of difference.

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In Print, On the Net: Tamil Literary Canon in the Colonial and Post-Colonial Worlds

A.R. Venkatachalapathy

Some texts are born literary, some achieve literariness, and some have literariness thrust upon them. (Terry Eagleton 1996, 7)

Today when we speak of the Tamil literary canon, we generally tend to think of such texts as the whole corpus of Sangam literature, the post-Sangam didactic literature (with pride of place being accorded to *Tirukkural*), the twin epics of *Silappadikaram* and *Manimekalai*, the saivite *thirumurai*s, the vaishnavite *Nalayira Divya Prabandam*, Kambar's *Ramayanam* and a selection of what is referred to as *chittrilakkiyam* or minor literature. A wide spectrum of overlapping institutional practices – extensive preservation and transmission with concomitant hermeneutic devices like commentary and exegesis, prescription in pedagogy and curriculum, employment of texts as grammatical authority and reference, as a repertoire for allusion, invocation as a marker of antiquity and historicity – have given these texts a canonical status.

Common sense would associate an immutable character to such texts and endow the canon with universal, unchanging and absolute

values. Recent studies, however, have questioned the definition of a literary canon as an immutable corpus of texts sharing certain assured value and properties, and distinguished by the possession of intrinsic worth. Therefore, it is now an academic commonplace to point out that literary canons, like all other human artefacts, are not given but the product of a specific history and are thus historically contingent (Eagleton 1996, Shirane 2000). The anti-foundational approach to the study of the literary canon – as it has been called – contends that there is no foundation in the text: this approach enables a study of a canon as the product of a specific history. This study is firmly set in this tradition and seeks to explore how the Tamil literary canon with respect to Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka were defined and redefined in colonial and post-colonial times.

Before I begin this exercise, it would be appropriate to define its limits. As it is assumed that the entire Tamil population of the world somehow buys into this canon and shares it, we need to define, at least broadly, who the Tamils are. The Tamil people, numbering over 70 million, are now spread over a good part of the globe. From their traditional homelands in southern India and Sri Lanka, the vicissitudes of globalization have scattered them out across the continents. This paper explores whether an undifferentiated Tamil canon is shared by the Tamil people. For the purposes of this essay, the Tamil people of India and Sri Lanka alone are considered (though I do not consider here the plantation Tamils in Sri Lanka). I do not take into account the regions of south east Asia (where Tamils have lived for about a millennium with a continual history of migration) and other parts of the world such as South Africa, Fiji and the Caribbean islands (where Tamils migrated as indentured labourers in the high noon of capitalism) because literary tradition has either been weak or non-existent. Further, by literary canon, I refer to only the pre-modern literary canon: a consideration of modern canon(s) is beyond the scope of this paper as it is even more contentious and still in the process of making.

Canon(s): Pre-Colonial and Colonial

As is now widely acknowledged, the Tamil language has a long and hoary and, more importantly, an unbroken literary tradition. The fecundity of literary production is borne out by the plethora of extant literary texts. Not surprisingly their position within the canon has varied considerably with the figuration and refiguration of the literary canon through the ages.

The pre-colonial canon consisted largely of religious didactic literature. Here is what the earliest Tamil novel, *Pratapa Mudaliar Charithiram* (1879) has to say about the inadequate reading of students:

Have they even so much as taken a look at Thiruvalluvar's Thirukkural? Have they heard of Kambar's Ramayanam even in their dreams? Are they even familiar with the authors of Naladiyar? Do they know Avvaiyar's moral books thoroughly? Do they know even a little bit of Athiveerarama Pandiyan? They have not so much as taken a look at the prabandams of innumerable Tamil poets. (Vedanayagam Pillai 1984, 307-8)

Clearly, only didactic and religious works were counted for in the canon. This point is made rather dramatically by U.V.Swaminatha Iyer (1855-1942), the legendary editor of Tamil classics. On Thursday, 21 October 1880, U.V. Swaminatha Iyer, then a twenty-five-year-old teacher at the Kumbakonam Government College, went to meet Salem Ramaswamy Mudaliar, a civil munsif who had recently been transferred to the small town of Kumbakonam. Swaminatha Iyer had been a pupil of Mahavidwan Meenakshisundaram Pillai, acknowledged as the finest Tamil teacher of the nineteenth century. Salem Ramaswamy Mudaliar was reputed to be a liberal man with a broad outlook who patronised scholarship. In an obvious attempt to win his friendship, Swaminatha Iyer had ventured to meet him, at the instance of the pontiff of Thiruvavadudurai Adheenam, at his home. What

transpired at this meeting is dramatically narrated by Swaminatha Iyer, in his famed autobiography:

"With whom did you study" Salem Ramaswamy Mudaliar queried.

"Mahavidwan Meenakshisundaram Pillai," I replied.

I expected the uttering of Pillai's name to create a ripple. Even if he did not respect my official position, he could at least open out to me as a student of Pillai. He did not and spoke in a measured manner.

...He continued with his questions "What did you study?" came the next question. Certain that I could dazzle him with a reply to this question, I listed the texts that I had studied: *Kudandai Andadhi, Marasai Andadhi, Pugalur Andadhi, Thiruvarangathandadhi, Alagarandadhi, Kambarandadhi, Mullai Andadhi, Meenatchiyammai Pillai Tamil, Muthukumaraswamy Pillai Tamil, Akilandanayaki Pillai Tamil, Sekkilar Pillai Tamil, Thirukkovaigar, Tanjaivanan Kovai* Twenty *andadhis*, twenty *kalamakams*, fifteen *kovais*, thirty *Pillai Tamils*, twenty *ulas*—thus I listed a number of *prabandams*. There was not a trace of wonderment on his face.

Suddenly, he interjected, "What is it worth?" I was not a little disappointed ... I did not give up and began a list of *puranams*: "*Thiruvilaiyadal Puranam, Thirunagaikkaronna Puranam, Mayura Puranam, Kanda Puranam, Periya Puranam, Kuttrala Puranam....*"

He continued to look still like a graven image.

"*Naidadam, Prabulinga Leelai, Sivagnana Bodham, Sivagnana Sithiyar,*" I continued. Gave the names of some grammars. Yet he remained unmoved. With the thought that I had forgotten the most important of them all, I said, "I have read *Kambaramayanam* two to three times over...."

"It is good that you have read all these later day works. Have you read any of the ancient texts?" he asked.

"There are so many old works among those I have listed!" I replied.

Only when he countered "Have you read the texts which are the wellsprings of these texts?" did I realise that he was up to something.

"I don't know the texts you are talking about?"

"Have you read *Seevaka Chinthamani*? *Manimekalai*? *Silappadhikaram*?"

(Swaminatha Iyer 1997, 50-3)

No doubt, U.V. Swaminatha Iyer's account of this meeting with Salem Ramaswamy Mudaliar is highly dramatised. But it highlights rather emphatically the conflict that was emerging in the later part of the nineteenth century, over what was the real canon, the great tradition. Ramaswamy Mudaliar's dismissive statement 'What is it worth?' decimates in one stroke the entire body of literature that Swaminatha Iyer valued. In other words, the pre-colonial canon was being fundamentally questioned. It was the moment of the unmaking of an old canon and constructing one anew. A new notion of time – what constituted antiquity, the ancient – had come into play. While both Swaminatha Iyer and Ramaswamy Mudaliar prized ancient works for their antiquity, they differed over what was ancient or ancient enough.

Many of the texts that Swaminatha Iyer listed are now but adjuncts to a different canon and go by the name of *chittrilakkiyam*, minor literature. Further, these texts are mostly religious in character, mythologizing sacred spaces and hagiographising divine beings and saints. Many of these texts are now valued only for their religious significance; some are barely read or cited; few of the entire list now forms part of any curriculum. This then

constituted the pre-colonial canon that was shared by the cultural worlds of both Tamilnadu and Eelam.

The question to now explore is how did this change take place that reduced so many texts, so meticulously imparted and imbibed, to near worthlessness in the canon of Tamilnadu. To understand this one needs to turn to the social and intellectual milieu in the colonial context.

It is now a commonplace to suggest that colonialism produced knowledge about the colonies (see Cohn 1996). Power was deeply implicated in this production of knowledge. A battery of colonial officials and scholars systematically collected and created information about the ruled. The Orientalists codified law based on long-forgotten and newly retrieved texts, and unearthed new literature and redefined the cultural heritage of the colonized. In the Indian context, William Jones and Max Mueller were the stalwarts of this project. Their work displaced Persian as the language of India – in fact, Persian was to suffer twice over: while English displaced it as the official language, Sanskrit decimated its position culturally. Their work led to the publication of the Vedas, puranas and other texts, which have now come to define the 'essential' India. The orientalist representation of India was fully founded on Sanskrit scriptures and texts. The newly emergent discipline of comparative philology added to its importance, as Sanskrit was seen to be kindred to, if not the source of, the Indo-European languages.

Orientalism thus privileged Sanskrit over all other languages in India and it was often described as classical thus implying that other Indian languages were vernaculars. This formulation was in its turn challenged in south India. Christian missionaries and scholar-administrators, with their agenda for countering brahmanical hegemony, posed this challenge. Drawing on similar philological tools as those employed by the Orientalists, they formulated a new theory of the Dravidian family of languages. Though the defining moment is often taken to be the publication of Robert Caldwell's

Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Family of Languages (1856), we now have the fresh insights that it was Ellis who anticipated many of Caldwell's ideas. While Caldwell based his work primarily on Tamil, Ellis worked through Telugu. This approach, which I term counter-Orientalism, posited that the Dravidian languages – Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam – did not belong to the Indo-European family of languages and owed very little to Sanskrit. These languages, especially Tamil, grew independently of Sanskrit with its own corpus of literature and grammar.

This theory of an independent Dravidian family of languages was avidly seized by the emerging non-brahmin elite scholars of Tamilnadu, who employed this to reinforce their identity and challenge the supremacy of Brahmins in the public sphere. Their quest led them to a search for a corpus of literature that pre-dated Aryan/Sanskrit influence. The corpus of Sangam literature with its ancient cultural traditions untainted by a brahmanical religion and a culture based on sedentary life proved just right. The egalitarian communal life depicted in this literature, with the glorification of ideals such as love, valour, munificence and honour provided an alternate worldview to that of a vedic age constructed by the Orientalists. The time was thus ripe for a 'rediscovery' of the Sangam classics – highlighted dramatically by U.V. Swaminatha Iyer's tryst not only with Salem Ramaswamy Mudaliar but also with his own destiny.

The question 'What is it worth?' drove U.V. Swaminatha Iyer to look for what was really worthwhile. Salem Ramaswamy Mudaliar himself provided the lead with the palm-leaf manuscript of *Seevaka Chintamani*, a Jain *kappiyam* or epic. Though he began studying the manuscript with some trepidation and misgiving, he reassured himself: 'How does it matter as long as it is not beyond Tamil literary tradition? Is it in Sanskrit or Telugu that one has to learn it afresh? Will it be beyond one's comprehension if one studies it carefully with a given knowledge of Tamil texts?' (Swamintha Iyer 1997, 534)

However, Swaminatha Iyer was to be proved wrong. As a rubric in his autobiography goes, it was 'a separate universe' (*'oru thani prapanjam'*). Swaminatha Iyer glosses this section with statements that further qualify the utter novelty of this newfound literature: 'It appeared like another unique language'; 'The vistas of the new world depicted in the Sangam books appeared as the mountains covered by mist. Though this heavy mist hung over the mountains, its loftiness and magnitude though not fully visible was yet perceptible as bigger than the earth, vaster than the sky and more unfathomable than the deep seas' (ibid, 557). Here Swaminatha Iyer is making a self-referential allusion (to the sangam text *Kurunthokai* 3), once again heightening a sense of discovery and at the same time appropriating it as one's own tradition.

Swaminatha Iyer's systematic and meticulous study brought forth the publication of many of the Sangam classics at regular intervals. As he prodded through to make sense of *Seevaka Chintamani*, it became clear that one could not understand a text without association to the other texts of the same corpus. Swaminatha Iyer relates how he made a list of difficult terms from these texts and then tried to make sense of them in relation to one another. Ultimately, he published his edition of *Seevaka Chintamani* in 1887 – the inauguration of a long innings in the field of scholarly publication.

Contrary to popular myth, U.V. Swaminatha Iyer, however, was neither the first nor the only editor-publisher in the field. Tamil scholars from Sri Lanka played an equally crucial role in the discovery and retrieval of these ancient Tamil texts. In fact the modern editions of Tamil classics were truly inaugurated by Arumuga Navalar, reputed to be the father of the saivite renaissance in Jaffna. Even by 1860 he had published a fine edition of *Tirukkural*. Moreover, C.W. Damodaram Pillai (1832-1901), also from Jaffna, was in fact the true pioneer; he was the earliest scholar to systematically hunt for long-lost manuscripts and publish them using modern tools of textual criticism. In the event, his editions

of *Tholkappiyam-Porulathikaram* was published in 1885, *Iraiyanarakapporul* in 1883, *Viracoliyam* in 1881; he published the Sangam work *Kalithokai* (1887) at least two years before Swaminatha Iyer published any Sangam text (Damodaram Pillai 1970).

Leaving aside the question of 'firsts', the point to be noted is that this project of unearthing ancient literary texts towards constructing a new canon was a shared intellectual enterprise between scholars from both sides of the Palk Strait. It is worth labouring the point that postcolonial developments obfuscate how much Tamil scholars of Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka shared and functioned in an almost undivided mainstream cultural world. The cultural stalwarts of Jaffna, and to a certain extent even Batticaloa, had bases in Tamilnadu and it was not uncommon for scholars from Tamilnadu to make periodic visits to Sri Lanka. C.W. Damodaram Pillai and U.V. Swaminatha Iyer were systematically looking for and publishing the Sangam texts and in this exercise they were articulating the desire and fulfilling the requirement of the reconstituted world of Tamil letters. In the preface to each work, they talked about the canon of which it was part (see especially Damodaram Pillai's *Kalithokai* preface), the publication of which followed in a regular stream: *Kalithokai* (1887); *Pathittruppattu* (1889); *Purananooru* (1894); *Ainkurunooru* (1903); *Kurunthokai* (1915); *Nattrinai* (1915); *Paripadal* (1918); *Ahananooru* (1923). *Silappadikaram* and *Manimekalai*, the twin epics as they came to be later designated within the canon, were published by Swaminatha Iyer in 1892 and 1898 respectively.

We also find an interesting metaphor that both of them employed in their description of the new Tamil canon. Personifying the Tamil language as a mother, they extended this metaphor by terming the various texts of the canon as her adornments. By extension, they thought of their work as a search for the jewels that had been lost due to external aggression and internal apathy (Damodaram Pillai 1970, 69; Swaminatha Iyer 1995, 35).

In terms of modalities, print was constitutive of this process of discovering and constructing the canon. In the editorial prefaces of C.W. Damodaram Pillai and U.V. Swaminatha Iyer the urgency to save the texts from the palm leaves, from the ravages of white ants and termites, from the jaws of Time itself is quite palpable. The underlying premise seems to be that of print as a panacea: somehow the printing of these texts in itself would render them immortal, defeating Time and consequently restoring the heritage of the Tamil people. As C.W. Damodaram Pillai exclaimed, 'Was not the non-availability of print that eventually led to the extinction of *Ilakkana Vilakkam*' (Damodaram Pillai 1970, 67).

Though both Damodaram Pillai and Swaminatha Iyer complained of poor patronage, there is little doubt that it was gobbled up by the Tamil elite with pure delight. The writings of Tamil scholars is suffused with the details culled from these texts: P. Sundaram Pillai, V. Kanakasabhai Pillai, J.M. Nallasami Pillai, Maraimalai Adigal and others used these works to write their literary, social, historical and philological work. By the early 1910s they had become influential enough to be decried by their opponents that:

Within the last fifteen years a new school of Tamil scholars has come into being, consisting mainly of admirers and castemen of the late lamented professor and antiquary, Mr. Sundaram Pillai of Trivandrum. Their object has been to disown and to disapprove any trace of indebtedness to the Aryans, to exalt the civilization of the ancient Tamils, to distort in the name of historic research current traditions and literature, and to pooh-pooh the views of former scholars, which support Brahmanization of the Tamil race. (Srinivasa Aiyangar 1914, 6)

Srinivasa Aiyangar's diatribe clearly points to the uses the new literary canon had been put to in Tamilnadu: to fashion a new identity for Tamils. This message was diffused in Tamil society from the early part of the twentieth century. Scholarly editions were reprinted; less scholarly editions were published; commentaries

were written; they were prescribed texts not only in colleges but also schools. Incidents and events from these texts were rewritten and fictionalized. In politics, the Dravidian movement flaunted it with rhetoric. Of course, within this canon, differential emphases came to be apportioned to the texts. *Purananooru* and *Kurunthokai* were seen to exemplify the twin values of valour and love, while *Paripatal* and *Kalithokai* were given short shrift, especially because of their later date of composition. *Thirukkural* was in a separate class of its own, quoted on all occasions, claimed by every ideological hue and rejected by none. *Silappadikaram* occupied pride of place with its epic narration, exquisite poetry and potential for political appropriation.

What in fact was happening in Tamil society was a process of secularization. Religious texts were being increasingly marginalised and another body of literature, the sangam classics, were being prioritized over them. Religious values were undermined and the secular character of the classics was being upheld. In this interpretation, ancient Tamilnadu was seen as an egalitarian society where caste and religion did not exist. Love, valour and munificence were the most valued attributes. This secular vision of ancient Tamil society was counterposed to the unequal society that Tamilnadu became after the advent of Aryans and brahmins. Caste and religion accompanied them thus turning Tamil society into an unequal one. The Tamil language itself was seen to be tainted by religion. Therefore the religious associations of the Tamil language had to be purged by invoking the pristine character of the sangam classics.

This understanding of Tamil tradition became the dominant one in Tamilnadu. To document just one instance, if we take a look at a late nineteenth century text like the *Tamilalangaram* by Dandapani Swamikal, we find that the glory of the Tamil language is seen purely in terms of Hindu mythology where the language is closely associated with divine miracles performed by poets and Tamil savants. This view of the Tamil language lost currency with the rise of Tamil identity politics, outlined above, which saw the

Tamil language in entirely secular terms. However, this was not true of Tamil tradition in Sri Lanka, giving the literary canon there a different tweak. It is to this that we now turn.

Canons in Tamilnadu and Eelam: The Chasm

If this was the trajectory of identity formation in Tamilnadu, a different process obtained in Sri Lanka. Though the Tamil speaking regions of Sri Lanka (now much re-defined especially due to the conscious policy of demographic change pursued by the Sinhala chauvinist Sri Lankan state) in terms of the Jaffna peninsula, islands to its north, Vavuniya and the eastern province (the plantation Tamils not being counted), the Jaffna Tamils have historically been socially and culturally dominant. So much so that '*Yalpanathu Manithan*' (the Jaffna Man) has become a metaphor that stands for the entire Sri Lankan Tamils. Even within this dominant section, the Vellalars have dominated. What often passes for Tamil Sri Lanka is more often than not this minority of Vellalars. This Vellalar elite capitalised on the opportunities provided by colonialism to become a middle-class elite. Despite the close proximity to the Indian mainland, the impact of colonialism was differential. Right from the early sixteenth century, Jaffna was ruled by Europeans – firstly the Portuguese and later the Dutch, until taken over by the English in late 18th century. Admittedly, Christian missionary activity was more widespread here than in Tamilnadu. The mid-nineteenth century saw the acute crisis among the Vellalar elite occasioned by the evangelization of Christianity. Arumuga Navalar is emblematic of this process and there was a veritable reassertion of Saivite identity. A new Saivite identity was reconstituted in direct opposition to Christianity. Saivite religion was almost sanitized with Arumuga Navalar devising prescriptive norms for Saivism and Saivites. This definition was sharpened through a series of polemics with Christian missionaries and within the Saivite fold. Navalar schematised elaborately what constituted true Saivite religion, its doctrine, its liturgy and its canonical texts. The Nallur Kandaswamy Temple of Jaffna was the locus of much of his activity and his

reformulation of Saivism was to win over the entire Vellalar elite to his fold. In his 1861-pamphlet on what constitutes Tamil scholarship, Arumuga Navalar refers only to religious texts and didactic literature. The only non-denominational texts that he includes are grammatical works. While he exempts Vaishnavites from reading purely Saivite texts, the addressee of his exhortations seems to be the Saiva-Vellalar male (Arumuga Navalar 1954, 28-9). Arumuga Navalar's protégé Sabapathy Navlar is more explicit when he asserts that 'the three *dwijas* who are eligible to wear the sacred thread, the Vellalars of the fourth division who have obtained *siva theekkai* and of the other division the noble ones like the *anulomas* who have taken *siva theekkai* alone are entitled to study the Tamil texts' (Sabapathy Navalar 1927, 178). As K. Sivathamby observes, 'Navalar and his followers, in their anxiety to prove beyond doubt the indivisibility of the Saiva-Tamil character of the Jaffna literary tradition, underplayed, if not openly kept away from public attention, the secular literature....' (Sivathamby 1995, 67)

This process was in stark contrast to the secularization process obtaining in Tamilnadu that was indicated earlier. Here it would be appropriate to take a look at how the Tamil canon was defined for the Sri Lankan Tamils right at the time of the redefinition of the canon in Tamilnadu. A canonical text in this regard is the seminal work *Dravida Prakasigai* (1889) by Sabapathy Navalar (1845-1903). Sabapathy Navalar, much like Arumuga Navalar, straddled the Tamil world on both sides of the Palk Strait. His *Dravida Prakasigai* is an elaborate treatise, the product of a breed of pre-colonial scholarship which is quite familiar with the colonial world, and yet reasserts the pre-colonial canon without so much as batting an eye-lid to concede a quarter to the newly discovered texts. *Dravida Prakasigai* is very much a literary history, except that it is structured like a medieval grammatical text and explicates 'literature' as understood in pre-colonial times. A sketch of the contents and the structure of the book could clarify this. After a brief *payiram* or preface, follow four chapters: the divine antiquity of Tamil; grammatical heritage; literary heritage and philosophical

heritage. The final chapter following this, in true pre-colonial fashion, is actually an appendix (*olibiya*). For Sabapathy Navalar, grammar, literature and philosophy constitute a whole, which is separable only for explication. In the chapter on literary heritage, he includes *thirumurai*, *sangam*, epic, *puranam*, *itihasa*m and other literature. The point to note is that the devotional *thirumurai* literature is given pride of place. He explicitly states that their divine origin (Sabapathy Navalar 1927, 136) commands primacy. *Thirukkural* is subsumed within this sacred literature. Sangam literature, the fount of all literature in the newly defined canon of Tamilnadu, is relegated to a secondary place with only ten pages given to it. The Tamil classic par excellence, *Silappadikaram*, is given cavalier treatment in just a page for its Jain association. Similar cursory treatment is given to the vaishnavite *Nalayira Devya Prababdan*. The fourteen Saiva Siddhanta philosophical texts (*Siddhanta Sathiram*), which have no place in the mainland canon, are given a separate location in the Sri Lankan canon.

Even on the question of antiquity, there is a fundamental difference in its definition. While the literary world of Tamilnadu understood antiquity in secular historical terms, *Dravida Pragaisikai* argues in terms of a divine antiquity. The antagonism vis-à-vis Sanskrit is also negotiated in varied terms. While scholars of Tamilnadu argued for the Tamil language's superiority over Sanskrit in secular terms, Sabapathy Navalar asserts that both languages have divine origins and therefore Tamil should not be accorded a secondary place in relation to Sanskrit.

While the secular sangam classics were indeed given a prominent place in the canon of Sri Lanka, a saivite interpretation of these texts à la the Vellalar scholars such as Maraimalai Adigal of Tamilnadu, was given to the texts. The Saivite canon of the twelve *thirumurais*, especially *Thevaram*, *Thiruvachagam* and *Peria Puranam*, continued to enjoy primacy. More important was the primacy given to *Kanda Puranam*, a fourteenth-century text that mythologises the story of the ancient Tamil god Murugan in

tune with the Sanskritic Skandan. In fact so central is the *Kanda Puranam* to Sri Lankan Tamil culture that it is often referred to as 'Kanda Puram Kalachara' or 'Kanda Purana Culture' (Sivathamby 1994, 67; Kailasapathy 1986, 62). But in Tamilnadu, *Kanda Puranam* has absolutely no literary status at all: it is not prescribed in the school curriculum, nor is it the subject of literary practice in terms of commentary, exegesis or criticism. It is read only as a religious text, if at all. No Tamil scholar would even have more than a nodding acquaintance with this text.

1947/48 – the years of formal independence from the British – further widened the chasm. The Sri Lankan Tamil elite bought into the concept of 'national literature' (*desiya illakkiyam*) that was being advocated in Sri Lanka, with its emphasis not only of freeing Sri Lankan culture from the after effects of colonialism but also from the swamping by the commercial mass culture emanating from India. In the 1950s and 60s, the distinctness of Sri Lankan culture vis-à-vis India was articulated emphatically. Apart from the occasional nostalgia for a past golden age of a shared culture with Tamilnadu, the wedge was indeed in place.

The refrain during the immediate post-colonial period was one of maintaining a distinct identity as Sri Lankan / Eelam Tamils while not fully rejecting the commonalities shared with Tamilnadu. As K. Sivathamby states at the outset of his book on *Tamil Literature in Eelam*, 'The primary objective of this work is to clarify to Indian readers the manner in which a literary tradition, combining Sri Lanka's individuality and the generality of Tamil literature, emerged and grew in Sri Lanka' (Sivathamby 1987, v). He goes on to add:

Due to the common link of Tamil language and geographical proximity, apart from many other common features, [the Eelam Tamils] also *strongly* exhibit many attributes which distinguish them. This distinction ranges from language use to social structure, from clothes to food habits, from economic structure to weltanschauung. (Ibid., 2)

The learned professor could well have added literary canon to this list! K. Kailasapathy's assertion that Sri Lankan Tamil literature has exceeded the earlier description of 'literature from across the shores' into being an inseparable part of Tamil literature can be understood in this context (Kailasapathy 1986, 10).

The late 1970s however occasioned vigorous rethinking. The oppression of the Tamil people in the Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinist state decimated any support for a 'national literature' of Sri Lanka. The police firing in the 1974 International Tamil Conference at Jaffna, the incendiary attack on the Jaffna Library in 1981 and finally the 1983 state-sponsored pogrom against the Tamils delivered telling blows that redefined Tamil identity. The fillip that these gave to Tamil insurgency, and the continued war-like conditions have meant that Eelam Tamils have had to seek refuge outside.

Apart from India, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora is now spread in Europe (especially France, Germany, Switzerland, UK), Canada in North America and Australia. More Sri Lankan Tamils live in Toronto now than in Jaffna! Further, the migration of Tamils from India is also not insignificant. This Tamil diaspora is now fairly well settled and relatively well organized.

The Tamil book market has expanded a little, due to this. More Tamil writers travel abroad than ever before. A number of Sri Lankan Tamil writers are getting published in Tamilnadu since 1983. More importantly access to the net has reconfigured the Tamil world. It is said that Tamil is one of the most widely used languages on the Net, with thousands of active Tamil sites. In these sites – which house many e-magazines, home pages, discussion groups – there has been a coming together of Tamils cutting across the boundaries of nation-states. The problems of Tamil in relation to its functioning in the digital world is one of the hot topics of debate. This has largely been responsible for the standardization of the Tamil keyboard; many international conferences have been held on the subject of Tamil in computers; even a Tamil virtual university has been launched.

In this process there is an active concern regarding the preservation and retrieval of Tamil texts. This squarely confronts the question of what constitutes the canon. Given the situation that the cyber community of Tamils is not constrained by national boundaries, two distinct canons, one for Tamilnadu and another for Sri Lankan Tamils have not been able to thrive. Thus in the various websites which host the Tamil classics, the secular Tamil canon – the canon of Tamilnadu – has become the canon almost by default. Religious literature is marginalised or accorded a place because of literary merits.¹

Concluding Remarks

Tamilnadu and Eelam shared a common literary canon in pre-colonial times. Despite independent literary production in these two regions, a common stake was laid on a canon of texts. Admittedly, the canon consisted predominantly of religious, mythological and didactic texts. A combination of the advent of print with colonialism and its attendant social transformations led to the discovery of a whole body of texts from a period prior to the then existing canon. Print played a major role in bringing these texts into an emerging public sphere, which was avidly seized by the non-brahmin elite of Tamil society. In their interpretation, these newly canonized texts took on a secular colour. The religious texts were completely marginalised. Even when some of these major religious texts were accommodated into the new canon, they were accorded a place on strictly literary terms – for what was considered to proclaim the greater glory of the Tamil language and its speakers. The identity politics of the Dravidian movement largely revolved around this canon.

Though Sri Lankan Tamil scholars played a crucial role in the retrieval of these texts, their literary tradition did not fully buy into the new canon. In their cultural world the pre-colonial canon thrived largely unchanged. The texts of the new canon of Tamilnadu were read as the pre-history of the existing canon. The primacy of the Saivite texts remained largely unchallenged. This is explained by

the religious reassertion epitomized by Arumuga Navalar, who reconstituted Saiva religion in accordance with the threats and challenges posed by social transformations triggered by colonialism. The innate sense of superiority that Jaffna Tamils hold vis-à-vis the people of Tamilnadu cannot also be discounted as a factor in the framing of a different canon for themselves.

The chasm between the canons of Tamilnadu and Eelam was further widened by the process of decolonization. In post-independence Sri Lanka, the demarcation of national boundaries divided Tamilnadu and Eelam. The assertion of a new found national identity, furthered by fears of being swamped by Tamilnadu/India and the emergence of a concept of (Sri Lankan) national literature further rigidified the canons.

The political developments since the 1983 pogrom dispersed a Tamil diaspora across the world. The spread of new technologies such as the Net, has brought a new virtual Tamil community into being. This has created the space for a dialogue between Tamils of India and Eelam, which has enabled once again the making of a shared literary canon.

**** Whether we are all still the same unit irrespective of our locations on the globe and we could make contributions to the 'home country' from wherever we are was a concern expressed. The duality of Americanization – the war on terror v the Kyoto Protocol – highlights further ambiguities in global processes and desires. The marginalisation of Dalit texts within the Tamil canon, the process of canonization itself, and the secularization of the canon were discussed. The standardization of Tamil through its wide use on the internet is a vital consequence of the canon being made available on the net.**

Notes

¹ Some of the sites that host classics are:

<http://www.tamil.net/projectmadurai>

<http://www.infitt.org/thf>

<http://ambalam.com/kalanjiyam>

<http://www.tamil.net>

<http://www.tamilnet.net.au>

<http://tamil.com>

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Globalization and Women: New Forms of Work, Survival Strategies and Images of Migrant Women Workers in the Fish Processing Industry in India¹

M.V. Shobana Warriar

The paper focuses on the changes wrought in the identity of women of fishing communities by the transformation of their traditional world of work by integration into the global economy. The industry is spread out all along the coast of the Indian subcontinent and it is estimated to employ more than one hundred thousand workers. Major centres where the processing units are located are Veraval and Porbunder in Gujarat, Mumbai and Ratnagiri in Maharashtra, Goa, Mangalore, the Kollam—Kochi belt of Kerala, Tuticorin in Tamil Nadu, Vellore and Vishakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh, and Kolkata and its adjacent areas in West Bengal.

The fish processing industry is a major export-oriented industry and an important foreign exchange earner for the country. Given the current pressures imposed on the sector by importing countries, with stringent quality norms and low prices, the fish processing industry is evolving rapidly to both enhance quality and cut costs. Such adaptation of the industry to global pressures has a direct impact on its workforce.

The present study was conducted on the following lines. It started off with a pilot study of processing units in Mangalore, Tuticorin, Kolkata, Veraval, and Kollam. Then, we traced our way to the source of labour in the villages of Kerala from where they were recruited. We conducted 59 extensive interviews based on a questionnaire and in-depth interaction with the women in their homes. These were supplemented with workplace visits and interviews with employers and labour contractors. In addition 250 workers were randomly interviewed with the help of research assistants. In the process, we have talked to those who had returned from a stint of work in fish processing units, those who aspired to work as well as active workers.²

The industry mainly employs migrant women workers on contract. While a majority of the migrant workers are drawn from Kerala, of late, women from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka have also been finding employment in the sector. Hence the stereotype that the 'prawn women' are all women from Kerala no longer holds true completely.

Women from the fisher community initially comprised the migrant labour force tapped by the industry and continue to form half of the workforce. Changes in fishing activity through processes such as mechanization and the setting up of processing units resulted in disruption of traditional modes of work associated with fishing and reduced work availability. Loss of control over the catch and distribution of fish, in which process women traditionally functioned as vendors and processors of surplus fish, forced women from these communities to redefine their work (Warrier, 2001). Attitudinal change within communities also plays a role in women making this transition to migrant labour. For example, a number of young girls we spoke to in the course of our investigations preferred to do work other than that done by their mothers.

Migration initially attracted women, mostly young, from fish worker communities. This was because initially these women were recruited to the units for their ability to work with species such as

prawn. It has been claimed that migrant women workers from Kerala are predominant in fish processing because of their special skills in fish processing tasks. But this is not a tenable argument any longer to explain such large-scale migration. Many of the women we interviewed in the course of our survey stated that they acquired their skills on the job and that they did not bring them from home. Most women we met stated that they never worked on prawns till they got the current job at the processing unit and that they first worked as apprentices for months. This blows up the myth that the women from Kerala find work in the units on account of their expertise. Instead we witness a situation where skill is acquired on the job especially when nearly half the workforce come from families other than traditional fishing folk. We see changes in the patterns of origins of labour to the units. With hardly any requirement of skill except the willingness to put in long arduous hours at the workplace, there are women from non-fish worker communities too opting for such migration.

Skill does play a role in migration, however. It appears that these women gain entry on account of the popular perception of their skill, which comes in handy for the agents and contractors. That Keralites tend to be educated—the state leads the country in literacy, claiming almost hundred percent literacy—and therefore more skill-upgradable than their counterparts from other states is also a relevant factor. It may also be noted that contractors are mainly Malayalis tilting the scale in favour of the migrant workers from Kerala finding a job in fish processing. The management thus easily procures a cheap, disciplined, efficient, clean and partially educated class of labour to work for them. The added advantage that contract workers provide is a workforce practically free of all encumbrances virtually captive at the workplace as they are housed close to the workplace—mostly above or beside the unit.

It is not only single young women who migrate, though they comprise a major section of the workforce. Today, there are instances of families of women, mothers and daughters, migrating

to the units for long periods of time to go on to save and build homes back in Kerala.

In the course of our investigation, we found that the women were from varied caste backgrounds. The majority of women from non-fishing communities are drawn from agrarian castes, although we found a sprinkling of women from the upper castes as well.

Also, the stereotyped image of the young woman/girl worker herded by the middlemen to their new work and living place is an incomplete representation of reality, although there is a certain sense of loss of control that the women face initially in their new homes/hostels.

Despite the difficulties they have to put up at a work place far away from home and things familiar, a fish processing job does not seem any less attractive a proposition to most of these women. For the choice available back home leaves much to be desired. Alcoholism, domestic violence, and poverty have been cited by many of our respondents as driving forces pushing the women out. At the same time, work and migration throw up a range of new options.

In Kerala, the lack of availability of employment opportunities along with a long history of migration has contributed to the specific situation of large scale recruitment of women to processing units. That there has been steady migration of men and women to cities in India as also the Gulf countries from very early on legitimized and paved the way for further migration as and when job opportunities arose. Further, the social fabric is conducive to the gender-specific migration. Women in fish processing comprise a large proportion of the unorganized workforce in Kerala (a news feature quoted it as 100000 in 1997) and enjoy, for a variety of reasons that range from a tradition of matriliney to overall democratization of society leading to relative empowerment of all sections, a degree of autonomy available to them. The fact that migration to the processing units takes place in groups, supervised

by trusted elders, gives further legitimacy to gender-specific migration. Central to such social consent is the notion of security of the young women's persons and morals under the stewardship of *chechis* (elder sisters) and *chetans* (elder brother), recruiting agents placed in a network of kinship with the young girls (Beneria 1992). Discussing the trend in Bangladesh, Lourdes Beneria points out the use of Islamic preoccupations of appropriate female behavior. The propriety of women has been used to shape the recruitment practices of urban entrepreneurs, maintain a segmented labour market where women work in the lowest paying occupation and leave unchallenged the responsibilities women continue to have for family maintenance.

The easy transportation of the women from their village environs to the units is on account of the network that has been established. The network delineates a system of sub-agent, agent, contractor and, at the top, the company. The hierarchy of the workplace gets inverted in terms of endearment. The sub-agent, one from among the workers assumed this status by virtue of her long years of service or because of her proximity to the contractor or for any other reason. But for all purposes, it is to her that the workers turn for help and advice. At the same time, she is also the point of control and regulation for the women. Most of the workers are not even aware of the other people in the rungs above the sub-agent responsible for securing them work in the unit. In fact, during the course of our survey studying the conditions of women in the fish processing units, we found that a large section of the women were unaware of the method of recruitment, the name of the company for which they worked or the name of the contractor. Their familiarity was with one proximate cog in the chain of recruitment. Therefore, we find that the whole network of agents and sub-agents and the latter's close links with the communities from where workers are recruited facilitate easy transit of the worker from the village to the unit. In fact, there is a community established between this *chechi* (literally, elder sister) and the girls she recruits which, in normal situations, is a very close-knit, tight bond that

makes it easy to get them to accept her authority and disciplining at the workplace as well. She assumes the role of a *sirdar* of earlier times in the modern processing unit, as one significant site of social as well as individual control of the contract employees. These sites of control become important in a set up that is primarily based on informal understanding in place of any legal contractual arrangement of workers and employers.

The women we met made the choice to migrate mostly on their own initiative—there was no patriarch controlling their exodus from the village. Rather, it was the aspiration of these young women to break free that provided the impetus for their migration to the towns. In some sense, their transition to the status of a migrant wage earner also contributes to the undermining of traditional patriarchal authority back home. On the work front, though, there are new structures of power and authority.

Women taking up fish processing work come primarily from very poor households. Many families are supported by the wages of these women who migrate to the processing units. In the sample of 59 we have taken we found that there were 8 fathers unwell on account of drunkenness, TB or other physical disorders and 7 of them had lost their fathers or husbands as the case may be. Loss of livelihood in the village itself is one factor pushing them to migrate. Most answers to the question as to why they took up work is that if they did not, their families would not survive. The image of the woman as an earning member of the family gradually had widespread acceptance, albeit socially legitimized on the ground that these young girls go out as migrant women to earn their dowries. The other significant pull lies in the liberating images of migrant workers that are transmitted to the villages. In any case, the younger women especially in the fishing communities are not willing to go to the *chanta* (local fish market) to sell fish even though their mothers still go. They would much rather prefer to go off to work in the units far away as that would open new horizons for them. Thus, there is clear recognition on the part of the women that they

are shifting to a new form of work, away from pre-industrial tradition. This modernity also paves the way for the entry of women from non-fishing communities into fish processing.

The change in the composition of the women who are recruited appears to be on account of changed social perception of such work itself. That women from castes not belonging to the traditional fishing communities today account for nearly half the workforce in the processing units requires an explanation. The fact that the workplace is a factory and not the fishermen's wharf where the women earlier went to buy fish to vend or share in the labour of the entire family plays a vital role in the acceptance of this work today as 'respectable' and acceptable. Also that skill no longer seems to be the basis for recruitment as was told to us by many of our respondents. The redefinition of work, in other words, has an impact on migration and employment. It also posits a disjunction between caste and occupation. The image of the processing unit as new form of work makes it an acceptable occupation and leads to integration of varied caste groups of women from Kerala as migrant women workers.

While the economic impetus definitely is central to the women's decision to migrate, that does not explain all of it. The women are willing to put up with the irregular, long hours of work with low wages as they do gain in non-economic terms as well by shifting from the village to the town. The distance from home in the case of these girls also contributes to their becoming more self-reliant as well as free to make their own decisions concerning their lives providing them with some autonomy. There are aspects of economic freedom that invite the younger women to further migrate. The women do not give all their wages to the family straight away even though there are arrangements where the contractor is entrusted with the responsibility of saving the wage to be given to the family. They at the same time have the freedom to spend at least a part of their earnings the way they want to. They also imbibe new values as young women who work to earn a living far away from their family's control in the process.

The image of the woman as a migrant worker has made its mark in the minds of young girls in the villages. So much have the working women influenced the village that back home they have become the new role models for the younger women of the village. The good clothes they bring back from Mumbai or Kolkata, their ability to see faraway places on account of their employment in those places provide others an incentive to follow suit. One elderly woman proudly pointed to a nearby house, stating that it was constructed with the savings of her niece and her daughters, as her niece's husband was an invalid and could not earn. Therefore the niece and her daughters have been working in fish processing units for the last six years. Clearly, migration disrupts normal familial relations. In yet another case, an elderly grandmother sought to keep the family together even at the new workplace, by migrating along with her granddaughters. She accompanied her three granddaughters to work in a unit in Mangalore, as she did not like the idea of 'her young birds flying out alone'. An invalid, she nonetheless did some peeling work in the unit to eke out a living together with her grandchildren.

At the same time, there is also a negative image of the women circulating in the communities about their job, belittling processing unit recruiters as enticing women into 'immoral activities'. This is the more conservative attitude that does not find it easy to accept the women in their new social role—as migrant income remitters to their families. This has also gained more currency following incidents of sexual harassment and the suicide of some women in the units in Goa and Mumbai. No doubt there are such instances of sexual vulnerabilities of migrant women being exploited as well. However, it is completely misplaced to characterise the community of migrant women workers in fish processing as a sexually exploited lot. Besides, instead of letting such problems act as an impediment in the way of migration of women what is necessary is guaranteeing them dignity at the workplace.

The making and the perceptions of the workplace

Migration has opened new avenues for the women but at the same time also exposed them to the vagaries of a new work culture and discipline of the modern industry creating a more oppressive set of relations at the workplace. This has meant a break from their traditional modes of existence. Most of these women come from either fishing or daily wage earning agricultural labour families with little industrial work exposure. This helps contractors exploit the women for they are quite unaware of the legislated limits on hours of work and issues such as minimum wage and look up to the employer as their benefactor. Also the vulnerable material conditions of the families of the women make it easy for the contractors to tilt the scales in their favour to the disadvantage of the women who are denied even basic freedoms in many units.

Getting work back home is difficult; therefore we take up work in the faraway unit. Women carry tray packs, which is a very strenuous work, we face great difficulty at the unit. After work we wash the worktable and the floor regularly and are forced to bear with the combined smell of fish and chlorine on account of which many of us vomit. The bleaching powder used burns our eyes. We are also made to wash the toilets in many of the units.

This was the account of one of the workers in the diamond unit of Kolkata. The processing units are abysmal in the working conditions that they offer to the migrant workers. There are of course variations between management. Some units are better off but they could all be more in tune with the global market in which the industry operates. It is difficult for researchers to even access the women workers who live in virtually complete captivity. The women in these units are also not given the freedom to move about alone, except with a male escort and that too for a short while. The conditions at the workplace are similar: 12 hours of work, poor wages and impermanent work. Through the years, the women have begun to raise the issue of labour rights in their units—demanding

eight hours' work, minimum wages and better facilities at the workplace. The workers struck work at Ravi Seafoods, Thane, on March 14, 1997, demanding these rights. This followed in the wake of colleague Suja Abraham's suicide on account of sexual and work harassment. Interestingly, on this occasion, the division of interests among workers also came to light. The unionised permanent workers at the unit feared the contract workers' strike as the management put the issue across as an attempt to close the unit down. Therefore when the migrant, contract workers agitated, the permanent workers, seeing it as a threat to their livelihood, shouted slogans in opposition to the victimized migrant workers. With police support and collusion, the management summarily carted back to Kerala the 250 odd women who dared protest against the powerful management. This provides one more instance of the insecurity that the unorganized, unprotected workers encounter at their workplace.

The workers today have more choice with regard to contractors and workplaces. A large number of women we spoke to already have been made offers but were waiting to take up the best offer in every sense after a thorough survey of the market from discussions with one another, even us!

Another divergence from the conventional notion of fish processing workers is that these women stuck to their jobs much longer than is generally implied by descriptions such as seasonal migrant. The women also had choice as regards where to go depending on the wage offered and the conditions at the workplace. All of this means a rethinking of the classification of such migration as being temporary, circular, transient or otherwise.

When we look at the impact of migration on the lives of these women we need to look at its micro level consequences too. At a macro level the insecurity of employment characterizes the unorganized sector. On the other hand, in certain sectors, the growth of the unorganized sector has also opened up employment

opportunities to deprived groups in society, although they remain very vulnerable given their unorganized status.

There have been efforts to unionise the women or attempts to take up the issue of labour rights of the women in the sector. There are instances of resistance to the exploitative conditions. In 1994, there was a big furore when some Tamil women in the units in Goa protested. The women wanted to go back and this resulted in a deadlock between the workers and the contractor. It was only on the intervention of the Commissioner of Labour that these women were released and sent back home after all their dues were cleared. In one of the units in Goa, there was a major agitation by the workers on the issue of water facilities. They struck work to protest against the lack of water in their quarters. The stalemate was broken only after they were given assurance by the management that the needful measures would be taken immediately. In another unit in Goa, the women agitated over leaking rooms and got the management to do the needful. Thus, though the workers in the processing units are unorganized, it is not as if they do not in their own way militate for a better environment at the unit.

A case highlighted by the media was the reason for the campaigns on the issue of labour rights and human rights of women in the fish processing units in the last few years. Early in 1997, Suja Abraham, a migrant worker from Kerala, ran away from Ravi Fisheries in the Thane area, unable to cope with the environment of work. It is believed that she attempted to commit suicide. She was severely injured and was under hospital care at Mulund hospital. A police case was lodged by the Laghu Kamgar Union, which took up the issue of the woman worker's harassment at the Ravi unit. In the wake of these happenings, the girls at the nearby Brittany Seafoods started an agitation demanding eight hours work and better wages. On March 14, 1997, they struck work and wrote slogans on empty packaging cases, demanding eight hours' work. The workers at Ravi also struck work. The 250 odd migrant contract

workers in the two units were, by the very evening, unceremoniously bundled into buses and sent back to Kerala (Keshwaar, 1997). So what began as an attempt to challenge the oppressive work environment ended with the management nipping the worker's movement to address their problems through dispensing with the bothersome workers altogether for it could secure a fresh load of women workers. Nonetheless what is important to note is that the image of the docile woman worker is challenged in this instance of protest as it was the vulnerable unorganized woman worker who dared to transgress to assert for rights of workers and dignity at the workplace. Thus these are instances of workers in the unorganized sector protesting against their working conditions and demanding a better fare for themselves.

Social Life and living conditions of the workers

The migrant workers attempt to create a community in their new homes. Despite their long and arduous schedules they do forge networks to facilitate easier adjustment to the hostile environment at the workplace in their places of residence. No doubt these are fraught with squabbles, faction fights, and everyday politics especially when they cohabit in large numbers. At the same time, they also grapple to give meaning to their lives and evolve strategies to survive despite all the odds. Our attempt to look at the new relationships they establish at work and away from it provides for a dimension of agency in how they cope with everyday life.

The women in the units live far from their homes and for many of them it is a new experience. Initially there are cases of homesickness and inability to adjust to the new environment but over time they get used to the change. It is fine for women who have continued to work in the same unit for many years but for the more nomadic ones, it is a tough battle to survive in the unfamiliar environment. Women in a particular unit belong to a particular village or have built rapport with one another after having worked

together over the years. Thus bonds of community develop among them and it is this solidarity that keeps them smiling in the face of the tough life of work in the unit. Also, co-operative activities by way of going to see films, to the markets and to church/temple provide additional respite from the tiring work schedules.

The women also forge relations with various community networks at their new place of residence. Far away from home, in Vashi, New Mumbai, the Devadan Kendra provides the site for their community celebrations on festivals such as *Onam* and Christmas. Traditional *sadyas* and *kathotikali* were part of their life far away from home. The Kendra also provided them with Malayalam magazines and kept their networks active. These sites also become focal points during strife and insecurity as the church and the social workers were able to at least establish relations on a regular basis with these women. During times of stress or fear women workers interact with the counsellors at the Centre who were able to tell us a lot more about the abysmal conditions the women lived with in many units. It was the norm that women could go out of the unit only once a week and that too mostly under surveillance. Of course, all this is explained away as being done to protect the women from facing any harassment outside and thus creates new forms of patriarchal control at the workplace. These practices deny the women their basic right of freedom and there are instances of the women themselves trying to bring change here too by demanding that they be let out in groups of four and at times even breaking the rules sometimes resulting in loss of work (Warrier, 1998).

The woman worker derives some agency in the way she spends at least some of the money she earns. Apart from money spent on their daily necessities such as food and medicine, there are other purchases the women spend their wages on. A major expense is clothes, especially gowns and *salwar kameez*. In fact, a number of women in the course of our survey wear these and stated that they spent Rupees 1500-2000 annually on the buying of these clothes

and cosmetics. The other item into which a sizeable proportion of their wage goes is acquisition of gold ornaments.

Interestingly in some of the units, the expenses incurred for the common mess also provided the women with their monthly requirement of soap and oil. However, according to the women, they spent more money from their pocket as they required lots of soap to rid themselves of the foul smell that came with working in the fish-processing unit for long hours. Asha from Alapuzha, working at the Barraka unit in Mangalore, stated this. According to her most of the women by evening felt sick after being cooped up for long hours inside the unit with the air pervaded by the smell of fish and the sea. This was corroborated by many of the women in the units in Gujarat and Kolkata whom we met. Hence the provision of soap is far from what they need to feel fresh after long arduous stretches of work. This also has a cultural connotation that they feel the need to break out from, the *meen manam* as they put it. In fact, in the course of my interaction with them this was one point that they felt very strongly about: to rid themselves at the end of a long day of the foul smell that was characteristically part of their work.

In some cases the rather hostile and severe environment make them vulnerable to mental ill health as well. It is interesting to note the recreational facilities the workers developed so that the monotony of their work does not pervade their social life as well. A large number of the girls and women we met stated that in their free time they hired a VCR and watched films, some others played games such as hop scotch and cards and there were some who tried to sleep off the weariness of overwork.

Housing facilities

Most of the units employing migrant women workers provide some form of hostel accommodation to the workers. Recently, with the difficulties faced by the management on account of large scale

checks by the Inspectorate of Factories and Labour officers, there has begun a tendency to let women come from their local accommodation. This is the case in Vashi, New Mumbai, today. Thus, alongside the earlier forms of accommodation such as the dormitories and hostels, today we see the women workers living as tenants in groups of four and five in the vicinity of the processing unit. But, by and large, the earlier norm prevails.

Most women in the units state that their dwellings are above the production unit. This is definitely the rule in Kolkata where about three units located in the city have accommodated their workers in rickety dwellings above the unit. The women live in small overcrowded rooms: 10 of them in a 15 ft by 12 ft room, with leaking roof, the drains overflowing, and a few dirty bathrooms.

The poor sanitation facilities in the hostels are often reasons for the reproductive health and urinary tract infections that the women are prone to. In Kolkata, the living environs of the unit workers are virtual extensions of drains, dark, hostile, crowded places where sunlight hardly permeates any time of the year. Besides this, the cooped up living environment makes women vulnerable to infections any one of them gets—thus if one of them contracts chicken pox, the entire community becomes susceptible to it.

A hall accommodating 125-150 women seems the norm whether it is a unit in Mumbai, Tuticorin, Goa or Veraval. The other prevalent form of accommodation is of a small room shared by 6-15 girls, as is the case mainly in Kolkata and Mangalore. In Vashi, Mumbai, the women in the processing units are all housed together (sometimes numbering 130-140) in large 800 ft halls. Then there are the exceptional cases where women have been provided with decent accommodation. By and large even if it is a huge hall, the fact that 100 women live together has its limitations. The place resembles a railway platform with the women huddled together with their meagre belongings. They are provided with very little furniture: it is a luxury if women have their own bedding. Most of the room is taken up by the little bags and suitcases of the women

and the clothes they put out to dry for which too they have no other space. A large hall such as the ones provided by the units can in no way be considered a place to live in. There is the problem of keeping the place neat and clean. There is the obvious lack of privacy and of course a large number of instances of interpersonal problems coming from the co-existence of such a large group having to adhere to the same time and discipline enforced at the workplace. For the girls, the lack of adequate facilities is the cause of late arrival at the workplace in the mornings. There are times when this creates tension between the workers, as they stand to lose the day's wage as also the goodwill of the supervisors, which they can ill-afford. The other problem that came up from the women about their living arrangements is of the paucity of water.

The mess arrangements for women workers in the processing units

The fact that there is homogeneity in the composition of the migrant contract workers renders the management of their food arrangements at the unit easy. However, this has contributed to a diet which the women are not happy with and which by no means fulfils the nutritional requirements of the workers. Most of the units have made various kinds of rudimentary food arrangements for their migrant women workers. Contractors who charge the individual workers for the expenses undertake to run some messes. At times there are arrangements made privately at the initiative of the women themselves.

In Kolkata, women were doing their own cooking in small groups—either all the roommates sharing out the work or as organized by the contractor. In one unit in Kolkata, the girls were provided with rice but they made their own curries. However the quality of the food provided to the workers, by and large, is not very good or even nutritious and the workers are at times wary of eating the food provided to them. At the same time there are cases where the workers state that they get good food and in fact have

better food than they would eat back home. This was stated by workers of contractor Shaji in Goa as also by workers of Naser in Mangalore.

For a very rudimentary meal, the women had to pay anything between rupees 275-500 per month to the mess managing committee that was often in the hands of the supervisor or the contractor. The composition of the meal everywhere was mainly rice and *sambar* along with vegetables twice a day. This was the general rule everywhere with an additional piece of fish once or twice a week or a fish/meat curry once or twice a month. At many a place the staple diet provided consisted of rice gruel and *kadala* (whole Bengal gram, a variety of pulse) and black tea in the morning. On rare occasions, women were given a grand breakfast and on most Sundays they were treated to *idlis* or *upma* for breakfast. The monotonous nature of the meal was very much on the minds of the girls. At times, when they are dissatisfied and tired with the company mess food, they resort to alternatives such as preparing fish or meat curry by pooling in money and effort. A lot of them also spent extra money to stock biscuits, bread, and other snacks to supplement their very poor fare. A number of units were not even this generous. There are strict rules forbidding women from cooking in their rooms, hence the girls had to make do with what they got or wait for their monthly/weekly visits to the market to buy their stock of goodies they craved to eat. On rare occasions when units had surplus fish, some of it was given for the workers' consumption. Then the girls were provided with a good fare. However, there are occasions when, according to the women, the women smuggled out fish, with the support of the supervisor, to cook for themselves. If they were caught before the fish was cooked, they would only lose the fish but if it had already been cooked, the manager in charge of production would charge them the cost of the fish. There were times when the women were given fish that had been kept frozen for too long a time to consume. Most of the women found the taste unbearable and some even went on to say that they would rather have just gruel than 'such iced fish that tasted foul'.

Thus it appears that the system of collective messing practised by many units has its limitations. Not only does it mean loss of some part of their income on a monthly basis, it also means food that neither is found tasty by the workers nor meets their needs. At times, it also creates additional expenses, as the women pay for the mess but also make their own food as they like to. Hence all fanfare the contractors make as regards workers' facilities at the units is quite misleading.

Health and safety of the workers

The environment that characterizes the processing units is by and large very damp and cold. Most of the units have the problem of being cluttered and congested. The workplace is one long stretch of aluminium tables, with trays and trays of water, and at times, grading machines close by. The women employed in the grading and the weighing as also packing sections stand for long hours. This is a significant factor contributing to their ill health. The women in the peeling section have to squat for long hours amidst cold water that leaks from the iced raw material. Thus it is but natural complaints of aches, pains and colds are common. The very posture of the workers at the workplace—standing in one position for long hours, bending at the table while grading and packing or squatting and bending down while peeling—induces unhealthy physical strain.

That the processing unit is also the place where the dormitories of migrant women are in some of the units makes it all the more necessary that safety standards be adhered to by units. Physically many of such units appear dilapidated, unfit to work leave alone to live in. This is because the workers' lodgings are provided either atop the processing unit or beside it, in most cases. This arrangement, as noted earlier, has been adopted so as to ensure the availability of the workers whenever the consignment of raw material arrives, whatever time of the day or night. So the workers stay confined within the precincts of their workplace, except once

a week when they are escorted out for their weekly day off. Such organisation of production in the fish processing units resembles not any modern capitalist enterprise, but more primitive practices prevalent in the early phase of industrialization when apprentices stayed along with the master craftsman to learn skills from him.

The difference lies in the fact that the women are kept in such accommodation as it facilitates smoother organisation of production by perpetuating relations of subordination and domination that at times appears to be extremely coercive. A large number of complaints made by the women are of this nature. A number of contractors treat the women as their tool with no point of view of their own and until the end of the contract at the unit they have to take orders from the contractor. That the contractor in many a unit stays with the workers makes it convenient to ensure that the women are at the worktable when they want and for as long as they want.

Housing the workers atop the processing unit actually goes against the spirit of the safety regulations prescribed for industry. Ammonia based freezing plants are potential accident sites. Many of the units have very old freezing plants and are said to have huge ammonia plants, meant for maintaining temperatures in the units, that are not well checked. The mostly wooden flooring of the workers' lodgings offers poor insulation from the dampness of the unit below. There have been reports of accidents due to leakage of ammonia in very many places. In one such incident in Kolkata, in the eighties, there was loss of life when some of the women who had got poisoned by the ammonia gas died, though taken to the hospital. In all the five units we visited in Kolkata, the workers were provided accommodation atop the processing unit. The risk and the anxiety this gives rise to can well be imagined. After this incident there was general fear among the workers about staying in lodgings above the processing unit.

There have been other such incidents as well, although not fatal. In fact, at the Ravi Fisheries, Thane in Mumbai, because of a leak in the ammonia plant, a number of workers suffered the

poison effect and began to vomit'. Lata of Oonukal, Pathanamthitta district, Kerala, who was employed at the time in Ravi Seafoods, narrated this to us. What is appalling is that if factory inspections in a big city such as Mumbai are so cursory, one can imagine what the situation is in the small *mofussil* towns where a number of units are situated. In an inspector's report of a unit in Mumbai, it was mentioned that a particular plant was installed in 1975, and after an inspection by an engineering agency everything was said to be fine. However, this kind of detailed inspection is not the norm and therefore it is an urgent requirement that the units be made to conduct such inspections with regularity.

By and large most of the women are susceptible to a range of diseases, some of which arise from the conditions at work and some others from the poor sanitary conditions in which they live. A large number of the units we visited could not be described as providing a clean environment to work in. Besides, the fish processing units are located near polluted parts of the city. Such location creates a set of problems. In Veraval, we found that apart from the occupational hazards that originate at the workplace, on the health front women were exposed to the pollutants from the Indian Rayon unit situated in the area. Similarly in Tuticorin, it is said that the Sterlite Factory and other chemical companies in the neighbourhood threaten the health of workers in the vicinity. It is to be explored as to whether there can be established any direct relationship between the diseases that women are prone to and the environment around the workplace.

Skin rashes and peeling off of the skin from continued work with frozen material, when prolonged and untreated, results in women at times being unable to cope with the demanding nature of working fast and deftly with their fingers and thereby even giving up work. However, as some of the women stated 'even though the finger cracks are very painful and difficult to work with, the women continue to perform their work till it becomes unbearable'. Dolly, from Thiruvananthapuram, who has been working as a peeler at

the Barraka unit in Mangalore, is of the opinion that a lot of girls bear with the pain because if they did not work it would result in their losing wages, something they can ill afford.

Thus a skill which was the reason for their securing employment also results in their inability to work in the long term on account of the unscientific nature of work process—without wearing gloves to protect hands from the strain of working with frozen material with sharp, jagged edges. Very few units systematically follow the rules prescribed by the MPEDA and other regulatory agencies for the minimum requirements of a clean hygienic environment of production.

There are cases where women who had taken leave after slipping on the damp wet floor in the unit to recuperate have lost their wages for the period of absence. Thus an occupational hazard in the working environment which resulted in severe injury to the worker instead of the worker being compensated by the management in fact causes the reverse: a cut in their wages. It reveals the unprotected nature of employment of these workers. In such times, the women not only lost their little savings but also the potential earnings because they are handicapped temporarily.

Women in the units are prone to sexual overtures at the workplace, and a number of such cases may also have happened owing to the culpability of the woman herself who was willing to trade her sexual favours in return for a secure advantageous status at the workplace. In Mumbai as also in Kolkata there is a debate among the women workers themselves as to how to handle such a fragile issue. As many of the women who are at work come when they are at an impressionable age and have their own notions of what they want in life, there are a large number of incidents of men and women interacting outside the norm of marriage. The problem is acute when it involves pregnancy and abortion. In Vashi, Mumbai, it was stated by social workers that there were such incidents of women from the processing units going to the local doctor for the termination of unwanted pregnancies. In the process of going in

for an inexpensive way to rid herself of her unwanted pregnancy the woman worker becomes vulnerable to a host of diseases arising from unhealthy medical practices. A large number of the women we met complained of discharge, infection as well as severe urinary tract problems. In fact one of our respondents stated that she had been on medicines for more than six months for the same reason.

The growth of the fish processing industry has primarily been export driven. Such integration of local production into the global market has changed the production process, its control and ownership, redefined the meaning and nature of work. It has created new employment opportunities for women, re-configured gender relations and weakened the traditional correlation between caste and occupation. Tradition is both transformed and reinforced, in the process. While processing fish continues to be seen as women's work, its translocation to the factory premises makes it a blue-collar job acceptable to those outside traditional fish worker communities. That women have acquired agency unavailable in the traditional setting is indisputable, but new forms of domination, gender-specific and otherwise, have been created. The new forms of oppression could be tackled by organisation and state regulation, but, by and large, are not. At the same time new avenues are opening up for women in their migration from the village to the urban location, short term or long term. The image of the woman as a migrant worker has captivated the younger generation who seek better opportunities. These are not just in sum material change for the women as we have noted. It has resulted in a significant contribution to changing at some level the images of women and also the status of women in these households, even if fleetingly. That these women leave behind homes where they are prone to domestic violence and drunkenness as also abject poverty has a bearing on the lives of these women about which we need to know more. Upward mobility and additional agency is available to women workers who graduate to the recruiting chain but the wider ramifications of migrant work for the women's lives remain to be explored.

** The audience was interested in the ways in which migrant fish workers raised families in situations of transience, whether organised unions raised questions regarding basic amenities such as lack of soap, and how the independence women had in their work spaces translated into their homes back in the villages. While there is an element of exploitation in the ways in which migrant workers are treated there is also a sense of empowerment. The former is also reflected in questions regarding the raising of dowry. There is a tremendous sense of growth, for instance, in the saving schemes that these women set up. The similarities between migrant labour in the fish packing industry and nurses migrating to the Gulf countries, the globalizing of labour were enlarged upon. It is also noteworthy that the Kerala Government and the Women's Commission in Kerala have stepped in to reduce the control that the contractors have over the organisation and flows of migrant labour.

Notes

¹ This paper draws on material presented in M.V. Shobhana Warriar (2001), 'Women at Work: Migrant Women in Fish Processing Industry', *Economic and Political Weekly* XXXVI: 37, September 15. I wish to acknowledge my gratitude to the Centre for Education and Communication, Delhi, for whom I did the present study.

² I wish to gratefully acknowledge the invaluable help rendered by activists of the National Fish Workers' Forum, Programme for Community Organisation and the Communist Party of India (Marxist), without whose efforts these surveys would have been extremely difficult.

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**Desire in the Diaspora:
Gender, Memory and Nostalgia in British
South Asian Cinema**

Brinda Bose

Memory and nostalgia play critical roles in the construction of a diasporic South Asian gendered identity in Britain, in the age of globalization. Both memory/nostalgia and gender may be said to be predicated on the construction of (diasporic) desire operating simultaneously at two levels, often connecting and merging into a complex twinned desiring in which one transforms the processes of the other. It is on these simultaneous – and twinned – structures of desire that I will focus here, reading two kinds of desire: the first, sexual, tracing its inceptions and the possibilities of its fulfilment in the British-South Asian diaspora, and the second, a more ubiquitous desire for home, represented in the diaspora by nostalgia for a lost/distant homeland. I will use the first to interrogate the second, and attempt to establish that the diaspora provides such spaces for manifestations of sexual desiring that they become a key element in reducing the desire for a return to 'home' into a sheer desire for nostalgia, a guilty gesture to the past that is ultimately not just unfulfilled but also – more significantly – not really desired to be fulfilled. In other words, the possibilities for sexual desiring that the diaspora offers challenges and ultimately undermines completely the desire for home in the displaced South Asian settler in Britain.

According to Stuart Hall

Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference... It is because this New World is constituted for us as place, a narrative of displacement, that it gives rise so profoundly to a certain imaginary plenitude, recreating the endless desire to return to "lost origins"... And yet, this "return to the beginning" is like the imaginary in Lacan – it can neither be fulfilled nor requited, and hence is the beginning of the symbolic, of representation, the infinitely renewable source of desire, memory, myth, search, discovery – in short, the reservoir of our cinematic narratives. (1990, 235-6)

It is generally accepted that an 'endless desire to return to lost origins' lies at the heart of the diasporic experience of living away from one's homeland. However, in the aftermath of globalization, and the subsequent shrinking of the globe by enhanced exchanges and transmission, what was once distant and unattainable is now fairly easily available, if genuinely desired. The new diasporic identity, in process of formation, has changed to assimilate within it not the true longing for a return to roots but much more forcefully a sheer desire/need for nostalgia; as second generation South Asians settle more comfortably in Britain, they begin to recognize the exercise of memory as the only means of keeping in touch with that part of their hybrid, hyphenated identity that is far away. Cinema, as Hall astutely notes, serves this need particularly well in providing a 'reservoir of... narratives' that one can both dip into as well as create afresh.

Diasporic South Asian cinema gestures to that Lacanian 'imaginary' of the desire for the 'other' that can neither be fulfilled nor requited. In a general context, the gendered/sexual identity of the diasporic subcontinental has been a particularly difficult terrain to negotiate, given the rather strict inherited 'traditions' of culture that have been held up against the influx of western 'permissiveness' within the diasporic space. Negotiations have hinged on the question

of whether identity in this third arena, so to speak, is to be true to origins (thereby validating a pure nostalgia) or to the adopted culture (thus allowing one to assimilate more easily into the New World) or – most difficult of all – try to construct a self that acknowledges both. Narrative cinema like Hanif Kureishi/Stephen Frears's *My Beautiful Laundrette*, Gurinder Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach*, as well as Pratibha Parmar's short docufilms, *Khush* and *Sari Red*, attempt to negotiate conflicting South Asian sexual identities in a diasporic space in Britain that is ever more embattled by the decreasing distance between original and adopted homelands since the global communication explosion of the late twentieth century. As the longing for traditions recedes, that emptied space within the diasporic psyche appears to be increasingly occupied by a guilty need/desire for nostalgia that at once validates one's 'origins' and distances it effectively.

Stuart Hall has posed certain key questions about cultural identity, diaspora and representation that I would like to extend and apply to notions of gendered/sexual identity in diasporic South Asian cinema in Britain. Hall suggests that:

Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. This view problematises the very authority and authenticity to which the term, 'cultural identity' lays claim. (1990, 222)

Thinking of identity itself as 'production' can be useful in considering the cinema that attempts to recreate, represent, and 'fix' diasporic identity—a 'fixing' that is as much to do with capturing as it is to do with finding a remedy—because our task, clearly, is not just to identify this cultural identity but also to interrogate the process of its production.

Hall makes another point that is important to the consideration of diasporic cinema. On the subject of cultural identity and representation – the producer of the text, that is – he talks of the

I who writes as 'enunciated', the eye that records and tells therefore doing so "in context" of its own situation, location, position. It is this position that determines how cultural identity will be represented. It may be defined in terms of 'one shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self' [reflecting] the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history. This 'oneness', underlying all the other more superficial differences, is the truth, the essence... (1990, 223)

Alternatively, the enunciated cultural identity may recognize Derridean *difference*, a matter of 'becoming' rather than 'being', acknowledging ruptures and discontinuities, belonging to the future as well as the past. (Hall 1990, 225)

It is neither particularly revelatory nor revolutionary to say that noteworthy diasporic cinema most often belongs to the latter category, not only recognizing ruptures and discontinuities but locating themselves at those (dis)junctures, and articulating their difficulty in representing an utopic oneness that some misplaced loyalty may demand of them. This stems from an intrinsic belief that not only is it impossible to recreate such a oneness, but that it is also undesirable for the cause of both diasporic politics and cinema – and is demonstrated in any, or all, of the films I shall be discussing here. What is more interesting, however, is to consider how these moments of confrontation – between traditional oneness and radical fragmentation – use nostalgia to effectively further distance the past from the present, the act of remembering itself being transformed into an act of homage. Nostalgia becomes the safety-hatch into which new-generation diasporic South Asians ritualistically disappear when they feel the need to salute their origins, emerging

all the more convinced that what they have fought to achieve is infinitely more desirable to possess. These filmmakers participate very consciously in this process of mythmaking, where memory/nostalgia is the myth upon which dislocated diasporic identity rests. Dislocation, after all, is both artistically and politically enabling, and nostalgia becomes the key signifier in a text that likes to see unfulfilled desire/longing locked in an unbreakable metaphoric relationship with the notion of diaspora.

According to Avtar Brah in *Cartographies of Diaspora*,

the concept of diaspora embodies a subtext of 'home' ... Where is home? On the one hand, 'home' is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense, it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality ... The question of home, therefore is intrinsically linked with the way in which processes of inclusion or exclusion operate and are subjectively experienced under given circumstances. It is centrally about our political and personal struggles over the social regulation of 'belonging'. As Gilroy (1993) suggests, it is simultaneously about roots and routes.

The concept of diaspora places the discourse of 'home' and 'dispersion' in creative tension, inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins. (1996, 190-193)

In the context of gender identity in particular, it also places in creative tension the discourses of nostalgia and freedom, where the former represents not just the safety of tradition but also satisfies the need to 'desire' that which has been lost or left behind, while freedom signifies the sexual possibilities that the new world enticingly offers.

However, it cannot be denied that even while the so-called 'phenomenon of new femininities' has been read as liberating for

women in the west (specifically in Britain), it is challenged by the realisation that gender inequalities across the world remain embedded within larger social and economic structures. Nina Laurie et al in *Geographies of new femininities* have usefully considered the impact of globalization upon the intersection of geography and gender, an intersection that is especially pertinent to the context of diasporic women:

The cultural processes of globalization might also be expected to challenge gender relations. Several studies have emphasized that in fact global migrations and the creation of diaspora populations may result in the reinforcing of restrictive roles for women... Furthermore... there are often tensions within diaspora populations about embracing cultural transformations or seeking to maintain cultural integrity and these concerns often focus on retaining assumed views of femininity... Yet globalized cultures and mediated knowledges also open up possibilities for reworking gender identities... Marie Gillespie's (1995) study of the use of the media by young British Asians... outlines how "Bollywood" movies seen on satellite TV are reinterpreted in a local London context to renegotiate gendered expectations with regard to arranged marriages. Around these and other aspects of globalization it is possible to begin identity forms of gendered politics. (1999, 35-36)

Gurinder Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) uses 'Bollywood' as a fantasy trope while it explores – and exposes – gendered identity politics in a South Asian community in contemporary Britain. The film records a day in the life of a group of immigrant Indian women in Birmingham, whose disparate existences are thrown together during a trip to the beach organized by the Saheli Women's Centre (a battered women's shelter that is itself a product of the impact of western feminism upon the South Asian community in Britain). Even as the group – ranging from teenagers to grandmothers – are determined to force the mood of gaiety unfurled by a rollicking Punjabi version of Cliff Richards' 'Summer Holiday' playing in

their minibus, Chadha touches upon their individual lives complicated by issues of arranged marriages, interracial alliances, racism, sexism and violence against women set against the backdrop of various 'western' liberalizing tendencies and influences.

Bhaji on the Beach focuses mainly on the plight of two women: a young mother who has taken shelter at the Centre along with her small son after being physically abused by her husband, and a seventeen-year-old who, on the verge of fulfilling her parents' ambitions for her by going to medical school, discovers that she is pregnant by her Black boyfriend and finds her world crashing about her ears as she contemplates the effect that this news will have on her family. What was planned as an innocent, and innocuous, trip to Blackpool on the festive Illuminations night turns nightmarish as the news of her pregnancy becomes known to the elder women in the group who react with expected outrage, while Ginder – the young mother – discovers her husband Ranjit to be in pursuit of them, apparently with the evil intention of abducting their son. Some comic relief is provided by the plight of Asha, a middle-aged wife and mother prone to 'visions' in the Bollywoodian mode every time she is confronted by nascent feminist existentialist angst related to her consistently subservient role in her family's life. The gallantly romantic attentions of a quaint Englishman as he plies her with ice-cream and welcome masculine appreciation momentarily turns her head, but even as she emerges from the fantasy to reject it, it provides her with the confidence in herself as a woman that Chadha clearly considers a necessity in the process of gendered identity formation amongst South Asian immigrants. The central dilemma that Chadha identifies in her film is the psychological battle that each of these women face, not merely in the specific problems presented by unwanted pregnancies, marital violence and menopausal angst, but more critically in dealing with them through cultural barriers created by gender/sexual taboos that have been imported from the homeland. No easy solution appears to be in sight, either to reconcile the group to their tradition-bound heritage or to free them into lives more stereotypically 'Western'.

liberal, but the real significant outcome of the day lies in the group's ability to foil Ranjit's intention of terrorizing Ginder and their son by rallying together against him, as it lies in a young pregnant teenager's staying behind in the comforting arms of her boyfriend, who has also pursued her to Blackpool, as they pledge to 'handle' their crisis together.

Rather than debating the question of how true – or not – Chadha's representation of the plight of Indian immigrant women in Britain facing conflicts in their gendered/sexual identities is, what I would like to consider is the message of the film – insofar as it offers one – in the context of a monitored cultural 'production', and the repercussions that such a text would expect to have on its primary target audience, the South Asian community across the world. In the Report of the Commission (chaired by Bhikhu Parekh) on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, published in 2000, a couple of basic statements and questions appear to sum up the dilemma of multiculturalism that assails Britain today:

All communities are changing and all are complex... There are also many overlaps, borrowings and two-way influences – no community is or can be insulated from all others. Increasingly, people have the capacity to manoeuvre between distinct areas of life and to be "cross-cultural navigators". Hybrid cultural forms have emerged, especially in music and the arts. In this context, does "Britishness" have a future? Or have devolution, globalization and the new cultural diversity undermined it irretrievably? (2000, XV)

We may assume that the questions posed in the Report are rhetorical, and that there is little doubt that a Britain as multi-ethnic as it is today can no longer boast of any pure 'Britishness' in its culture and society. It is not just that the people inhabiting Britain have become 'cross-cultural navigators', however; the hybrid cultural forms emergent from this society also bear this characteristic, almost like a responsibility.

South Asian immigrant cinema, for example, has constantly tried to mediate between (eastern) tradition and (western) permissiveness in its struggle to represent – and come to terms with – changing sexual mores in its hybrid society. Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* is a case in point: it feels the need to validate a very 'Indian' sense of community even while it must endorse a more 'liberated' lifestyle that signifies progress as well as amalgamation with the adopted country. The diverse group of women may disagree violently on lifestyles – the older ones are clearly as horrified by teenage pregnancy as they are disapproving of a young mother abandoning her marital home no matter what the provocation – but they stand together in homage to a distant homeland. Many of the traditions maintained in such homage are clearly critiqued by Chadha. In the case of Asha, whose homelife falls far short of fulfilment, Chadha uses sequences imitating the popular Hindi song-and-dance film genre to bring to life her romantic fantasies as soon as she receives a little masculine attention from a middle-aged Britisher. The Hindi film trope as well as the displaced white man who dons the role of dashing hero make the production somewhat complex: there is nostalgia here for the indigenous Indian celluloid dream, as well as a deep-rooted desire for the 'other' who participates in what is a very 'native' fancy only to be exposed for what he is—a clownish, if pathetic interloper. Asha's return to the fold is Chadha's gesture to the nostalgic mode, while her endorsement of new sexual and/or gender identities in *Bhaji* is far more confidently an acceptance of what is known to immigrants as western liberated feminisms.

The question of sexual and/or gender identities, as always, becomes far more complicated when one looks at homosexuality. Bhikhu Parekh in his report on the future of multi-ethnic Britain writes:

Racism exacerbates, and is exacerbated by, sexism – they reinforce each other in vicious circles and spirals, and intertwine to the extent that it is impossible to disentangle them... Sexual rivalries in sexist and patriarchal contexts exacerbate fears and

fantasies among white people about the supposed sexuality, promiscuity and fecundity of people believed to be racially different... (2000, 67)

Immigrants who are homosexuals face multiple discriminations: those of racism and sexism as well as those of patriarchy, conservatism and homophobia, and find themselves in exile in many more ways than the average heterosexual immigrant. Notions of home, exile and belonging are of course lodged as a holy triumvirate in the very idea of diaspora, in which an ubiquitous sense of belonging is a free floating signifier between the twin teasers of nostalgia for the native land and desire to possess (and be possessed by) the adopted one. For the immigrant homosexual, it may be said, this elusive sense of belonging remains a free floater, unable to attach itself to either past or present location. Pakistani-British Hanif Kureishi, who wrote *My Beautiful Laundrette*, has explored this crisis in the South Asian immigrant context.

Kureishi's location as an immigrant searching for 'home' in its conflicting avatars is symptomatic, perhaps, of the dialogical construct of diasporic existence: he swings between doubt and confidence, between debating the meaning of the question and deliberating upon its answer. In *The Black Album*, Kureishi's protagonist agonises, 'I do not understand the question of exile', and 'This matter of belonging, brother. I wish I understood it' (Weber 1997, 120). Kureishi attempts to find answers and meaning in the margins. He draws upon what has been represented in cultural theory by Stuart Hall as a 'new ethnicity' that seeks to overturn 'hegemonic conceptions of "Englishness"' (Hall 1989, 449). According to Donald Weber,

'Ethnicity' as deployed in British cultural studies proves enabling as a mode of social critique for those marginally displaced – it opposes static, authorizing nationalisms and posits the fluid, hybrid, migrant border position as the site where the 'new ethnicity' can expose, through 'narratives of redemption and emancipation' (Paul Gilroy's phrase) all forms of cultural

and political absolutism...[Kureishi] demands that 'it is the British who have to make these adjustments', that 'there must be a fresh way of seeing Britain... and a new way of being British'... but [in his case] the overriding desire, the overarching need, is to overturn the smug pieties, the rapacious zeal, and the sad provincialities of cultural insiderism – behaviours and beliefs nurtured in the comedy and pain of ethnic striving, native to the familiar territory of 'Americanization', as well as its emergent British equivalent (can we begin to speak of the ordeal of 'becoming' British, of "Britishization"?). (Weber 1997, 123)

Interracial homosexuality is the signifier that Kureishi uses in *My Beautiful Laundrette* to mock the 'smug pieties of cultural insiderism' in an inherently racist Britain, and forces, from a liminal space, a consideration of a new way of being British, which, contrary to a process of Britishisation, amounts to a difficult birthing of that new entity which Parekh has termed a 'multi-ethnic Britain'. Set within the South Asian community in Britain, the film explores an unusual interconnection between burgeoning – homosexual – love and youthful entrepreneurship, where Omar uses his ambitions for both to 'rescue' his childhood (white) friend-turned National Front member Johnny from a violent street gang life to an arguably more meaningful existence. Certainly, for Kureishi's young protagonists, 'Britishization' means multi-culturalisation, in which love and money are invoked by the young and desirable South Asian male god Omar as remedial spirits to combat the ugly white racism that Johnny had almost fallen prey to, prior to his timely rescue. Johnny has to reconsider his allegiances, and Kureishi doesn't shy away from using Omar's sexual appeal to destabilize the white male's established notions of racial superiority. While family ties are constantly evoked in the film as a touchstone for successful immigrant existence, the future of Omar with Johnny clearly makes no concession to what father and uncle might wish for him in the form of racial purity and a 'suitable' heterosexual alliance.

Pratibha Parmar has addressed questions of home, exile and belonging in diasporic Britain to a doubly – and sometimes triply – marginalised community, that of South Asian women, through the documentary film genre in the 1990s, and has grappled with the notion of the gendered gaze, cinematic and spectatorial. Her short film *Khush* (1991) is a landmark in Black lesbian cinema from Britain, while her powerful ten-minute documentary *Sari Red* made in 1987 took up the fraught issue of racist sexism in Britain, angrily inspired by the murder of a young woman Kalbinder Kaur Hayre in 1985 by three white racist men. 'As a filmmaker, writer and activist,' says Gwendolyn Foster,

Pratibha Parmar operates within what Stuart Hall has termed 'an oppositional code'... Parmar speaks out against overdetermined identity politics that describe her as 'marginal' or 'other'. Parmar states, 'I do not speak from a position of marginalization but more crucially from the resistance to that marginalization'. (1997, 73)

Parmar from her early activist days targeted racism, sexism and homophobia in its impact upon coloured/non-white women in Britain, usually homogenized as 'Black'. Parmar's oppositional political aesthetic was developed even before she began to use cinema as a forum for political action; she perfected the confrontational 'look back' as a tool for the Asian woman in Britain, in which the objectified 'other' takes on an active subjectivity and gazes back at the viewer, transgressing the traditional signification process and interrogating the viewer, who then becomes subject to the oppositional gaze.

In *Sari Red*, Parmar evokes a violent racist attack on a young Indian woman by using a hard-hitting, repetitive visual image of blood splattered on a brick wall (Kalbinder had been crushed to death against a wall when her racist tormentors ran her down in their van). As Foster explains,

Blood and its color, red, act as shifting signifiers that at once connote the memory of 'what must not be forgotten', racist sexist violence. At the same time, red and blood denote positive images of the survival of Indian cultural traditions, traditions that celebrate red as the color of India, of the Great Goddess of India... Red is the color of women, the color of femininity, the color of the clothing of Indian women, the sari. (1997, 77)

Sari Red finally uses the sign of the sari itself as an eloquent metaphor for community, agency, testimony, and Asian women's power of resistance... a sari is folded and unfolded, and at one point ritually wrapped around one South Asian woman by another, as the history of [Kalbinder's] murder is repeatedly enunciated... The choice of the red sari as a location of female knowledge, memory and empowerment (Foster 1997, 79)

is significant, as is the motif of the eye, representative of the Asian female gaze and of resistant, collective female agency. It is equally significant, however, that even while Parmar locates the metaphoric power of the red-sari-sign as a traditional icon of South Asian woman power, the strength to resist that she celebrates in Kalbinder—who 'shouted back' at racist abuse and was killed for her pains—is one that she recognizes in immigrant experience: as Parmar recounts in an interview to E Ann Kaplan, 'It became an instinctual response that if you were on the street and somebody called you "Paki" or a "Wog", you shouted back. You didn't just bend your head down, and walk away. Maybe our parents' generation looked away, but our generation didn't.' (Kaplan 2000, 95). Nostalgia may be embedded in the sign of the sari, but it is merely a gesture that puts into perspective the horrors of present day realities.

In *Khush* (1991), Parmar uses the film-within-a-film technique in the tradition of Sheila McLaughlin's postmodern lesbian film, *She Must be Seeing Things* (1987), to construct a montage of a South Asian lesbian gaze exchange. Parmar says:

I wanted to make a film that was not going to be pathologizing or explaining to audiences who didn't know much about the existence or the visibility of South Asian lesbians...The film was intended as a dialogue – as conversations that were happening between South Asian lesbians in Britain, in Canada or North America and in India...*Khush* was only a start, but in terms of what I do in the film, it was quite self-conscious. I have these little vignettes with two actresses, within what is otherwise a documentary film. There is a scene of them watching an old black and white movie with an Indian woman dancer [*Chandralekha*]. Sometimes they have their backs to her, and are enjoying being with each other, and other times they watch her with visible pleasure. That was a deliberate strategy of subverting the gaze, of turning the gaze around and saying, 'We are the spectators of our own images'...In its original form, it was a woman dancer who's performing for an evil king, being forced to do this dance for his pleasure. I edited out his gaze, and had these two women watching and enjoying her dance. That strategy came about as a result of trying to think through questions around the gaze and the spectator – around who's watching whom, who is speaking to whom, and who is in visual dialogue with whom. (Kaplan 2000, 98)

Diasporic South Asian cinema in Britain has tried to turn the gaze around, and inside out – not just in employing the 'look back', but perhaps more significantly in looking inwards, and finding new equations and identities to offer the multi-ethnic world it inhabits. Nostalgia has been an useful tool in this exercise in excavation, glittering from a distance, but often the truth of memory has been discovered to be a little jaded, a trifle faded and not insignificantly rusted upon closer inspection. The promise – and the lure – of sexual possibilities in the new world, that would have been construed as transgressive at 'home', has interrogated the nostalgic mode that usually characterizes diasporic existence, and exposed it as less desirable. At this crucial juncture, new identities have been

forged, balancing delicately on the verge of a nervous nostalgia still, but poised, I think, on more precariously unknown futures.

****** The ways in which diasporic cinema seems to represent the immigrant audience talking to and viewing itself were highlighted. The gesture is toward a need/desire for nostalgia while at the same time the subject is located in the adopted country. The crucial issue of sexuality within the South Asian community and the ways in which race and sexuality were conjoined in a film such as *My Beautiful Laundrette* were areas of interest.

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The Locals Visit the Global

Nilanjana Gupta

This paper examines the notions of the 'local' that seem to be posited against the processes of globalization and argues that many 'globalizations' and many 'locals' are being created which are an integral part of the phenomena of globalization. There are many aspects to the local/global relationship, and this paper will try to suggest that the territorial location of the consumer of culture, as well as his/her class and gender positions will tend to determine the particular cultural manifestations of the local. In a heterogenous society like ours, it is perhaps not enough to discuss only the local and the global; therefore the role of the nation in these new formulations will also be briefly examined.

I would like to begin the discussion with a description of a winter's evening in the crowded cultural calendar of Calcutta in the December of 2000. One of the highlights of that 'end of the millenium' season was the Biswa Banga Sanskriti Mela or the Global Bengali Cultural Festival. There was much media coverage about this event which was supposed to bring together persons of Bengali origin settled all the world over and to provide an interface between the diasporic Bengali community and the native community. This turned out to be an occasion for those Bengalis of the world to unite who had nothing to lose but their culture. The experience of one chilly evening at the Dakshinapan Complex, which is a Government created shopping complex and includes a

programme hall in South Calcutta, provided one of those moments that remain in the mind and force one to think in new ways about culture and its consumption. As part of the Biswa Banga Sanskriti Mela, groups of ethnically attired global Bengalis, clutching their bottles of purified water were entering the Madhushudan Manch for an evening of a taste of the best of Bengali Group Theatre productions. The Group Theatre Movement in Bengal is a politically and socially committed movement which brings together directors, actors, and theatre workers who are usually part-time and for whom the message is more important than the commercial gains. There was also a large group of jeans and jacket-clad youngsters who lounged on the steps of the complex waiting for something else. Just outside the hall, the young stars of the Bangla Rock World were congregating and going through the ritualistic 'Hello, Mike Testing, Hello, One-Two-Three' on a makeshift stage with huge amounts of electronic equipment. While the global Bengalis appreciated the subtle crises of confidence in the lower-middle class Bengali family, the local Bengalis tapped their toes, shook their hips and waved their hands to the rhythm of the hybrid phenomenon, Bangla Rock. While the global Bengali clapped politely at the end of the drama and went home to traditional Bengali food, the local Bengali was still swinging his hips and probably had chow mein or pizza for dinner.

As a curious observer of culture as it is lived and loved, this evening with its contrasts and paradoxes was completely fascinating. The Rock Concert was put together by some of the shop owners of the Dakshinapan Shopping Complex and piggy-backed on the mainstream 'official' programme of the Global Bengalis. The Rock Concert used the overall festive ambience of the official programme—the lights, the decorations and the mood—brought together some of the young musical groups and a corporate sponsorship. It should be noted that the sponsor was one of the largest global producers of one of the largest ranges of the various creams, lotions, powders and smells that have helped us Indians to define ourselves as civilised, fashionable, and most importantly,

modern. Again, in the logic peculiar to the global/local rubric, the local government sponsored the ethnic cultural productions for the global Bengali, while the global corporation sponsored the beats and sounds of a global sound for the local Bengali.

Globalization is a term that already seems to have become rather weary and over-used and is now an indeterminate word with many meanings. There are critics who are arguing that globalization is nothing new—even hundreds of years ago there were trade relations and cultural exchanges between people and cultures that were miles apart and when travel between these areas took months. Later there was the whole history of colonisation in which economies and cultures were interlinked in ties which were transnational. Armand Mattelhart, for example, writes about the era of the Universal Expositions and the ideological construction of the 'Universal' in his book *The Invention of Communication* (1996). Then, in the twentieth century, the word International came to be used and there were the International Conferences and Federations of Trade Union bodies, the International Year of the Women, the International Youth Festivals and so on and one of the agencies which was at the focal point of such configurations was the United Nations. Yet the term globalization seems to denote a new set of transnational relations and interactions.

One of the crucial factors that theorists of globalization like Anthony Giddens and others (1993) emphasise is the implosion of the space-time dimensions. In this process the new media have come to play a crucial and determining role in the exchanges that now characterise the processes of globalization. The ICE age of Information, Communication, and Electronics has made financial interaction globally possible and the world economy has come together in ways that are markedly different from preceding eras. Of greater interest to cultural critics like myself is the circulation of images that are instantaneously available at any point in the globe. This has led to much talk of the ubiquitous 'global' culture that has supposedly evolved and which is threatening the existence of the heterogeneity of local cultures and identities.

Yet the technology that has made the huge media conglomerates possible and provides the financial logic of the production of culture on a global scale has also provided the opportunity for smaller enterprises to emerge and create their own niche audiences. The music industry in India provides a good example of this as the domination of the big recording companies has been challenged by the innumerable smaller recording companies who produce music for small local audiences (Manuel 1993). Similarly the very same technology that has made the emergence of global television financially inevitable has provided the possibility of the growth of channels that are not only regional but also very local in nature. I am referring to the local programming that cable operators screen for their subscribers.

This paper suggests that in the Indian context, these two tendencies have seriously dislocated the notion of a 'national culture' which was once the aim of both the political entity of the nation-state and the economic propulsion towards a national market. The emergence of what has variously been called the national-popular, or the capitalist-realist forms or the national culture of India has now been replaced by innumerable cultural forms with very specific audience appeal. In many discussions of India, there is a tendency to suggest that the Indian experience is unique. While there are no doubt certain unique features, the Latin American experience seems to be familiar. Jesus Martin-Barbero writes of the experience in that area in the early phase of the emergence of the modern nation in terms that seem applicable to India :

A new nationalism emerged, based on the idea of national culture, which would be the synthesis of different cultural realities and a political entity bringing together cultural, ethnic and regional difference...To work for the nation means, above all, to work for unification, overcoming the fragmentation that generated the regional and the federal wars of the 19th century. Unification through roads, railways, telegraph networks, telephones and radio broadcasting made possible

communication between regions, but above all between the regions and the centre, the capital.

(Fox and White, trans., 1993)

The twentieth century saw the emergence of national-level radio broadcasting, national-level telecasting, national cultural products like cinema and music, all working towards a culture of the nation all over the world, including India.

It has become commonplace to suggest that the truly national cultural products of the nation-state of India was the Hindi cinema and the truly national songs of the nation were the Hindi film songs. Ashis Nandy in an article uses an interesting anecdote from the descriptions of the hijacking of an Indian Airlines jet by Sikh militants in 1984. According to this description, one of the young hijackers would sing songs from popular Hindi films and this created a bond between the hijackers and the hijacked (Dwyer and Pinney 2001, 15). By the last quarter of the twentieth century, we see the beginning of the end of the creation of such wide audiences for cultural products — both state-created and market created — and instead we find cultural products which are targeted for smaller segments of society.

This fragmentation of the mediascape has modified the nature of sociality in our current global media situation. John B. Thompson argues that we now experience (as audience) a mediated sociality, that is: 'Our sense of the groups and communities with which we share a common path through time and space, a common origin and a common fate, is altered. We feel ourselves to belong to groups and communities which are constituted in part through the media' (1997, 10). If we can extend this slightly, it can partially explain the two groups of the audience on that winter evening where the global Bengalis create their sense of identity based on the culture they consume and share with others like themselves. The same applies to the youngsters who congregate in groups and help to consolidate a different identity. This creation of smaller communities through the agency of media and media products again

seems to be a phenomenon shared with other nations. British sociologists David Morley and Kevin Robbins write: 'As an antidote to the internationalisation of programming, and as compensation for the standardisation and loss of identity that is associated with global networks, we have seen a resurgent interest in regionalism within Europe, appealing to the kind of situated meaning and emotional belonging that appear to have been eroded by the logic of globalization' (1995, 35). This suggests that even economically more powerful nations than India are feeling culturally threatened by the impact of global media. However, all too often this is theorised within the discourse of identity politics or another position that Morley and Robbins argue, as a 'reterritorialisation' of the media. To put these issues into this kind of a grid of identity politics depoliticises and deproblematizes the issues involved. While media may act as a mediating medium, the kinds of social structures and social values that these new forms of sociality reflect and engender are, I would like to argue, extremely politicised and complex, just as they are in real as opposed to virtual communities.

In this paper I wish to argue that this emergence of the 'global' and 'local' is implicated in designating certain new social-political and cultural configurations in our current environment. I will in this paper concentrate on some of the variations of the manifestations of the local and suggest that the local also has a variety of positionings. Here I will concentrate on the issues of class and gender.

Globalization, far from being a process which is genuinely global in the sense of being an inclusive process is actually an extremely exclusionary process, and other papers in this collection have discussed some of the groups that are being excluded from the global world. I will argue that among the various issues that are articulated in various types of media products, we often find a reaction to globalization and that the nature of this reaction can be related to the positioning of the product in terms of class, the urban-rural location, gender, age and other categories.

One of the examples of a particularly positioned cultural product that I wish to discuss in this paper is the commercial Bangla cinema. There has been a shift in the making, production, marketing and audience of the Bangla commercial film over the last ten years or so. At present, there are clear audience-specific products being produced. One particular type is very low budget—sometimes even as low as Rs 1.5-2 lakhs—which aim at short runs and quick, but small profits. These products are usually characterised as being for a rural audience, but some of these are actually quite popular in the urban and suburban areas too. Typically in these films, we find either the hero or the heroine to be from a poor but honest working class family, while the lover is from an affluent family and often just returned from America. The class positions are emphasised in a variety of ways. The rich are shown as living in luxurious houses, with cars and all the other consumer gadgets at their disposal. The poor live in slums or in the suburbs.

One of the basic premises of these films is that goodness—and goodness is defined in visibly social ways like helping others in the community, providing food or other support to the elderly, encouraging parents to send their children to school—resides in the poor, usually working class family and social situation. One of the points that is established very early on in the films is that the hero/heroine is not afraid of standing up to the local bullies or small-time crooks. There are usually early scenes where the hero or heroine shows his/her sensitive nature and he/she speaks up and protects the innocent from being harassed by the villain or his gang. The villains of the films inevitably belong to the groups that are identified with social crimes—in Bengal the number one villain of the times is the promoter. So several of these films have the promoter or developer as the villain who is causing a factory to close down in order to make a grab for the land, or trying to dupe the poor into handing over their land for a small sum of money. Politicians are also favourite villains—rarely by themselves, but as supporters of the corrupt. Occasionally we have doctors who are seeking fame and fortune instead of healing the sick and needy as the hero does.

Business men and women also frequent the plots of these films as villains.

In the terms of the focus of this paper, a few specific points may be made. One is that there is in these films an emphasis on the complete lack of faith in the institutions of the state, like the justice system, the police, even in one film a total lack of faith in the educational system. Therefore all the 'right action' has to be done by the hero/heroine. In many scenes, onlookers stand by passively watching some wrong being perpetrated—for example a gang molesting a woman. Only the timely, single-handed intervention of the hero/heroine can save the damsel or the situation. Sometimes the victims attempt to go to the police, but they usually plead helplessness or, worse, are corrupt. Many of these points are true of all melodrama genre popular narratives, where the agency of individual action solves crimes and rights social injustices. However, there is an aspect which I would like to argue makes this particular category of films relevant to the concerns of this volume. There is in almost all these films a common ideology of locating the evil forces within a populist notion of what is seen as globalization.

The factors that seem to define globalization include consumerist spending, a so-called Westernisation of culture and the representation of the lifestyle of the rich as a globalized life. In sharp opposition to these we find repeatedly a clarion call to return to the values of tradition in the lifestyles, the clothes, the values that are used to define the 'good'. A few examples would make this clear. In many of these films, there is at least one dialogue about how something indigenous is better than the Western consumer product, such as a dialogue in *Ek Pashla Brishti* about the green coconut being better than Coca Cola and other soft drinks. Women who are 'bad' are inevitably dressed in Western clothes and listen to western music. The 'good' woman is dressed in conventional attire, often rather badly dressed in fact, as if the virtue of 'simplicity' as opposed to elaborate make up needs to be equated. None of these 'good' women work outside the home unless some

tragedy forces them to. In fact, women with careers are shown to be heartless and usually get into all kinds of trouble. The better alternative, it seems to be suggested in film after film, is to stay at home and let the man of the house face the world.

The power of tradition is often conveyed through the images of religious deities. Durga and Kali especially seem to haunt these films as both of these regional goddesses are reconstructed by the narrative to represent the archetypal resistance to evil. Both take up arms, both are bloodthirsty and determined in their crusades. The heroes and heroines are often devotees of either of these two and gain inspiration and sometimes a bit of divine intervention in their crusades. In the alignment of the forces at work, there is a conflation of the honest, the traditional and the religious, as if the 'goodness' that is advocated receives the sanctions of all these spheres of beliefs. In the film I wish to take as a representative of this type and discuss in more detail, the reigning deity is Durga. The film is titled *Tomar Rakte Amar Sohag* (*I Am Wedded By Your Blood* is the nearest, but very inadequate English translation I can manage). It has almost all the features mentioned above. The heroine is the good, poor girl and the hero is the idealistic young architect just returned from America with grand plans of providing low cost but good housing for the poor and other such ideas, which, obviously put him at odds with the scheming, greedy, profit hungry promoter. The hero is killed in front of the image of Durga in a temple where the hero and heroine have met to marry in secret. The heroine is drenched in his blood and the blood replaces the sindur as she is 'wed' at this moment of death.

In this film, as in some others, it is the woman who acts as the agent of the restoration of the 'proper' order of things. It is interesting that the heroine begins her transformation from a rather simple unsophisticated girl to the instrument of justice by visiting the gym, doing aerobics, and undergoing a rigorous physical training schedule in the western style. She wears leotards and gym shoes, and a sweat-band on her head. Once she is fit, she begins to learn

the traditional arts of fighting like stick fighting, the use of the heavy sword and goes to traditional gurus, often in the temple grounds. From other cultures she learns karate and the use of traditional weapons like the chain and stick or how to throw ropes to bind and trip up people. In these sequences, the image of Durga with her eyes focussed on vengeance and the elimination of evil is inter-cut with the scenes of training. Durga appears at other crucial points in the narrative too. The inefficacy of the police has already been established earlier, so the heroine has to undertake the duty of the restoration of justice alone. Traditional social and institutional structures have failed this woman—neither the police nor society nor the political process has been able to protect her. She is 'married' only in the eyes of the temple deity and she is pregnant and soon delivers a male child. One of the features of modernity is the institutionalisation of social life—crime and punishment is given over to the state as is the legitimisation of births, marriages, and deaths. In this film, all these structures of modernity fail and the heroine reverts to a pre-modern mode of justice based on a traditional (rather than modern or contemporary) system of values. In the logic of the film, the woman serves to solidify conventions of patriarchy, not to question them. For example, the issue of the illegitimate son is solved by the child's grandfather accepting the child as the proper heir to his family heritage and the claim is based on the logic of patriarchy rather than any acceptance of a radical notion of marriage and or relationships. One wonders what would have happened to the child if it had been a female child.

At the end, the rich are all punished—serious wrongdoers are killed off while lesser offenders are publicly humiliated and slink away into narrative oblivion. The agent of revenge is the woman who kills the villain just outside the courtroom after the trial is over while a crowd passively watches and so do the official upholders of justice. Obviously, this vigilante action cannot be entirely condoned, so the woman is eventually killed by the police after she fulfils her role of the avenging deity. In this, as in all these films, the good, honest poor ultimately win the battle.

Which is of course hardly surprising considering that Bengal has had such a long tradition of left movements and working and peasant movements. Yet in these films what is particularly interesting is the appropriation of certain typically left rhetoric and iconography by these commercial films. One of the mega-hits of recent years is a film titled *Sasurbari Zindabad* with its sequel *Jamalbabu Zindabad*. In the film *Tomar Rakte Amar Sohag* the heroine leads a rebellion of the workers against the businessmen with 'Inquilab Zindabad' and 'Manchhi Na, Manbo Na'—typical leftist slogans of protest. Yet there is nothing at all leftist in this film. What seems to be happening is that here we can find the residue of the radical leftist sentiments of the past. This residual radicalism is mixed with a contemporary traditionalism to create a hybridised form of protest against what seems to be defined as a new form of class oppression, which is not merely a class-based one, but one in which the oppressors are connected with the forces of globalization. In many of these films, including this one, the villains are shown to have criminal connections with Dubai and other such places which have received a kind of notoriety in the public imagination. The battle lines are between those who have chosen the path of greed, profit and exploitation and those who have the sanction of the community at large, the deity and tradition. In these battles, the icons of 'global culture' and 'traditional culture' are pitted against one another to invest these films with a strange mixture of residual radicalism and revivalist traditionalism.

The legacy of the great Bangla cinematic tradition of Ritwik Ghatak, Satyajit Ray, and Mrinal Sen has not completely disappeared though. Rather, the Bangla cinema has become more stratified in terms of production values, audience, content, and ideology. Over the last five years or so, there has been the emergence of a middlebrow cinema in Bangla, which is director-dominated, which wins prizes at festivals and that draws the middle class Bengali into the better halls in Calcutta. These are films directed by Aparna Sen, Rituparno Ghosh and a few others. It is my argument that in these films, the positioning of the local with the global is

not antagonistic but rather works towards a dovetailing between the global and the local. In Rituparno Ghosh's film *Dahan* the molestation of a woman actually forms the basis of the story but the scene is completely different from the sequences in the films being discussed earlier. The scenes in *Dahan* are much more naturalistic in design. The positioning of a variety of onlookers and their comments establishes certain attitudes towards the scene. The camera does not take the position of the omniscient narrator, but changes perspectives constantly.

In films like these, there is a very 'politically correct' stance taken by the directors very consciously. The molested woman is freed through her insistence on fighting for justice. In Aparna Sen's *Paromitar Ek Din* (A Day in the Life of Paromita) too, the focus is the young, newly wed girl. Eventually, she leaves her abusive husband and finds romance and fulfilment in her relationship with Srivastava who works for what else, but an advertising agency. However, to make him an acceptable hero figure, we are told that he is also working on a documentary on something worthwhile. He romances the heroine with wine and hot baths in the bathtub. He literally whisks her away in his new white Maruti, and from the simple, rather timid, not very intellectual young girl of the traditional North Calcutta family emerges the independent, individualistic, woman who participates in the globalized world of consumption, media, and of course love with the jeans and Reebok clad knight. This romance, we are sure, will cause their child who is conceived at the end of the film to be healthy and fit for the new world—not the spastic child of the first marriage who had to die in order for the heroine to be able to lead the life of the new woman. This genre of film seems to be able to negotiate globalization with relative ease and confidence. Issues of gender, class, and individual choice dominate these films. Yet in these films the attempt seems to be to coalesce the global icons with the local traditions. Of course, both the 'global' and the 'local' are defined and represented very differently in these films than in the earlier ones. Here, for example, Paromita takes her mother-in-law out for lunch at a fashionable

restaurant. This act of eating out is, as Beckenbridge and Appaduarai argue (1996), in itself an act of participating in the rituals associated with modernity, and to include the mother-in-law in such an act is to defy the traditional constructions of the daughter-in-law and mother-in-law relationship. These films accept certain notions of the 'modern' Bengali which does not preclude a certain consumption pattern associated with globalization. Thus, Paromita's 'true love' is represented to us in almost Hollywoodish terms of sensuousness, with wine and flowers and other 'global' markers of romance. By taking this step, Paromita defies the patriarchal ideology that imprisoned her mother-in-law in the demanding, loveless household of convention, tradition and duty and relegated her male admirer to a pathetic figure of contempt. In these films, the local, the national and the global elide with no sharp edges into a smooth celebration of the integration of the local and the global.

Perhaps that is why these films rely heavily on that staple of the Bangla Bhadrak (educated middle class) for its music—the good old Rabindrasangeet. This particular genre of music allowed the Bengali to create a very small but powerful repertoire of songs that served as a way of articulating a cultural distance from the commercialised Hindi film music and the commercialised Bengali Adhunik music and has sustained the notion of the cultured Bengali for generations. Like Ritwik Ghatak, Aparna Sen, Gautam Ghose and others rely almost entirely on this musical genre to capture the sense of the continuing 'Bengaliness' of the characters who may be choosing new ways of fulfilment for themselves.

It seems that it is in reaction to the domination of the Rabindrasangeet and all that the genre represents in terms of cultural capital that the form of music this paper began with—Bangla Rock—seems to be flourishing. For the young and trendy, Bangla Rock seems to offer a combination of the local and the global in a perfect mix. At first hearing, the Bangla Rock seems to echo the sounds of a variety of Western rock music—an eclectic mix that includes the Beatles, Pink Floyd, Bob Dylan, Caribbean beats, rap,

and Simon and Garfunkel. Snatches of tunes sound as though you have heard them before, and of course you have—only in a different language and in a different time. The boys dancing to the tunes look distressingly global in their clothes, and pathetically provincial as they self-consciously try to copy MTV-mediated images of crowd behaviour. The groups too present their performance in typical rock group style. Yet they are still in the process of learning and the dancers on the floor often look as if they have learnt their steps not on the floor of the hip Calcutta disco Tantra but in the *bhashan* processions after Kali Puja. This brand of music is almost entirely patronised by the student crowds of urban and suburban Bengal. There are now many such, of varying talent and ability, but I would like to talk about one such group who call themselves Chandrabindoo.

Chandrabindoo is of course a linguistic symbol, but to all educated Bengalis it will also immediately remind them of the great writer of nonsense literature, Sukumar Ray. Many of their songs which are strong on lyrics dwell on media, globalization, images and so on. Yet in their songs a clear sense of ambivalence emerges. One of their lines is 'Tumi sandhyar meghamala, aami Gabbar Singh'—a very difficult line to translate because the first part is a line from one of Tagore's songs and very roughly may be translated as 'you are the clouds at sunset' while the rest of it says 'I am Gabbar Singh'. This line playfully attacks the romanticism that Tagore uses in most of his love songs and also, perhaps, the incompatibility of this romanticism with the romanticism of popular media products. Another song titled 'Khelche Sachin' (Sachin is Playing) begins by enunciating the sense of exclusion that the urban student feels – 'Tomra khabe murgi mutton, amra khabo chow/ Tomra hole essential, amra holam fou' which may be translated as 'You will eat chicken and mutton, while we eat chow (here referring to the cheap plates of chow sold on the pavements of Calcutta for Rs 5-7)/ You are essential, while we are the free gift'. In all their lyrics, including this one, there is a deliberate blurring of linguistic registers, as they juxtapose slang words with English words with

lines from Tagore or Sukumar Ray or other classics. The whole song is a sardonic comment on the creation of media heroes like Sachin, Sourav, Madhuri Dixit while the spectators watch hungrily and lead lives of financial and emotional poverty.

The song I wish to look at in some detail is called 'Duniya Dot Com' (Appendix 1 p. 233) and is one of the most popular songs on their third cassette called 'Cha'—the Bengali letter. There is also a visual for this song which begins with the screen saver which shows the Windows symbols flying around, then cuts to what is apparently a scene of a puja, but as the camera draws back, we can see that the priest, wearing a garland made of CDs, is praying to a computer monitor. The visuals consist of a juxtaposition of images from hi-tech worlds—like the flying windows screen saver—to the local boy who is desperately trying to be included in the 'global' world of computer technology, the Internet, and multimedia operations.

The tune is parodic of the tune of mantras, especially evocative of the mantras that are broadcast on the early morning special programmes on the day of the Mahalaya, the first day of the Durga Puja season. However, the rhythm is strongly beat based and synthetic. Here the word *Baby* replaces the word *Devi*, in the original. The deliberate juxtaposition of Haldia and Honolulu is of course more than just onomatopoeic as Haldia is the hope of Bengal's programme of a new wave of industrialisation. Similarly the names Gublu-Bablu suggest the non-Westernised group of young boys who now can dream of making it big on the dot com roller-coaster. These songs capture the duality that the educated, but non-privileged group of students are trying to fit into the contemporary world of the electronic media. There is hope, but also satire; promise, but also possibilities of failure; the global, but only at a very local, even petty level. The global is fascinating, but also inaccessible, while remaining a mythic space for dreams and visions that may come true if the computer gods are propitiated enough.

One of their songs (translated as 'If You Don't Drink Your Milk') advises the listeners about how to be a 'good boy'—drink your milk, do well at school, do an MBA, go to America, and finally 'marry a Mem[sahib]'. This clearly makes fun of the social and economic aspirations of the Bengali middle class for whom educational qualifications have provided the means to a better life. As 'Duniya Dot Com' suggests, even boys who have failed to clear high school can now dream of making it big by mastering the new technology. This popular cultural product is aimed at a different, but very specific audience and captures the ambivalence that exists about the processes of globalization. In the formulation of these songs, the national exists in the saturated world of media entertainment where cricketers and film stars inhabit the world of consumptive culture and the local lads can only remain the mute, excluded audience—excluded equally from the global and the national.

While local youths are singing and dancing along to the irreverent rhythms of Chandrabindoo, a look at the web magazine *Banglalive.com* shows us that the global Bengali with whom we began is happy to be excluded from his own global existence and take refuge in the world of the comic strip hero, Bantul the Great. This uncomplicated, simple, almost pastoral world of Bantul is apparently the most popular item on their site which is aimed at the diasporic Bengali community. Nostalgia comes in many forms, and the unlikely catalyst for the global nostalgia is the rather stupid, but well meaning Bantul for whom consumption means eating a dozen rosogollas or a batch of newly baked cakes. Visually in the comics too, there is a simplicity of line and frame that negates the dazzling world of contemporary media. The global and the local meet in a sort of remembrance of things past and laughs laughed, in a world before September 11th and recession and world-wide terrorism.

Many theorists talk about the fact that as global culture becomes more powerful, there is an inverse relationship in which the local

is offset against the feared swamping by the global. Unlike the seventies and eighties, in the era of the MacBride Commission or the New World Information and Communications Order, where the formulation of cultural imperialism was framed in terms of the conflict between the West and the Third World, in this global age, everyone seems to be equally threatened by the global, which, because of the mobility of finance and the transnational character of production companies and the emergence of mega-media corporations has made local cultures seem vulnerable even in the West or in the developed countries. By reading these varieties of cultural products, there seems to be a series of new relationships between the local and the global which reveal the contradictions that processes of globalization have made us aware of in unexplored ways. In these new forms of culture, rather than a homogenisation, what we find is a multi-layered, discrete formation of culture through which the players, the spectators, and the victims of the processes of globalization are searching for ways of responding to the new ways of the world.

****** A particular Bengali ambiguity regarding the influence of the West: a valorisation as well as a simultaneous association of the West with 'evil' in certain Bengali films were talked about. The poor in Bengal respond positively to the films painting the evils of globalization because they do feel isolated, alienated from the benefits of that process. The directors of these films, although motivated primarily by profit, tapped into innate anxieties regarding globalization as well as communal or religious traditionalism.

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Appendix 1

Duniya Dot Com

Chandrabindu

Asha Studio

2001

Go on, Baby, Run along, learn the Multimedia
Gublu Bablu had a dream, a WW Idea
E-connected, on the net, Honolulu-Haldia
Duniya dot com, Duniya dot com, Duniya dot com, Namah, Namah

Dead of night, the mouse trap, catch them all;
Corpses run—holy water—walking tall;
March ahead with your floppy, clarion call.

Vagabond kids touch the mouse and become 'First-Class'
Father's thrashing, kids are learning Java, Sumatra, C Plus Plus
The mad scramble, for the brain drain, save yourself in the rush.
Duniya dot com, Duniya dot com, Duniya dot com, Namah, Namah

Dollar-pence, foreign money, fattened cow.
Cholesterol, heart diseases, you know how.
Bears and bulls; come on baby; right now.

Here you come, fatty bum, High school took so long.
Crippled fellow? buy a leg, in the race you'll be so strong.
Computers, NIIT, a generation gone so wrong.
Duniya dot com, Duniya dot com, Duniya dot com, Namah, Namah

Kargil and the Consolidation of 'Indianness': Media Representations of the Kargil Conflict

Subarno Chattarji

A classic framework of interpreting media representations is the propaganda model developed by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky in their path breaking book, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (1988/1994). They point out that one dichotomy sustained through the cold war was that between the free and democratic west and the despotic and totalitarian communist bloc. An ostensible sign of this freedom was the mass media, the fact that editors and television anchors could occasionally critique the government of the time. The myth of democratic freedom asserted that dissent was permitted in the West unlike the plight of dissidents such as Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Andrei Sakharov. There are nuances within this monolithic position that I cannot examine in detail but I mention this because the Manichaeic logic of 'us' versus 'them' helped to sustain both sides in the cold war. This Manichaeism is evident in the reportage on Kargil and I will return to that later in this paper. The media in the west and elsewhere, however, was and is neither free nor objective. In the words of Herman and Chomsky:

The mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behavior that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society. (Herman & Chomsky 1994, 1)

In other words the media is a powerfully hegemonic entity that creates and reinforces desirable opinions and values. Herman and Chomsky analyse the ways in which news is filtered before it is presented. These filters include the ownership and profit orientation of TV channels; the reliance of media on information provided by the government, by business, and by 'experts' who are often funded by state authorities; and 'anticommunism' as a national religion during the cold war. In the case of Kargil it was anti-Pakistan shading into anti-Islamic and also anti-terrorist/infiltrator modes that filtered the reportage. These elements interact with and reinforce one another. The filters operate so effectively that well-intentioned media people actually believe they are providing objective and fair coverage. The model is not, of course, an inflexible watertight one and dissenting views are occasionally aired or printed. 'Occasionally' is the operative word here because dissent is very effectively marginalised in the mass media. During Kargil, for instance, there was little mention of the terrors of war and about the views of the 'enemy'. The construction of a national consensus was based primarily on the elision of inconvenient points of view through seemingly objective media reports.

'For two and a half months', as Geeta Seshu points out in an article in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, 'wargames occupied television viewers and readers of newspapers and magazines' (Seshu 1999, 2917). I propose to focus on the July 5, 1999 issue of *India Today* to probe certain specificities of these preoccupations. It would be fatuous to base conclusions on one issue of one magazine, but a perusal of the eight cover issues dedicated by *India Today* to Kargil and cross-references from some newspapers reveal a sufficient

degree of consensual reporting and ideological cohesion. The issue under consideration serves as a useful point of entry and highlights the modes of consolidation that so galvanised the country in 1999.

The cover story 'Will the war spread?' has an epigraph from Clausewitz: 'War is fought with the will of the government, competence of the armed forces and support of the nation' (*India Today* 1999, 5 July, 20). Clausewitz's dictum provides a clue to the biases and desires embedded in the article. The article has four subheadings: 'Will international pressure work?', 'Why the border build up?', 'Are the armies prepared?', 'Are political compulsions a push?'. The questions lead to answers that categorise these hopes in terms of authoritative reporting. The first section projects the internationalisation of the conflict as positive fallout. 'Diplomatically, the policy of restraint has paid off with even the leaders of the powerful G-8 warning Pakistan, without naming it, to pull back the intruders and restore the sanctity of the LOC' (*India Today* 1999, 5 July, 22). There is an expression of quiet pride in G-8 and US support for the Indian position with reference to President Clinton's 'personal' involvement in pressurising Nawaz Sharif. The global dimension of the war is emphasised as a coming-of-age of Indian diplomacy. The subtext of this section is fairly obvious but immensely important in its projection of post-Pokhran India as a global player. This subtextual reference may be placed alongside that of *Panchajanya* which exhorted Vajpayee to rise and fulfil the role destiny has chalked out for him, rhetorically asking, 'after all, why have we made the bomb?' (Seshu 1999, 2917). The political right spoke openly of 'finishing off Pakistan' with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) proclaiming in a meeting in Hardwar that '1999 was the year to wipe Pakistan off the globe' (Seshu 1999, 2917). *India Today* was not party to such jingoism but it paradoxically highlights the contradiction between the responsible diplomacy that India wishes to project and a shrill hegemonic discourse within. The section quotes Brajesh Mishra, national security adviser, to reiterate the idea that India's restraint cannot be taken for granted: 'We do not have unlimited patience and time' (*India Today* 1999,

5 July, 22). The idea that India is a reluctant and patient combatant as opposed to the adventurism of Pakistan is stressed in various ways throughout this issue. This section is also oblivious of certain ironies such as India's position *against* the internationalisation of the Kashmir issue, which lies behind the Kargil war. The blanketing out of Kashmir during the coverage of Kargil was across the media and, as Rita Manchanda observes, 'reinforced the negative impression of the people of the state, that Indians see Kashmir as just a territorial dispute' (Manchanda 2001, 90). Manchanda points to the fact that the foreign media which was denied access to Kargil remained in the valley and reported on the alienation of the people of Kashmir and the excesses by the security forces. *The Independent*, UK, reported on the torching of villages in Bandipur, Khargam, and Nathpora by the Indian forces. The Indian media ignored it. Manchanda quotes a well-known Indian TV producer's justification for this blackout: 'I wouldn't touch the story at this time because the viewers wouldn't like to see the army portrayed in a negative light. A postmortem would be alright' (Manchanda 2001, 91). Viewer satisfaction was a convenient mode of evading serious issues and practising self-censorship.

The diplomatic offensive launched by India is intended to pressure the G-8 'to take some tough economic measures against Pakistan' because Pakistan depends heavily on the IMF and other international agencies. Whatever the economic plight of Pakistan the article implies quite clearly that Pakistan is a basket case economy. It then goes on to combine the economic condemnation with the characterisation of Pakistan as a terrorist safe haven. 'It is also in the interest of the US to rein in Pakistan. There are concerns that the country is increasingly becoming the hub of Islamic fundamentalism and supporting the Osama bin Laden type of terrorism that the US wants to crush' (*India Today* 1999, 5 July, 24). Pakistan's desperate economic situation coalesces with the country's role in Islamic fundamentalism to create the idea that Pakistan is a 'rogue' or 'failed' state. In subsequent post-Kargil cover stories *India Today* has analysed extensively the nature of

this 'rogue' state without quite examining the political and economic dynamics of the Pakistani nation state. The situation has, of course, altered significantly after September 11 and, although the demonisation of Pakistan continues, the obvious support that General Musharraf has garnered from the US in its war against terror causes considerable anguish in the Indian political establishment. During Kargil the tenor of media coverage centred on the idea of Pakistan as the quintessential enemy. The *Times of India* editorialised: 'A Talibanised and militarised Pakistan [...] acts as a rogue state because of the autonomy it feels it enjoys because of nuclear capability [...]', and further that Pakistan is 'dominated by mullahs and generals steeped in drug trafficking, money laundering and international terrorism [...]' (Manchanda 2001, 79). Another editorial in the *Times of India* mocked a group of eminent Indians and Pakistanis counselling restraint: 'It is like advocating restraint equally to the rapist and rape victim' (Manchanda 2001, 79). Not only do these statements contribute to the essentialising of the conflict between the two states but also they contain a curious and unconsciously ironic reversal of national definition. In war discourse landscapes and geographies are often feminised so that one speaks of the rape of Vietnam or southern USA during the Civil War, for instance. The feminisation of landscape is a common trope and indicative of victimhood. In the Kargil context India projected itself as the victim of Pakistani intrusion, a reluctant belligerent in a war thrust upon the nation. That Indian intelligence agencies and armed forces were caught unawares by the build up and intrusion along the LOC was initially highlighted by the media. This failure of intelligence became a subject of political and parliamentary debate, but it swiftly disappeared from mainstream media. The rape analogy cited by the *Times* feminises the nation in a way that is at odds with nationalistic rhetoric and desire. The VHP proclamation cited earlier can hardly be construed in terms of victimhood. While pointing to the rabid, fundamentalist elements in Pakistani society and polity, media coverage in India remained silent about its own

fundamentalist fringe with its notion of a resurgent, masculinist Hindu India. The demonisation of the other was at the cost of self-analysis.

The *India Today* cover story makes one passing reference to the economic cost of war: 'A war is also an extremely costly affair and can seriously set back the nation's economic development by several years'. This truism is followed immediately by: 'Nor can a country succeed in war without adequate domestic political consensus and preparing the world for the consequences as India did in 1971' (*India Today* 1999, 5 July, 26). The first sentence opens up vital questions of cost, economic consequence, and the simple fact that two of the poorest nations in the world were fighting a futile war. These questions are not analysed or scrutinised here or elsewhere in the eight-week coverage that *India Today* offered. The reference to domestic consensus is an appeal to the political class to stop 'politicising' Kargil as if it were an apolitical event. The double speak of politicians of almost every political hue was conveniently forgotten. The reference to 1971 ignores the striking difference between the two political and historical moments, from the position of the US to the nuclearisation of the subcontinent. It is the constant edging out and mis- or non-representation of historical facts and contexts that sustains media reportage and creates the 'reality' of Kargil. *India Today* with its multilingual editions and wide circulation carries a certain authority and media presence. The current circulation of *India Today* is 4,032,000 in English, 3,050,000 in Hindi and 1,050,000 for the combined Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam issues. This is more than the combined circulation of other newsmagazines such as *Outlook*, *Frontline*, and *Week*. *Outlook* and *Frontline* in particular did feature more critically analytical articles, as did *The Hindu*, but their relatively small readership meant that dissenting views were confined to a small minority. Thus when *India Today*'s reporters misrepresent or evade analysis there is every possibility that these elisions will not be noticed by the reader. More importantly the continual non-representation of certain issues, such as the reactions of Kashmiris

and events there, serves to obliterate them from the reader's consciousness. It is this gradual and perhaps not so subtle process of censorship that helps in the creation of larger political and media consensus.

One area of consensus was the idea that the Indian armed forces have been consistently underfunded. *India Today* quotes retired Vice Admiral K.K. Nayyar, a member of the 1990 Arun Singh committee on defence expenditure: 'The Kargil crisis is directly attributable to the starvation of funds for the armed forces during the '90s' (*India Today* 1999, 5 July, 25). The section 'Are the armies prepared?' cites specific examples of such deprivation. 'From a peak of 3.6 per cent in 1987-88, the share of defence expenditure in India's gross domestic product (GDP) had slipped to 2.33 per cent in 1998-99. Though this is a global trend, India spends a smaller proportion of GDP on defence than Pakistan and China do' (*India Today* 1999, 5 July, 25). It then goes on to lament the 'real devil', which is not so much defence expenditure allocation as the ways in which it is spent. The analysis is on much firmer ground and points to the bureaucratic and parliamentary delays that have created this situation of unpreparedness. Reading this section from a post-Tehelka point of view I am struck almost by a sense of ironic prescience that the section inadvertently displays since what it does not mention is the elaborate system of patronage and kickbacks that characterise some defence deals in this country. Ramesh Vinayak in an article titled 'Price of austerity' reiterates the details of underfunding: 'At Kargil, the armed forces are learning some hard lessons. Of just how a decade of severe cost cutting and peace has affected its battle-readiness' (*India Today* 1999, 21 June, 32). He too blames the political class for its mishandling of defence procurement without any analytical insights into the details and politics of the process. There is a reference to 'the infamous Bofors gun' and the fact that it has performed well in the mountainous terrain. While the politician and bureaucrat are implicated in processes of defence procurement armed forces personnel are seen as the aggrieved party. Their role in purchases and subsequent

money making is never mentioned. Thus on the one hand while India is the victim of Pakistani intransigence and intrusion, on the other the Indian armed forces are themselves victims of politics and bureaucracy. The almost universal call for more defence spending during and after Kargil was reflected in increased budgetary allocation and increased valorisation of the armed forces. This reality and atmosphere of militarisation is coeval with the VHP call for obliterating Pakistan and media reports contribute effectively towards this process.

In the final section of the cover story under consideration there is a summation of possible political objectives that India could consider. The choices are:

- Dismember Pakistan as in 1971.
 - Settle the Kashmir dispute irrevocably in its favour.
 - Teach Pakistan a hard lesson that will frighten it from any future military misadventure.
- (*India Today* 1999, 5 July, 26)

The first two options are, I suppose, related in that the capture of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) would contribute to the further dismemberment of Pakistan (unless the reporters have some other kinds of dismemberment in mind). The third option is delightfully vague and almost smacks of schoolboy adventurism as if Pakistan were an errant child that needs to be taught 'a hard lesson'. Apart from the touching naivete of these suggestions is the underlying creation and consolidation of a perennial enmity and a moral justification for military action. The Kashmir dispute, for instance, is seen exclusively in militaristic terms and absolves India of all or any responsibility. The dehistoricising of Kashmir is crucial if a homogenous discourse of enmity and victimhood is to be maintained.

Throughout its coverage of the war *India Today* carried a separate feature titled 'Kargil War Heroes'. This feature was a

particularisation of soldiers who died in the conflict and constitute what Manchanda calls the 'theatre of *Shradhanjali*' (Manchanda 2001, 87). In an introduction to the feature Samar Halarnkar and Harinder Baweja write of communities bonded together by grief: 'Some 106 of them came home to tears and memories of those who waited. Yes, families and communities bear a heart-rending pain but beyond that, honour and pride in their dead is creating a oneness of purpose in a divided, cynical nation' (*India Today* 1999, 28 June, 24). This is perhaps the most explicit comment which acknowledges the ways in which the media and the state reappropriate the bodies of the dead soldiers for reconstructing a less divided and cynical nation. That war should be the preferred means of doing so is profoundly ironic. As Adrienne Rich wrote in the context of Vietnam and the appropriation of sons, mothers, and wives for furthering national identity in the US: 'War comes at the end of the twentieth century as absolute failure of imagination, scientific and political. That a war can be represented as helping people to "feel good" about themselves, their country, is a measure of that failure' (Rich 1995, 16). The portraits in *India Today* create a verbal and iconic tapestry of heroism, valour, masculinity, and Indianness weaving together the diverse segments of this divided and cynical nation. Television contributed more effectively to this process and turned the spectacle of the public mourning over ceremonially draped coffins into the metaphor of the Kargil war and a militaristic nationalist resurgence.

[...] Every state, waited to claim its Kargil martyr, whipping up a mass patriotic hysteria, reinforced daily through the endless footage on television. A wave of nationalist resurgence swelled around these martyrs as television trailed them to their homes in Kerala, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan and Orissa, mapping out a heroic India and heroic Indians. (Manchanda 2001, 87)

The cartography of heroism was ably bolstered by the print media as is evident from the *India Today* series. The title headers indicate the specifically masculine glamorisation of the war: 'Doon

Devil', 'Desert Warrior', 'Guts and Glory', 'Nangal's Pride'. Beneath the title is a subheading 'MISSION', which encapsulates the heroic action that led to the death of a particular soldier. The brief profile that follows is largely devoted to individuation and heroisation. For instance, Sepoy Jaswinder Singh's elder brother Sita Ram says in one profile, 'He was tough and the army provided him the adventure he was looking for' (*India Today* 1999, 5 July 35). In another profile Captain Haneef Uddin's mother, Hema Aziz, 'displays the stoicism of grieving families nationwide: 'As a soldier Haneef served his country with pride and dedication. There cannot be a greater statement on his valour than his death which came fighting the enemy' (*India Today* 1999, 5 July, 35). A third profile 'Wangchuk's War' mentions that Wangchuk, 'the son of a paramilitary soldier', 'is a deeply religious Buddhist' and that 'before going to battle he and some of his men went to the Dalai Lama, who was visiting Leh, to seek his blessings [...]. But that gentleman's exterior hides the tough interior of an officer the army is proud to showcase' (*India Today*, 1999, 28 June, 34). These individual memorialisations embody some of the ideological desires of nationhood and its identitarian consolidation through war. While characterising Pakistan as Islamic and fundamentalist the portrait gallery emphasises the plurality and heterogeneity of the Indian nation. That heterogeneity might have once been the cause of cynicism and division but now it is a binding factor.

Human bodies, as Elaine Scarry points out in her classic study, *The Body in Pain* (1985), are the primary locus of war. 'The main purpose and outcome of war is injuring', yet the acts of injuring, as Scarry notes, disappear 'through redescription' (Scarry 1985, 63). Every war produces its own examples of redescription, such as Kamikaze pilots being called 'night blossoms' in the Second World War, the destruction of civilian abodes and civilians designated as 'collateral damage' during Vietnam, or the death of soldiers referred to as the 'supreme sacrifice' in the daily press briefings during Kargil. The *India Today* article presents a heroised version of these bodies in the form of a martyr's gallery, so that the

bodies are recuperated for furthering national glory. The injuries and deaths are not only made invisible, but relocated. The process of relocation takes various forms: as a 'by-product' of war, as a road to another goal, as 'cost', and a continuation of something benign. In the instances cited above the profiles redescribe the dead soldiers in contexts of adventure, fulfilment, valour, and a gentlemanly religiosity. In the last instance there is no sense of irony in Wangchuk's band of brothers seeking the Dalai Lama's blessings to wage war. The overarching framework emphasises the value of death in terms of national good. In passing, many of these profiles indicate that the boys who died came from rural and poor families, that they were the only breadwinners of the family. There is no analysis, however, of socio-economic forces that lead these boys to join the armed forces in the first place. The implication is that it was patriotic frenzy that drove thousands to army recruiting centres across India. Apart from *Outlook* magazine, which carried an article titled 'Martyrs to Unemployment', there was no serious examination of the failures of development and governance that led so many to recruiting offices in search of a job. As Rita Manchanda points out: 'The spectacle of war and martyrdom, glamorised a macho psyche and militarised the national sentiment' (Manchanda 2001, 88). The repeated coverage of grieving but stoic families on television furthered this desire to attain heroic stature. The socio-economic background of many soldiers in Kargil may be compared to the disproportionate number of blacks and Puerto Ricans in combat during the Vietnam War. In Vietnam the rich and the educated opted out of enlistment or fled the country. As Leslie Fiedler put it, Vietnam was 'the first war of which it can be said unequivocally that it is being fought for us by our servants' (Bates 1996, 95). Fiedler's hyperbole does not exaggerate the class and racial divide during Vietnam. In media representations of *shradhanjali* class and caste are conveniently erased and that furthers the process of nation-building. The body is always political (for instance, in the way physical presence is necessary for citizenship rights to be conferred), and the ceremonies of death in

the realm of the media furthered political allegiances and identifications. Conflict with the demonised enemy consolidates the value of those identities and national formations.

In this context media reports about the 'mutilation' of six Indian soldiers is significant. The *Pioneer* carried a report titled 'Barbarians: Pak army gouged Indian soldiers eyes, chopped off ears, genitals' based on a UNI agency flash, quoting an army colonel spokesman. All newspapers mentioned the government and army's version of the mutilation. As Geeta Seshu writes:

Reporters either did not care, or practised self-censorship in the national interest, to ask basic questions: the motivation of Pakistan to return mutilated bodies, whether all or only one body was mutilated (as later reports suggested) or the possibility of natural decomposition. (Seshu 1999, 2919)

War deaths in particular are often gruesome violations of the human body but they are never mentioned in reportage. The mutilations were made much of because they reiterated the essentially 'barbaric' nature of Pakistani soldiers and by extension the Pakistani State. The essentialised, civilisational basis of the war was bolstered and it also links up with the idea of victimhood mentioned earlier. The violation of individual soldiers is constructed as the violation of every Indian – Jaswant Singh stated in a press conference, 'I am outraged, I feel personally violated' – and leads onto the need to avenge these atrocities. It is, of course, significant that the fact of atrocities and torture committed by Indian armed forces in Kashmir is seldom reported in similar terms.

A separate report in the July 5 issue of *India Today*, 'Taking Tololing', presents war as an adventure removed from the contingencies of history, politics, and death. These absences highlight the boy's adventure story quality of Kargil as well as emphasising the immediacy and excitement of war. The latter qualities were best presented on television and Barkha Dutt of 'I'm calling from a bunker' fame established STAR NEWS and herself

as national icons during Kargil. Just as Vietnam was America's first television war Kargil was India's first and the language of war and victory, national identity and consensus noted in the print media was in greater evidence in television coverage. In an article, 'Kargil: a View from the Ground', Dutt emphasises the eyewitness authenticity of her account and then coins broad generalisations and clichés to describe the war. Kargil 'was, for a long time, one huge paradox, a meeting ground of enormous courage and overwhelming fear, of gravitas and vulnerability, of head and heart' (Dutt 2001, 64). In Dutt's analysis the war is virtually apolitical and she repeats truisms of war uncannily similar to that of Michael Herr's classic on Vietnam, *Dispatches* (1977). Dutt writes, for instance, 'Our hack-pack was welcomed with an almost bizarre level of warmth, not just because these men were scared that their stories and sacrifices would slip into anonymity, but more because they were just glad to have someone to talk to' (Dutt 2001, 66). The war reporter as confidant and truth teller and seeker is a commonplace of war reportage, as is the idea that there is something beautiful about the war. She sees herself as a 'mere chronicler' deeply involved in the action and the stories of the soldiers, yet unable or unwilling to fathom the political and ideological realities that have led her and the soldiers to the heights of Kargil. Dutt further distances the soldiers from responsibility by quoting a Commanding Officer who asserts, 'I'm not doing this for my country, Ma'am, I'm doing this for my paltan'. A Nepali soldier from Dehradun is convinced that if they fail 'anyone can turn around and say, you're not fit to join the army' (Dutt 2001, 66). That these military voices perceive themselves as separated from national and political masters and realities is a crucial index of the fictiveness surrounding representations of war. Elaine Scarry's observation on the language of war is relevant here:

As fictiveness becomes a major attribute of language which precedes physical injury (the instrumental language of strategy and alliance that brings the wounding into being), so too it becomes a major attribute of language which follows the injury,

the language reporting the history of the scenes that took place that day. (Scarry 1985, 134)

In writing about the battle for Tiger Hill Dutt reports on actions and reactions not from the point of view of an objective observer, but a war correspondent who sees herself as implicated in that action. However, since those actions have been essentialised and placed within limited ideological spheres they contribute effectively to the mythification of soldier heroism, the beauty of war, that war is hell, and that the soldiers are only boys whose lives and deaths must be commemorated.

There is a fairly entrenched myth that the media was a valuable source of protest and dissidence during the Vietnam War. Rita Manchanda writes: 'In Vietnam, the media's disclosure of the horror and senselessness of the war, turned public opinion against the war' (Manchanda 2001, 86). The media has been blamed by the US Congress, some veterans, and other responsible people in power of actually losing the war for the US. The logic is that images of horror turned people off and they didn't want to see napalmed villages or dead American soldiers while eating their TV dinners. Hence they turned against the war and persuaded President Nixon to start the withdrawal of US troops. Even as astute a critic of war as Paul Fussell asserts that the media during the Vietnam conflict was a moral agent, as opposed to its role during the Second World War:

[I]n unbombed America especially, the meaning of the war seemed inaccessible. As experience, thus, the suffering was wasted. The same tricks of publicity and advertising might have succeeded in sweetening the actualities of Vietnam if television and a vigorous uncensored moral journalism hadn't been brought to bear. (Fussell 1989, 268)

Nothing could be further from the truth. As Herman and Chomsky point out:

It is a highly significant fact that neither then [i.e. 1965 when US Marines landed in Danang in south Vietnam], nor before, was there any detectable questioning of the righteousness of the American cause in Vietnam, or of the necessity to proceed to full scale intervention. By that time of course, only questions of tactics and costs remained open, and further discussion in the mainstream media was largely limited to these narrow issues. (Herman & Chomsky 1994, 172)

Mainstream media seldom, if ever, questioned the basic tenets of the war, i.e. the US was in Vietnam to protect and foster democracy. Facts inconvenient to these tenets were ignored or suppressed. Jack Lawrence, correspondent for the CBS in Vietnam, told me a couple of years ago that there was a significant degree of self censorship in the mass media, and that some scenes of war were actually enacted before the camera for consumption at home. *TIME-LIFE* magazine did not publish Ron Ridenhour's photographs of the My Lai massacre for more than a year after the event. Print media and TV created and echoed a language that dehumanised the enemy. The death of civilians was 'collateral damage', Free Fire Zones implied areas where any Vietnamese person could be killed irrespective of his/her political affiliation or status as civilian, and acronyms such as DMZ contributed to the process of dehumanisation.

This critique of media representations during Vietnam is equally applicable to Kargil with obvious differences of locale, context, and historical circumstance. The official Kargil Review Committee Report stated clearly that:

The media is or can be a valuable force multiplier. Even in circumstances of proxy war, the battle for hearts and minds is of paramount importance. It is little use winning the battle of bullets only to lose the war because of popular alienation. (Kargil Review Committee in *From Surprise* 2000, 214)

In Kargil the media was indeed 'a valuable force multiplier', whipping up war hysteria, succumbing unquestioningly to the demands of patriotic rhetoric, and consolidating a sense of Indianness. Perhaps any sort of 'objective' reporting and dispassionate analysis was virtually impossible given the close connections between media and government (particularly the latter's control of information), and media and big business. STAR NEWS owned by Rupert Murdoch would scarcely risk business prospects and higher TRPs for unearthing the so-called 'truth' or questioning conventional wisdom uttered during Newshour panel discussions. There were occasional articles, such as the battlefield reports of Sankarshan Thakur in *The Telegraph* that exploded the myths of glorious battles being fought for noble ends. His report on Tololing is in sharp contrast to the breezy boy's adventure story presented in *India Today*. By and large, however, the filters that Herman and Chomsky mention operated effectively during the Kargil War. An analysis of these representations reveals anxieties of identity, nationhood, and consolidation. The repressions and elisions are crucial indices of the insecurities of a Third World nation fighting a hi-tech war with sophisticated media coverage. The processes and impact of globalization was revealed most starkly in STAR NEWS coverage with its slick sets and slicker presenters, devoid of serious content and in-depth analysis. The internationalisation of infotainment was most evident in the obvious attempts that STAR NEWS made to present a modern India fighting a medieval, Islamist mindset over the border. The Kargil Review Committee Report notes approvingly that: 'The media coverage, especially over television, bound the country as never before' (Kargil Review Committee in *From Surprise* 2000, 215). A local war in the global village led to the consolidation of almost tribal identities, pushing back any possibility of peace between the two neighbours by years if not decades. Any notion of truth and analytical gestures were swiftly marginalised in the media, and this suited perfectly the desires of the political class. 'Satyameva Jayate', as the Review Committee Report notes, 'is

an excellent motto. But the truth must be assisted to prevail' (Kargil Review Committee in *From Surprise* 2000, 218). The symbiosis of the media and centres of power were almost perfectly synchronised in this assistance of truth and the creation of a less cynical and divided nation.

** Questions of objectivity, authenticity, censorship, and professionalism vis-à-vis reporting on the Kargil War were raised. The idea that media inspired nationalist jingoism was not a pan-Indian phenomenon, that there were pockets of local resistance was also pointed out. For instance, in Calcutta contributions towards War Funds dried up within two weeks of their initiation. One opinion was that perhaps the Kargil War was the least jingoistic of all the wars that India has been involved in.

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Lethal Documents : An Anatomy of the Bhopal Crisis

Suroopa Mukherjee

3rd December 2001 marked the seventeenth anniversary of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, a day usually commemorated by a silent procession of victims and voluntary activists marching the streets of Bhopal. The event goes unreported in the national dailies or the 'Reality Bites' on television. In a true sense the Bhopal crisis has been contained. Its iconic value is systematically denied so that the very commemorative nature of the event is undermined. By choosing to forget the victims they are rendered useless.

The process of erasure is intricate and inbuilt in systems of disaster management (Vishvnathan 1988, 149). Right from the beginning the Bhopal crisis was dogged by a lack of authentic information. Nobody, for instance, knew the exact nature of gas methyl isocyanide or MIC. Neither Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) nor Union Carbide Corporation (UCC), the subsidiary and parent body, had anything to offer in terms of safety manuals or scientific literature on MIC. Such literature was considered classified and not made available to anyone but the top management (Chouhan 1994, 86–110). Carbide reacted to the crisis by maintaining a conspiracy of silence. The government of India stepped in to prevent vital documents from being misappropriated. The CBI raided the premises of the factory and seized whatever

documents they could find. As a result, the facts of the case remain shrouded in secrecy even today (Bhargava 1985, 962–965).

Misinformation usually takes the guise of propaganda. The resident doctor of UCIL informed Hamidia Hospital, where approximately 25,000 patients staggered in on the first night itself, that MIC is not dangerous ('a bit like tear gas', he said) and that affected people should be treated symptomatically. The next morning radio and television announced that Bhopal was fast returning to normal and that vegetation and drinking water were free from toxic poisoning. A mammoth propaganda was undertaken to carry out the dangerous task of neutralizing the 15 tonnes of MIC left as residue in tank E611. It was nick named 'Operation Faith' and the State Government took upon itself the onerous task of convincing the people that there would be no more gas leaks in Bhopal. Banners were put up everywhere, eleven relief camps were set up for 'safe' shelter and Arjun Singh came on television to assure people that this was a 'zero risk' operation. The people of Bhopal chose not to believe anyone, and an estimated 2 lakh people fled the city. Operation Faith went through on December 16th without a hitch, thus proving to the world what Carbide had been claiming all along that nothing was really wrong with the plant. It also projected the state government as being in control of the situation and permitted the central government to send the right signals to the multinationals.

Purnima Mankekar in her book *Screening Culture, Viewing Politics* shows how the Indian State had launched its National Programme in 1982 for utilising the potential of television as a hegemonic state apparatus (1999, 60). Soon after the gas tragedy, the Madhya Pradesh Congress government worked in close collusion with the Center to propagate its ideal of a modern state dedicated to development and progress. It seemed imperative that the images of the tragedy were closely monitored. In a sense what Bhopal had unleashed was the modern monster of technology devoid of its human face. The faces that flashed on television or on

the print media were too ordinary, too humdrum to be really daunting. Who had not seen slum dwellers with their gaunt faces and doomed eyes, peddling their miseries in stereotypical images? Then again the Andersons, the Woomers and the Mukunds were all too familiar for us to grasp the enormity of what had happened.

There were only two available means of dealing with the tragedy. Disaster management deals with statistics, offering vital ways of coping with the magnitude of the event by reducing everything to paper work. It spirits away the familiar faces, replacing them with graphs and indexes. The other way is more journalistic and sensational. It offers the human-interest story, packaged with picture images and the nuances of individual voices.¹ It is meant both to distress us and comfort us by the very uniqueness of the story. By a deft shift in focus Union Carbide is revealed as the inevitable face of development and progress, the inherent risk government of India takes when it signs a transfer of technology contract.

No doubt, the written word has failed to capture the complexity and grim reality of Bhopal. And this, despite the fact that a prodigious amount has been written on Bhopal. It has been filmed, including a mainstream Bollywood version, and quite recently Dominique Lapierre has come up with a best seller that has made waves in Europe.² What I intend to do in this paper is to look at some vital documents and see how they image what has been described as the worst industrial crisis of this century. These documents are legal in nature and they were used in the apex court of India, the institutional upholder of the fundamental right of our citizens to life and a pollution free environment. It will help us to understand why Bhopal became the worst case of a medico-legal disaster.

In management parlance any industrial accident has the potential to escalate into a crisis (Shrivastava 1994, 19). This is best exemplified by using the central metaphor of a chain that is loosely coupled or connected. What is often a mere accident in the

sense of being a failure of technology becomes a crisis when subsequent actions involving people and organizations with a stake in the outcome combine in unpredictable ways to threaten the social structure itself. When the existing social system is incapable of resolving the ensuing economic, social, cultural and political problems we say it is facing a crisis. Thus the real story behind a crisis can rarely be understood by looking at the mere sequence of events as they happen. Similarly the loose coupling in the sequence of events often makes it very difficult to pin down responsibility to a single centralized agency. We need to see how a crisis extends to the organizational and socio-political environment in which the accident occurs.

Paul Shrivastava, author of *Bhopal: Anatomy of a Crisis*, who originally belongs to Bhopal and currently is a professor of Management at Bucknell University, Pennsylvania, uses Bhopal as a text book case study to analyse the nature of an industrial crisis. He tells us that the accident that happened in the Carbide plant 17 years ago still persists as a crisis. Therefore the compelling need to understand its ramifications outside the scope of traditional concepts and theories. Bhopal has to be rewritten using a new kind of imaginative engagement with disasters as they happen in today's world (Iyer 1991, 2705-2712).

An industrial crisis has multiple stakeholders who are put under considerable pressure at moments of crisis. Corporations such as Union Carbide that own and manage the industrial plant where the triggering event has taken place remains the major stakeholder with its 50.9 per cent share in the joint venture with the Indian subsidiary. It is therefore legally liable for accidents and hazards emanating from the premises. Government agencies who look after the industrial and social infrastructure like regulations, civil defense and public health are major stakeholders. They are not only meant to provide regulator and monitoring services so as to prevent a crisis, they are just as much responsible for mitigating the effects of a crisis. Usually government agencies have political liability

and failure to perform can threaten the government's own legitimacy. The third stakeholder is the public interest groups that are autonomous and can put pressure on the state and international agencies to resolve problems. Their liability is more diffuse and people turn to them when they have lost faith in establishment organisations. Finally the most profoundly affected stakeholders are the victims. They are the workers in production facilities, consumers and residents of communities facing danger from hazardous plants.

Union Carbide saw the Bhopal plant as a non-profit organization, more or less a blot on their corporate image.³ The MIC production unit of the Bhopal facility was started in 1979 with the capacity to manufacture 5,250 tons of MIC based pesticides. The idea was to take advantage of the Green Revolution and capture a large portion of the growing market for chemical agricultural inputs. But Union Carbide miscalculated on two counts. The Bhopal facility was five times the size needed to supply the anticipated demand. In 1981 peak production was 2,704 tons (nearly half the anticipated demand) slipping further to 1,657 tons in 1983. Fluctuating market following drought conditions soon made the company go into a 'long term decline'. Besides, it had not heeded the advice that MIC should be stored in 55-gallon drums for both safety and economic reasons. In order to maintain cost effectiveness UCIL compromised severely with safety standards. By 1984 UCC directed UCIL to close down the Sevin plant and prepare it for sale. At the time of the accident the MIC division of the factory had been non-functional for months, perhaps explaining why many of the systems in the plant failed on the 3rd night.

No doubt developing countries are more prone to industrial disasters because complex technologies are brought to communities that do not have the infrastructure to support them. Bhopal is a classic case in point. A thousand years old city, its industrial capacity was primitive. It had neither adequate water supply nor housing, transport or communication facilities; it did not have proper public

health services, community awareness of the hazards of industrial growth or an effective regulatory system (Basu 1994, 8-12). Densely populated slums mushroomed around industrial plants like UCIL. The slum dwellers were migrant labourers working in unorganized sectors and illegal occupants of the land. They lived in unhygienic conditions; death and diseases were part and parcel of their daily lives. Arjun Singh had given them pattas or land deeds in order to win their votes. Thus when some of the workers protested against two accidents that had taken place prior to 1984, by distributing posters that warned the citizens against the possibility of a major accident, the slum dwellers responded with open hostility. They saw this as part of a political strategy to gain publicity.

No doubt the plant was sanctioned by a government under pressure to industrialize. This despite the fact that the support systems were missing. Shrivastava points to a fundamental contradiction that obstructs the state's ability to deal with an industrial crisis. On the one hand, the state must create conditions for capital to be invested in the most productive and profitable way. On the other hand, it must regulate this investment in an effort to preserve public good and the environment. This bid to both control and free the productive enterprise system, according to Shrivastava becomes the source of the crisis (Shrivastava 1994, 21). In an attempt to safeguard its legitimacy the government does not always serve the public interest. The government of Madhya Pradesh used everything in its power to scale down the magnitude of the crisis. It declared the number of dead as 1,700, an official record that remained unchanged even after the count in hospitals kept rising. The strategy of revealing little information is designed to protect the government's legitimacy. Both the industrial organization and government agencies choose to control the media. Thus false stories make the rounds adding to the confusion and heightened perception of harm. UCIL carried on with its propaganda by floating a theory of sabotage by a disgruntled worker who simply fixed a hose pipe and allowed water to get into tank E610. The government pitched in with a story about a Sikh terrorist group taking responsibility for the tragedy. Inevitably

the collective response to a crisis is piece meal and symptomatic without eliminating its fundamental causes. Hence the crisis potential continues to exist long after the actual event is over.

Perhaps nothing can quite capture the story of Bhopal as graphically as the legal struggle that ensued within the portals of the highest judicial bodies in India. Leading lawyers fought out the case, 'representing' the victims. Moves and countermoves were strategically made according to rules of fair play. The legal documents became very important.⁴ It recorded the 'voices' of both the plaintiff and the defendant. But how far was the authentic voice of the victim heard inside the courtroom? As victims they ceased to be living, breathing, suffering entities and became units in a number game.

Soon after the disaster, Bhopal became an ideal hunting ground for hordes of American lawyers (ambulance chasers) who swooped down upon the victims and carried away thumb impressions, to register as many as 1,86,000 suits in different District courts in the US. In retaliation the Indian Parliament passed the Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster [Processing of Claims] Act on March 29, 1985. This gave the government of India the statutory right to represent victims, too poor and illiterate to bring any action against a multinational. All victims were brought under a protective umbrella by grouping them into a class of claimants. A claimant was defined as any person who had 'suffered injury as a result of the disaster' and was therefore in a position to claim compensation.

Legal proceedings were initiated against Union Carbide by the government of India in the New York district court on April 8, 1985. India did not have jurisdiction to try UCC anywhere else but in America. UCC responded by declaring the forum 'inconvenient' and asked for a dismissal of the case. While Judge Keenan upheld charges, he ruled that the more convenient forum for trial would be India. The scene shifted to the District Court of Bhopal on September 5, 1986. In December 1987 Judge M.S. Deo of the

District court ordered for the payment of interim relief to the tune of Rs 350 crore, which was modified to a sum of Rs 250 crore by the High Court of Madhya Pradesh. Both UCC and Union of India appealed against the order. In order to circumvent what they described as a lengthy legal battle, the Supreme Court of India in an order dated February 14, 1989, directed both parties to arrive at an overall settlement of 470 million US dollars, to be paid as compensation by Union Carbide and a termination of all civil and criminal proceedings against them.

A shock wave swept through the country. The settlement was described as a sell out, a betrayal, a second catastrophe. What was the basis of such a compromise, was the question asked at several forums. But curiously enough a great deal of the protest centered on the 'amount' of compensation. Why had the government of India agreed to a paltry sum of 470 million when the original demand had been 3000 million US dollars? The Bhopal litigation hinged on two important factors, compensation and liability. (Jayaprakash 1990 2761-2766). In other words, how much money would compensate the disaster? And in the final analysis, who was responsible for the tragedy? The spirit of the settlement did not presume guilt. Thus it denied the victims the only compensation they could have hoped for: justice. What the litigation threw up for analysis were the ways in which Bhopal was reconstructed for legal purposes. It rebuilt the image of all the stakeholders and recreated the arena within which the conflict was enacted. It brought in larger factors from social, economic, cultural and political fields thus redefining modes of perception. It made industrial crisis much more than just a model for management studies.

Judge Keenan's order to choose India as the convenient forum was based on a quaint use of the colonial context as the basis for assessing the Indian judicial system. The plaintiff, on the other hand, had asked for the case to be tried in the US, on grounds that the law of torts was far more developed in America, and a much bigger package could be worked out as compensation for the

victims. Delays were endemic in Indian courts. Besides it was felt that Bhopal was too big a case to be merely local in its impact. Given its global implications it should be tried in full view of the American people so that they saw for themselves the fall out of double standards in matters of safety.

It is this wider, global issue that Judge Keenan circumvents by putting forward the theory of India's emergence from the stranglehold of colonial rule through a process of rapid industrialization. In his eyes the crisis was a fall out of the antagonistic field that was created by the contending political factors. His own role in it was seen as potent and historic.

In the Court's view to retain the litigation in this forum, as plaintiff's request, would be yet another example of imperialism, another situation in which an established sovereign inflicted its rules, its standards and values on a developing nation. The Court declines to play such a role. The Union of India is a world power in 1986, and its courts have the proven capacity to mete out fair and equal justice. To deprive the Indian judiciary of this opportunity to stand tall before the world and to pass judgement on behalf of its own people would be to revive a history of subservience and subjugation from which India has emerged. India and its people can and must vindicate their claims before the independent and legitimate judiciary created since the Independence of 1947. (Baxi 1986, 69).

At the same time, the private interest of Union Carbide is made to override the public interest of an event with global ramifications. And here the judgement provides a litany of shortcomings in-built in the Indian system. Thus it is pointed out that all evidences for the case are located in India, and given the unsystematic method of maintenance of documents like records of the Safety/Medical department, which is responsible for daily auditing of safety performance and maintaining safety statistics, it may be virtually impossible to produce them in a foreign court. This coupled with problems of translation and the fact that most of the witnesses whose

testimony would have direct bearing on the case were residing in India, made the entire process cumbersome and expensive for Union Carbide.

The judgement touches upon a vital aspect of industrial crisis, namely the question of corporate liability. If American corporations made profit from doing business abroad then they had the moral responsibility to provide justice for any resulting mishap. It was precisely this moral responsibility that Judge Keenan's ruling undermined. He seemed to feel that the onus of what happened was entirely on UCIL. According to the ruling, 'Design Transfer Agreement' and 'Technical Service Agreement' were negotiated at arms length, pursuant to Union Carbide corporate policy, and the Union of India mandate that the Government retained specific control over terms of any agreement UCIL made with foreign companies.

Thus in a single ruling Judge Keenan was able to preach for a deliberate amorality in the making of corporate decisions (Kumar, February 1989). Clearly corporations are meant to pursue objectives that are rational and purely economic, while it is the regulatory hand of law and the political process that would turn these objectives to the common good. But in this case the court of law failed to provide the forum for laying down grounds for the common good. Judge Keenan's stance remained imperialistic, and by a subtle shift in focus he was able to renegotiate India's place within the colonial context. To quote him:

India no doubt valued its need for a pesticide plant against the risks inherent in such development. India is a country with a vastly different standard of living, wealth, resources, level of health care and services, values, morals and beliefs than our own. Faced with different needs, problems and resources India may in balancing the pros and cons give different weight to various factors than our society. Should we impose our standards upon them in spite of such differences? We think not. (Baxi 1986, 66)

In many ways the judgement paved the way for an out of court settlement. It showed how the structure of a multinational made it virtually impossible to pinpoint responsibility for an industrial disaster. The serious repercussion of such a lapse becomes apparent when we turn to more recent developments in the Bhopal crisis. In February 2001 UCC merged with the Michigan based Dow Chemical Company. Any attempt to make Dow assume liability for the continuing health impact of the disaster has met with little success. The Justice for Bhopal Group, which undertook an extended touring of the US to raise awareness and press for accountability, has asked Dow to release unpublished medical research on MIC's toxicity so as to treat patients who continue to suffer from the after affects of the gas. The groundwater and soil in and around the factory site continues to be toxic and a new strain of tuberculosis has been recently detected in Bhopal. The reaction of John Musser communication director (public affairs) is quite predictable: 'We have tried to identify some humanitarian initiative...it is strictly philanthropic activity and shouldn't be confused with any assertion that we are responding to ...demands on liability'. A blatant refusal to accept liability is in the face of what Greenpeace representative Dr Mary Elizabeth Harmon has categorically stated: 'US law doesn't absolve responsibility for contamination due to transition of ownership. A lesser standard outside the US is unconscionable' (Sen 2002, 14).

The Bhopal Act placed the individual victim in direct conflict with Union Carbide described in the plaintiff's writ petition as a 'monolithic, multinational corporation'. As a monolithic entity it became even more difficult to determine how exactly Union Carbide controlled its subsidiaries, especially in such crucial areas as safety and technology. The only way to establish absolute liability was to set aside the 'corporate veil' of secrecy, something that no multinational would ever allow. Right from the beginning Carbide made it very clear that it was not willing to accept a 'guilty' verdict (Baxi and Dhanda 1990, 34-107). It was not willing to pay compensation as punishment even in the name of justice. At best it

was ready to 'settle' for a certain amount to be paid to the gas victim, so long as the word 'liability' was struck down.

After the case was transferred to the District Court in Bhopal, UCC responded with a written statement made on December 10, 1986 accusing the Union of India of filing a suit that was 'premature' as it was based on 'vague and general allegations'. The accusation was well on target. The Bhopal Act had clearly set down rules for assessing of claims, yet the government was tardy in doing so. UCC rightly pointed out that the petition had failed to demonstrate the exact nature of the damage to life and property in Bhopal. Here again the fatal flaw lay in the manner in which the victim was classified and the quantum of injury evaluated.

The experience of Bhopal was unprecedented in many ways. It was for the first time that the impact of chemical agents on the human body was seen on such a vast scale (Narayan 1990, 1835-1846 and Aug. 25, 1990, 1905-1913). In the days that followed the accident the doctors on duty failed to keep any record of the vast number of patients that thronged the hospitals. Later this posed a major legal problem for the victims. Patients came with a bewildering variety of symptoms, many of them drug resistant. The most affected organs were the lungs, the eyes and the neuro-muscular-skeletal system. The most widespread were psychological disorders with victims showing signs of neurotic depressions, anxiety neurosis and hysteria (Satyamala, 1988, 33-56). A number of victims suffered from 'delayed effects' so that death caused by secondary infections were common. When patients did not improve with treatment doctors reacted with deep suspicion. A new term was coined—'compensation neurosis'—which simply meant that victims pretended to be sick in order to get maximum compensation benefit. A Personal Injury Evaluation (PIE) was worked out which categorized victims under broad headings of 'permanent injury', 'temporary injury' and 'no injury'. The system was based on an arbitrary scoring system that converted symptoms into numbers. This was done in order to determine the amount of compensation

to be paid to individual claimants. It is significant that women and children remained the most neglected category of gas victims (Satyamala 1996, 43-57). The medical and scientific community showed a peculiar insensitivity in the way it dealt with statistics. For instance, abortions were not considered as evidence of environmental injury, for the simple reason that it could not be directly linked to the effects of chemicals. Abortions were considered the fall out of psychological trauma or simply fright. There was large-scale dismissal of findings based on history taking of patients, particularly women who were seen as prone to hysteria and faking. The ICMR reports repeatedly point out that it was difficult to distinguish between cases of tuberculosis contracted before the gas leak and post exposure lung damage.

By choosing to ignore the long term effects of MIC, the government of India wittingly or unwittingly strengthened the hands of UCC. It allowed the multinational to get away with massive distortion of information. It kept hidden from the world the fact that MIC caused chromosomal aberrations which could lead to congenital malformation in the generations to come; that it attacked the immunological system thus making the victims prone to life threatening diseases; and that it caused mutation of genes or increased the possibility of cancer twenty even thirty years hence.

The Union of India failed in its role of securing 'justice for all its citizens', in the case of Bhopal only a fraction of the victims had been identified. As a result the vast scale and proportion of human suffering never emerged from the legal proceedings. UCC exploited the strategic error to emerge a clear winner. It denied all the allegations made against it on the grounds that the given particulars were vague and imprecise. It placed before the court an overwhelming spate of denials.

Here is a list. It denied having misled the State and Central government regarding the risks inherent in a pesticide factory. It denied the ultrahazardous nature of MIC. It denied having set up the factory in a thickly populated area. It denied having gone against

any of the terms and conditions of foreign collaboration laid down in the Five Year Plan of 1969-1974. It used the sabotage theory to deny having caused the gas leak. And finally in an astonishing act of self-negation it chose to deny its own existence. 'The defendant submits that there is no concept known to law as "Multinational Corporation" or "Monolithic Multinational". The defendant has no operation in India, did not operate in India, and, at all relevant times was never recognized as operating nor permitted to operate in India. The laws and regulations prohibited any such operations' (Baxi and Dhanda 1990, 62). This was legal quibbling at its dangerous best! The denial of its corporate being changed UCC into an obscure American Corporation that merely held some 'capital stocks in separate incorporated companies in foreign countries'.

The question of liability became a crucial issue which the Bhopal litigation was compelled to tackle. Union of India could not account for a number of factors. For instance, it could not explain why rules and regulations that were meant to restrict the activities of a foreign company failed to do so. Why did the government grant license to set up the MIC unit when detailed technical information was not forthcoming? How was it that the Design Transfer Agreement allowed the defendant to take responsibility for the design alone and not for its subsequent use? Why wasn't medical aid, a warning system and evacuation procedures an integrated part of the original design? More crucially a bill was passed in the legislative assembly granting leasehold rights to the squatters living close to the factory. Why?

The question of liability brought to the forefront a very sensitive issue. It showed how the relationship between multinational enterprises and the State was one of mutual dependence (Baxi, 1995, 57-78). Within the framework of dependency the multinational exercised considerable power. Yet, its dominance was uneasy, for a number of regulations set up by the State had to be met and if necessary overcome. It resulted in a peculiar situation.

On the one hand, the matter of safety was hotly debated in the legislative assembly; on the other hand, regulations were overlooked and clearances granted at every step. Bhopal brought into the open many such glaring contradictions. By doing so it pointed a finger in too many directions. It went to the extent of exposing 'the model of development' endorsed by those in political power. Both India and UCC were partners in development. UCC offered to share its superior technical know how on the assumption that lesser safety measures were permissible. India allowed UCC to run an unsafe plant within the framework of certain 'acceptable' risks and costs. Who was really to blame?

Meanwhile Judge M.S. Deo put forward a proposal to both the parties to pay 'reconciliatory substantial interim relief' to the gas victims. Not surprisingly UCC's reaction was sharp. It accused the court of pre-judging the trial by dropping the 'mantle of the judge' and assuming the 'role of an advocate' (Baxi and Dhanda 1990, 225). It was quick to point out that the Indian government had all along refused 'its prompt and sincere effort to provide aid and relief' to the victims. The Union of India's reaction to Judge Deo's proposal was vague and directionless. It spoke in broad terms of an 'atmosphere of reconciliation' and the need for a 'fair and just settlement'.

The scene was finally set for an out of court settlement with the arena shifting to the Supreme Court of India. The Bhopal settlement was unfair in almost every way. It happened because UCC wanted it to happen right from the beginning. Even before India filed its suit in the New York District Court, UCC had offered a settlement amount of 300 crore, a sum that was covered by insurance. No doubt Carbide's litigation strategy was geared towards arriving at a settlement. The final order ruled that 'UCIL is joined as necessary party to effectuate the terms and conditions of the order' (Baxi and Dhanda 1990, 527). The reason for including UCIL at this late stage was obviously meant to allow its officials to go scot-free, since all criminal proceedings against them were

being dropped. Finally, the settlement was unfair simply because the opinion of the gas victims were never taken into consideration.

On May 4, 1989, the Supreme Court issued a further order seeking to clarify its position to the people of India. As an important piece of judicial document it was marked by a peculiar sense of helplessness. We really had no choice, it seemed to say. To fight for justice would imply an 'infinite wait for redressal', an impossible option given the enormity of the suffering of the gas victims. A lot of emphasis was laid on providing immediate relief to the victims, as though a fine line can be drawn between 'interim relief' and 'final compensation'. After all relief is not the first installment of compensation: it is a continuous process that should proceed independent of the litigation. All that the Supreme Court had to do was uphold Justice Deo's decision and enjoin both the parties to share the burden of 'interim relief'. Instead the court indulged in a piece of mathematical juggling by pronouncing the final compensation amount as 'just, equitable and reasonable' (Baxi and Dhanda 1990, 540).

The court further explained that it had scrutinised very carefully all the material available on record to compute the amount. Yet it was a well-known fact that the material was incomplete and the process of assessment was still underway. The court arrived at a broad estimate of the number and nature of injury by lumping together all the victims without differentiating them in terms of their gender and age (Sarangi 1995, 3271-3274). While assessing claims children below the age of 18 were left out on the grounds that they do not inherit property. Children yet unborn were not counted. In the ultimate analysis the Supreme Court indulged in a number game in which most of the calculations went wrong. The final tragedy of the Bhopal settlement was that no proper system had been evolved whereby the settlement money would reach the gas victims in a fair and equitable way (Stanton and Rosencranz 1994, 1643-1644).

The settlement failed to mete out justice in a more fundamental way. It did not allow for matters of far reaching consequence to be discussed at length. The Supreme Court could have become the forum for national introspection and debate. The 4th May order was wrong when it said: 'The excellence and niceties of legal principles were greatly overshadowed by the pressing problems of survival' (Baxi and Dhanda 1990, 541). Legal principles are not matters of just theoretical and academic debates. They are the basis for social change. Bhopal brought before the world a chilling truth. Multinational enterprises operate with dangerous technology in developing third world countries. The result is mass scale death, destruction and a ravaged environment. This is done in the name of progress and development, so that somebody pays the price while another reaps the benefit, what Shiv Vishvanathan described as the concept of a 'disposable community' (Visvanathan and Sethi 1989, 47-67). The Indian Court had the opportunity to bring this truth to light. In the process it could have etched Bhopal in the public memory forever. It is always foolhardy to allow the lessons of history to slip by, unlearned. The possibility of another Bhopal happening in our own city remains dangerously imminent. So the crisis persists even though the accident happened seventeen years ago.

****** While political parties and the legal system failed to adequately compensate the Bhopal Gas victims, it is interesting that in a similar leak in a Union Carbide plant in West Virginia a year later, there were no casualties, and both the US Senate and Congress passed stringent legislation vis-à-vis the chemical industry. The fact that Indian judicial and legal systems are flawed and that we are casual about facts was highlighted. In the case of Bhopal it was both a miscarriage of justice and shortcomings of the judicial system that allowed UCC to escape effective prosecution. The need for environmental legislation as well as judicial reform was pointed to.

Notes

¹ A typical example would be an article titled 'Bhopal: The Human Interest Story' by Suketu Mehta in *The India Magazine*, Vol. 17, December, 1996.

² Dominique Lapierre and Javier Moro, *It was five past midnight in Bhopal*, trans from French by Kathryn Spink (New Delhi: Full Circle Publishing, 2001). What Lapierre has written is a best seller, fast paced, riveting, a very moving human interest story that carefully exorcises the chilling details of what really happened. The 'why' and 'how' of Bhopal have been curtailed by the narrative.

³ The image of Union Carbide has been culled from several sources including articles in journals and newspapers. Particularly helpful were 'Beyond Bhopal: The Policy Issues' by Arun Subramaniam, Javed Gaya and Rusi Engineer, *Business India*, Dec. 2—15, 1988, and the cover feature in the same issue titled 'Towards corporate Responsibility: Why the Guilty must be Punished'.

⁴ The legal documents have been vitally organized and made available in two invaluable books: *Inconvenient Forum and Convenient Catastrophe: The Bhopal Case* prepared by Upendra Baxi (Bombay: The Indian Law Institute 1986) and *Valiant Victims and Lethal Litigation: The Bhopal Case* by Upendra Baxi, Amita Dhanda (Bombay: The Indian Law Institute, N.M. Tripathi Pvt. Ltd., 1990).

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Fractured Polity, Ethnic Identity: India and the North East

Sanjoy Hazarika

*The earth plays music for those who want to listen.
But there are few who hear.*

African proverb

For centuries, India's North East—hemmed in on three sides by international land borders with Tibet/China, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh and connected to the rest of the country by a narrow land corridor known as the Chicken's Neck—has long been a frontiersland for settlers. Its people are a rich and diverse group of communities, ranging from the Khasis who are said to be descendants of migrants from Kampuchea and still speak a form of Mon-Khmer to the Khamtis, who moved more recently (in the 18th century) from the Burma-China border to Arunachal Pradesh near the Chinese border.

There are currently eight states, the largest among them (in terms of population) being Assam with a population of about 25 million. The other states are Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, and Meghalaya. Sikkim is the smallest and the latest entrant. According to one account, there are not less than 350 distinct communities in the region, making administration

an extremely complex task with different competing groups seeking to establish their political and social control over land, resources and asserting demands for preferential treatment. The region is home to about 35 million people with a mix of religious and linguistic groupings: Assam is dominated by Hindus and Assamese speakers in the Brahmaputra Valley although in many areas Bengali-speaking Muslims and Hindus also are dominant; the states of Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Mizoram have large Christian populations of various denominations while nature worship (the Donyi Polo faith) is prevalent in Arunachal Pradesh. Tripura is largely Hindu with Buddhist and Christian communities among the tribespeople.

The situation has been further complicated by several insurgencies in different states espousing different causes: in the case of the Bodos, perhaps the oldest plains community of the region, one militant faction seeks independence from India; the other seeks a separate state carved out of Assam within the Indian Union. There are insurgencies in Manipur and Tripura as well as Assam while Nagaland, which is home to one of the oldest insurgencies in Asia, has seen a shaky ceasefire over the past four years between the main militant group and the Government of India and negotiations to settle Naga demands have only just begun.

The North East of India must be viewed as much in terms of its geographical location as from any other perspective. The location of the region gives it both unique advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantages have long been catalogued: distances from other parts of India and consequent isolation; high transport costs of freight and other consumer goods; poor internal connectivity, whether in terms of good roads or railways or airline connections; a certain 'alienation', both politically and physically, from the 'mainland'; frequent flooding and failure to use its natural resources, such as hydro-electric potential, extensive medicinal plants and existent finite mineral sources, such as coal and limestone. Security analysts see its proximity to China, Myanmar and Bangladesh as a

problem, particularly in the light of a proliferation of militancies, drugs and arms trafficking, and illegal migration.

The advantages are often glossed over: the North East is India's bridgehead to South East Asia. Some call it the bridge – but that privilege is Myanmar's alone. Again, geography is the key. With better co-operation and the development of the trans-Asian highway, goods, products and people from the North East as well as from other parts of India can flow to the markets of South East Asia and beyond. A beginning was made on April 4, 2002, with the inaugural weekly Air India flight from Guwahati to Bangkok.

It is home to some of the most diverse communities on the subcontinent, their traditions resplendent in a range of handicrafts and handloom products, exquisite in their beauty. With better designing, quality control and aggressive marketing, these – as well as the orchids of the region (there are over 300 varieties of orchids in the North East; with eco-friendly farming and bio-technology, these can be a prime export item, competing with South East Asia for European and other markets) – can become major foreign exchange earners.

There are other natural advantages at which the North East must look: the Brahmaputra river is perhaps the single greatest resource of the region. Yet, it is totally under-utilized, either for transport or for tourism. A simple package of high quality passenger boats, equipped with good cabins, safety equipment and other facilities, can be one of the greatest attractions of the North East, taking visitors from Guwahati, the commercial capital, up to Kaziranga, the national park famous for the one-horned rhinoceros, and then to Majuli, one of the largest fresh water islands in the world and home to the great Vaishnavite monasteries or *satras* and the Mishing community. The possibilities are endless – even if it is for run of the river projects that can tap the hydroelectric potential instead of building large dams, which are politically unacceptable and potentially hazardous in a highly seismic zone as well as hugely expensive.

In such a diverse, sensitive and difficult region, the issues of identity affirmation and formation of ethnic-driven politics and conflicts, of self-determination and self-governance are extremely real and tortuous. In this paper I look at two major issues that have the potential of both uniting communities and leading to development and better security, as well as of untying the Gordian knots of struggle which have created such deep divisions at the human level. These cannot be papered over by political accords.

In the first, I dwell on the issue of migration, particularly illegal migration from Bangladesh. In the second, I focus on the question of the future of the Naga community, in the state which it inhabits, Nagaland, as well as in neighbouring states. This is among the most difficult and oldest issues facing the Indian polity. I do not wish to be theoretical here but realistic and practical.

Migration

Since the late 1970s, India's North East has been troubled by agitations, often student-led, against 'illegal immigrants' from Bangladesh. Over the years, this has become a major political issue with different groups vying with each other in taking advantage of the religious, linguistic, ethnic and political factors that have emerged as a result.

This is not a new problem – the question of illegal migration, or migration caused by economic and environmental factors from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) – has been of concern to the region since the 1950s. It was perceived as a 'threat' (although at the time, these were part of one British dominion and not fragmented by Partition) even earlier.

In the 1930s and 1940s, the influx was resisted in Assam and the Congress Party led political campaigns against the settlers. The inflow was largely an organized one in those years, encouraged by the Muslim League Government of Premier Sir Mohammad Saadulla. The League wanted a change in the religious demography of the state, to help Pakistan establish a claim over the resource-

rich province. The migrants were predominantly farmers and landless peasants from the bordering districts of East Bengal, especially Mymensingh, and Sir Mohammed boasted in a communication to Liaquat Ali Khan, then the number two figure in the League after M.A. Jinnah, that the inflow of the peasantry from East Bengal had quadrupled the Muslim population in the four lower districts of Assam in 25 years (Hazarika 1994, 58).

The Congress Party in the state opposed the settlement policy and was supported by Mahatma Gandhi. Yet, the Assamese position irked national Congress leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel because they felt it was holding up the process of independence. But Assam stood firm under the leadership of Gopinath Bardoloi. It resisted being slotted with Muslim-majority Bengal in the Cabinet Mission's proposals of 1946 to divide some provinces like Punjab, Bengal and Assam into Groups and Sections. The result was that Assam remained with India.

The concerns fuelled by the movements of those days continue to trouble Assamese minds today. Since the 1970s, these worries have spilt over into confrontations between 'settlers' and 'locals' as pressure on land and other resources has grown. Conflicts and clashes have become increasingly common. At the heart of these confrontations is the land factor: of land as a source, often the primary source, of identity, economic security and cultural protection.

The issue of settlement and migration remains perhaps the most contentious and politically explosive question in the state. Memories are still fresh of the 1979-to-1985 student-led agitation against 'foreigners' that left a trail of social and economic devastation, riots and religious clashes as relations between many social groups, including religious, ethnic and linguistic communities, deteriorated, and erupted. In 1983, at least 3,000 persons (some regard this as a conservative estimate and believe that 5,000 is more accurate) were killed in clashes and attacks, largely on immigrant settlers and their descendants although other ethnic groups also battled each other in the Brahmaputra Valley.

In the killing fields of Nellie, Goreswar and Gohpur, all of which I covered as a correspondent for the *New York Times*, I found not just overwhelming human tragedy but came face to face with my own inadequacy—and that of the media, overall—in understanding the factors that fuelled this hatred by one group for the other.

There is both lack of understanding as well as of information about the issue of migration and refugees. Indeed, many scholars as well as policy makers and media tend to mix up the two. To help breakdown the groups, the late Myron Weiner of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology divided the refugee/migrant/Internally Displaced Persons groupings (Hazarika 2001, 84 fn11) flow into two broad categories:

1. Rejected peoples—such as political refugees. This includes the Tibetans, the Nepali-speakers from Bhutan who are living in UNHCR camps in eastern Nepal; the Afghans who have fled their country to take shelter in Pakistan, Iran and India as well as the Chakmas who moved into Tripura in 1988 and then in 1997 returned to Bangladesh after a political agreement. There are the Rohingyas of Myanmar who went to Bangladesh; a majority of them returned but some 20,000 still live in the Cox's Bazaar area. There are varying numbers for Chin political refugees from Myanmar in Mizoram; there are large numbers of Chin economic migrants.
2. Unwanted Migrants: these include those migrants who left their countries for environmental or economic reasons. It should be noted that migrants who entered the 'host' area were initially welcome but later, because of the growing 'threat perception' from the host community, have become unwanted. These groups include the Bangladeshis in Assam, West Bengal and elsewhere in India. Some categories of IDPs also fall into this listing such as the Chakmas of the Chittagong Hill Tracts who left the then East Pakistan because of the construction of the Kaptai Dam which displaced many of

them. They were relocated in the present-day Arunachal Pradesh and over the past two decades have become a source of friction with the local communities in the area of settlement. The latter fear they may be overwhelmed by the growth in the number of Chakmas. Hostility to the Chakmas is being converted into acceptance but there are still demands that they should be dispersed elsewhere in India.

What fuels concerns about migrations is not just the view that people are still coming across the borders but a fear that the influx is substantial enough to change the demographic shape of Assam and the North East as well as its political and religious/social/linguistic equations. At the core is the worry that power will go out of the hands of the Ahomiyas in the coming century just as surely as large tracts of land went out of their hands during this century.

Significantly, over the past decades, the Hindu population of Bangladesh has shown the remarkable characteristic of virtually not growing at all! In the area that constitutes today's Bangladesh, the Hindu population has grown by barely two million in 40 years from 9.2 million in 1951 to 11.1 million in 1991 (cf. Hazarika 2001, 213-232). The percentage of Hindus has dropped from 22 per cent of the total population in 1951 to 18.5 per cent in 1961, 13.5 per cent in 1974, 12.1 per cent in 1981 and 10.5 per cent in 1991. If one takes a 'Hindu rate of growth' of even two per cent per year, the Hindu population of Bangladesh today should be 60 per cent higher than what it is today (1961 is taken as the bench mark and not 1951 because refugee flows and adjustments after Partition continued in the 1950s). This means that there are about six-to-seven million Hindus who are 'missing' from that period. If 1971 is taken as the cut-off point, one would still get about five million 'missing' Hindus. And the perception of India as a homeland for Hindus in neighbouring countries cannot be ruled out: substantial portions of this population have moved to India, to Assam, West Bengal and Tripura especially.

It is nobody's argument that only one religious community is moving. Large numbers of people from both communities are on the move. The reason for focussing on religious figures is not out of any bias. I am simply going by the fact, borne out by experience, that people tend to lie about almost anything when it comes to reporting to the Government (whether it is their income, their age, their work and even the language they speak)—but few people lie about their religion.

There are varying estimates for the number of illegal Bangladeshis in India. The Godbole Report on Border Management that was submitted to the Government of India last year and has not been made public speaks of a figure of 15 million Bangladeshis (author in discussion with Home Ministry official, September 2002, New Delhi). I tend to err on the side of caution—my figure would be in the region of 10-to-12 million Bangladeshis, i.e. those who came after 1971.

As far as the demographic situation is concerned, it is also necessary to look at Assam's case: in 1971 the number of Hindus there was 10.6 million and the number of Muslims was 3.59 million¹. In 1991 (there was no census in Assam in 1981 because of the student agitation) the respective figures rose to 15.04 million for Hindus and 6.73 million for Muslims. The Hindu share in the population went down from 72.51 percent in 1971 to 67.13 per cent while the Muslim ratio rose from 24.56 per cent to 28.43 per cent in the same period. The Hindu population grew at 41.79 per cent in 20 years. The Muslim growth rate was 77.42 per cent or 38.7 per cent per decade. The Muslim growth rate for the rest of India was about 31 per cent for 1971-to-1981 and about the same level for the following decade.

There are relevant figures from the districts bordering Bangladesh: in 1971 Assam had two Muslim-majority districts, Dhubri and Hailakandi. In 1991 that number had doubled to include Goalpara and Barpeta and figures from three more districts showed that these too were close to reporting Muslim majorities (Morigaon,

Nagaon, Karimganj). The former Census Deputy Director for Assam, J.C. Bhuyan, argues that with natural growth rate, the Muslim population of Assam should have grown from 3.59 million in 1971 to 5.2 million in 1991 instead to 6.3 million (Hazarika 2001, 218). Mr. Bhuyan says that the balance are illegal settlers.

Bangladeshi scholars view this phenomenon of movement both as a survival strategy and an outcome of environmental crisis, particularly displacement in the flood-plains. 'In fact, one finds the number of people crossing over to India increasing during periods of environmental disasters,' says Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed of Dhaka University. He estimates that 1.72 million people (Hazarika 2001, 217-218) crossed illegally into India between 1961-71, another half a million for 1971-81 and not less than 600,000 crossed over into Assam alone between 1981-91.

Bangladesh officially denies the outflow, saying that its citizens go to places such as the Middle East and South East Asia for work and not to a neighbouring and impoverished, if not equally poor, nation! But Bangladeshi officials (privately), journalists and scholars (openly) have accepted this reality and are prepared to discuss it. Indeed, there has been a conscious effort by a group of scholars and media persons to engage Bangladeshi scholars, former officials and others as well as their Indian counterparts in trying to tackle the rigid mindsets on either side of the border. These attitudes represent some of the real stumbling blocks to co-operation and mutual development.

Laws developed to deal with these problems have been total failures. First, the Prevention of Infiltration from Pakistan Scheme, launched by the Central Government in the 1960s, collapsed in Assam when an influential lobby of Muslim legislators threatened to revolt against the Chief Minister, B. P. Chaliha.

In 1983 Parliament passed the Illegal Migrants Determination by Tribunal Act, which is dysfunctional. Only two out of 18 such tribunals are doing any work. Between 1986 to 1994 a total of 280,791 cases were referred to the tribunals for trial. Of this 8,477

were found to be illegal and 1,461 were ordered expelled. There are reasons for the low convictions as well as the low rate of complaints: one, much of the evidence turned up by the police, especially witness accounts, is flimsy and cannot stand the test of judicial scrutiny. Two, a complainant has to file a fee of Rs. 10 for each complaint he or she wishes to register against a supposed illegal settler and has to live within the jurisdiction of the police station where the 'settler' is located.

These disincentives were built into the law at the behest of the Congress regime of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Under the Act the complainant must prove his/her charge against an alleged illegal migrant. This is the very opposite of all anti-foreigner legislation across the world, where the onus of proof is on the accused.

The situation is extremely complex. It is not just migrant versus non-migrant or one community against another. The divisions within the settler community on religious lines also need to be assessed, although the core issue remains land and its control. In 1992 the riots that fanned out across the country after the destruction of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya, spilled over into clashes in the district of Morigaon. The clashing parties were Bengali-speaking settlers, both Muslim and Hindu, and the struggle was aimed at ousting the latter from the rich farmlands they had occupied for long. Thus, with time, both the social and political factors as well as clear-cut lines of demarcation, merge in the issue of land.

The land question has become especially important because the eroding might of the rivers in Bangladesh and the Brahmaputra in Assam displace millions of people every year in the flood plains. Erosion has meant that people are constantly on the move in places such as the Bangladesh district of Kurigram which borders Dhubri. I have met villagers in and around the port of Chilmari who have had to move their homes as often as five times in a year. The riverine areas have always been a port of entry and a place of settlement for the influx into the region. But these days the influx is putting

pressure even on old migrants and new routes are being fashioned to other parts of the North East.

India has put up barbed wire fences on parts of the international boundary between the two countries, much to Bangladesh's consternation and annoyance. The fences are designed to keep 'Bangladeshis' out but exist only in some parts of the border; they are, truly, symbolic assertions of New Delhi's political response to the problem—which does little to curb the influx, because these are knee-jerk policies and not developed with the background of the region's historic and realistic setting.

For migration is the way of the world. People, like water, always find their own levels, their ways to get to where they want to go.

We must be clear on what cannot be done. The Indian State and the Assam administration are unable to take the kind of swift, decisive action that many seek. People—and the media—talk glibly of deportation of lakhs of Bangladeshis. The issue of deportation which agitators did not understand then and perhaps do not do so even now is that the concept presupposes one fact: that the other side/country accepts them as their own nationals who have crossed an international border illegally. Bangladesh officially denies that its people leave. So where do they go?

Some individuals and groups are working at the unofficial level to persuade Dhaka to understand India's concerns. Semi-official groups, academics and media persons are recognising this fact. But it is a slow and difficult process that involves sensitivities on the Bangladesh side as well.

If the years of the agitation and its tangible results are considered it becomes evident that there was a heightened public awareness, however flawed, of the problem in the North East largely due to media coverage. This was especially through the print media because television was in its infancy.

Yet, it is time to think logically and with our heads. For far too long we have thought with our hearts.

The reality that migration will continue to take place must be recognized. The push and pull factors will see to that. According to one estimate, the cultivable area in Bangladesh is dwindling and population growth will reduce by half the amount of cropland available per capita by 2025. One Bangladeshi academic has described the outward movement as a 'survival strategy' (Prof. Shaukat Hassan in conversation with the author, July 1995, New Delhi).

The pressure on land is growing on Assam too, with the population increase on a cultivable land base that is not more than 70-to-100 kilometres wide at the maximum (the Assam Valley), large parts of which are regularly flooded by high water during the summer.

There are a series of steps that can be taken unilaterally by the Central Government and others that should be worked out in consultation and co-operation with Bangladesh. Essentially these are steps aimed at regulating legal work-related migration and discouraging illegal migration for settlement or for work. Such proposals include Work Permits for those who would like to come and work in India, Identity Cards for all residents, and a programme to develop infrastructure in the region.

Concerns about security in the 'soft' border areas on the India-Bangladesh boundary need to be seen in this perspective and not in the narrow terms of 'threat to national security', as unnamed intelligence or security officials or sources would have the country believe. The latter see the growth of confrontation and radicalism wherever there are new *madrasas*. We must not make the mistake of clubbing all groups together—there are many who live in Lower Assam, for example, who are long-time residents of the state and not new settlers. Indeed, the word 'Bangladeshi' has acquired a pejorative hue.

Changed mind sets and economic growth are the key to change requiring long-term, flexible strategies of mutual growth and benefit. We need to reflect this far better in our analysis. We must

continue to disseminate our views without fear or favour, in the sure knowledge that it is only through sustained efforts that we will bring about the changes which we seek.

The Naga Issue

There is another issue with a strong bearing on security and identity in the North East and in India: the Naga question and its complexities.

One of the most difficult challenges before India since independence has been the evolution of a reasoned approach and possible solution to the Naga imbroglio, which has pitted communities on India's easternmost border with the State and led to internecine conflicts among the Nagas themselves.

The Naga problem is older than Indian independence: if one goes by the Naga line of reasoning, they were never directly under the British but were defeated by superior might in the late 19th century in only a part of their traditional homeland. They were dealt with by a benign imperial presence, based in the Assam plains. A Naga delegation told the Simon Commission in 1929 (Iralu 2001; papers of the Naga National Council) that they had heard that the British were planning to leave India and, if so, would they please leave the Nagas alone – as they were before the colonialists came. On August 14, 1947, the Nagas declared independence, sent off a telegram to that effect to the United Nations, although few people paid attention to this declaration either in Delhi or abroad. So a dominant Naga view is: 'Why call us secessionists and separatists when we were never part of you? How can you secede from a country you never were a part of?'

The British and Indian National Congress never held consultations with the Nagas as they did with other, larger 'national' groups on the subcontinent. It could perhaps be argued that the Nagas were never a nation in the strict sense of the word, and hence they were not negotiated with. But there was a nine-point agreement (Hazarika 1994, 346-348, Appendix C) drawn up in June 1947

between Sir Akbar Hydari, the Governor of Assam, and a group of Naga representatives under the umbrella of the Naga Council, the precursor of the Naga National Council (NNC), that had specific clauses to protect the traditional customs and laws of the Nagas. It ended on a tantalizing note, saying that the agreement could be reviewed after ten years. This agreement was shot down by a furious Assam Government (Chief Minister Gopinath Bardoloi said he was not consulted) and the Centre because they saw it as a challenge to nascent national unity.

The Nagas prefer to identify themselves as of Mongolian stock; the name Naga has been given by outsiders – the tribes call themselves and each other by the tribe name, e.g. Angami, Sema, Chakesang, Konyak, Zeliangrong, Regmi, Mao and Maram to name a few. But the name has stuck and become part of the Constitution of India, of subcontinental ethnography as well as its political geography. Nagaland state was carved out of Assam in 1963, a Central Government initiative.

The Naga groups speak of having lived in their traditional homelands since time immemorial. But there is little in terms of documented history to back up this view. Nor was there a unifying leader or language until the arrival of Angami Zapu Phizo in the 1940s and his call for independence. There is an oral history except where there are references to them in the history of neighboring states and peoples as well as by contemporary scholars, European historians and anthropologists.

The Naga position raises a question of whether oral history and a sense of identity can be recognized as reality of national consciousness, of symbols of separateness? There were occasional agreements between the Ahoms, the Tais who migrated from the South East of Myanmar in the 13th century and ruled Assam until the middle of the 19th century, over access to salt mines controlled by specific Naga chiefs; there were tithes that the Ahoms paid to some Naga groups to persuade them not to raze their villages; in other cases, the Ahoms extracted taxes from Nagas.

The British sent a punitive force to tackle the Angami Nagas in the 19th century and defeated them after a struggle. There are questions which are raised here and in other parts of the world: just because you live in a particular area, does that mean that you are a nation, a conglomeration of entities that are agreed on a political union? Living together does not make a nation, even in the formative sense. There is no common Naga language but Nagamese—a patois of Assamese and the local Naga dialect. There is no common Naga history but the history of the past 70 years.

At the same time, oral history has a rightful place, along with documented facts, in the shaping and understanding of history.

There are numerous landmarks in the Naga struggle for identity. There was the formation of the Naga Club and the presentation of a 'leave us alone' memorandum to the 1929 Simon Commission. There was the Sir Akbar Hydari agreement which fell apart soon after its being signed. Phizo's ascendancy in Naga politics effectively controlled Naga destiny for nearly 40 years, until 1980 when a major split took place in the Naga National Council. There was a referendum, which the Government of India hotly disputes, which saw an overwhelming majority supporting independence. The echoes of that referendum still ring across Nagaland.

In 1964, through the Kachins of Northern Myanmar, Phizo sent his trusted lieutenant Theiungalang Muivah, a Tangkhul Naga, from Manipur, with a group of 100 Naga cadres to the Peoples Republic of China to establish connections for armed training and assistance. Both the Chinese and the Nagas followed the dictum: 'My enemy's enemy is my friend'. It was a relationship that lasted until 1976 and survived even the breakup of Pakistan in 1971, where numerous Naga safe houses and training camps were located.

Thus, in terms of security, there was both a direct threat and an indirect one to the Indian system – the direct threat came from the tremendous fighting capacity of the Nagas and their ability, on the whole, to conduct a guerrilla campaign on their terms and

conditions; the second came from the assistance that China and Pakistan funneled to the Nagas, undermining Indian interests and control and rousing consciousness among other small ethnic groups about the need to assert and protect their identities from the Indian 'mainstream'. This spillover effect was seen in the decades to follow: the Mizos took to insurgency (and ended it in 1986, with a surrender of weapons, cadres, rehabilitation and acceptance of the Constitution). The Meiteis, the plains dwellers of Manipur who are a majority of the state's population and Vaishnavite Hindus, took to arms; the Kukis and Nagas of the Manipur hills; the Bodos of Assam and a group of Assamese who formed the United Liberation Front of Asom.

There was the on-again off-again militancy in Tripura which began in the 1980s and petered out after an agreement between the Tripura Volunteers Force of Bijoy Hrangkhawl but was resumed by other groups in the 1990s – the All Tripura Tigers Force and the National Liberation Front of Tripura, the latter being more brutal. And now small groups among the Dimasas and Karbis of Assam, the Khasis and Garos of Meghalaya and the Khamtis of Arunachal Pradesh have established armed groups that seek separation but which are not a major threat yet – barring their extortionist capacity and ability to intimidate at the local level.

All of these, leaving aside the Mizos and the Meiteis, have strong connections to the Naga political and military movement.

As far as the Nagas were concerned, several faultlines emerged in the late 1960s and again in the 1970s on tribal lines. A ceasefire in Nagaland and the hills of Manipur was in place, with numerous violations, between 1964 and 1972. This followed the Shillong Accord of 1975 (Nibedon 1978; Hazarika 1994, 106-109) between representatives of the Naga movement and the Governor of Assam, L. P. Singh. The accord said that the Nagas would accept the Constitution and stop their armed movement. But it also left a safety clause for the Nagas and ended up by fiercely dividing the community. Muivah, Isaak Swu and S. S. Khaplang, the dominant

leaders of the movement outside the Naga hills, were in China at the time and condemned the accord. They demanded that Phizo also attack it. But, till the end, Phizo remained silent on this question.

In 1980 the NNC split with Muivah and his colleagues forming the National Socialist Council of Nagaland. Eight years later, this organization also split after Khaplang accused the Muivah group of trying to broker a secret understanding with New Delhi. Khaplang sent his best fighters to attack rival positions. More than 400 of Muivah's best fighters were killed in that assault and the Naga leader spent several years recouping his losses before emerging as the dominant political and military force among his people.

In 1995 the then Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao met with Muivah and Swu at Paris and then dispatched an interlocutor to Bangkok to open the door for detailed discussions.² These were followed up during the regimes of his successors, H. D. Deva Gowda and Inder Gujral. Ceasefires were announced and discussions began between the Government of India, represented by a Representative of the Prime Minister and the Director of the Intelligence Bureau, and the Nagas, represented by Muivah and Swu. The ceasefire was initially for three months and was regularly extended. Today, the confidence between the two sides has grown to such an extent that, despite some setbacks, the ceasefire extension is an annual feature.

However, negotiations on substantive issues did not take place.

In June 2001 the Government of India announced the extension of the ceasefire to other areas of the North East by adding the words 'without territorial limits'. This triggered a reaction by the Meiteis, the dominant community of Manipur who live in the plains. They saw it as the beginning of the vivisection of their ancient land and a sellout by their political leaders to the Nagas. The outrage was such that New Delhi rolled back the extension clause.

The Nagas held their peace and exercised restraint, despite their disappointment. Naga anger did not spill over into further

confrontation. There are a number of reasons why the Naga story is relevant for the entire North East.

First of all, nearly six years of ceasefire have revived civil society. People are no longer as afraid as they were earlier to speak out – not just against violations by security forces but also the excesses of the Naga armed groups. 'We have begun to breathe freely again,' is how one lawyer described the situation (conversation with author, 2000).

Step by step, in a sophisticated, calibrated response, the Naga rival groups have been reaching out to each other, using the platform of a remarkable and unique experiment – of reconciliation and 'reach out'. The Naga reconciliation process among the various tribes officially began in December 2001 with a large rally at the Nagaland capital of Kohima although the process was initiated earlier with the formation of a Naga representative body called the Naga Hoho, that brought together leaders of most tribes. During this process, Nagas are seeking to unite, asking each other's forgiveness for harm that one group of individuals may have done to another. This may sound extremely simplistic but it is a process that has found an echo in many hearts in Nagaland and beyond. It is especially significant since the major pro-independence groups cannot stand each other and have their support bases among specific tribes.

In January this year the NSCN (I-M) called a consultation with 44 representatives of civil society groups and churches from Nagaland, Nagas in Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The five-day meeting, characterised by bluntness and openness, resulted in a remarkable statement that called on Nagas to be sensitive to the legitimate concerns and apprehensions of their neighbours; it did not speak of the ceasefire extension issue which had sparked such anger in Manipur nor of territory nor of sovereignty. In fact, it represented the most conciliatory approach of the Naga movement in decades, calling on India to enable their leaders to return home

by lifting the ban on Naga 'national' leaders and withdrawing criminal cases against them.

The statement, barring some paragraphs of expected rhetoric, was positive. The pity is that neither the neighbours nor the Government of India have responded with the generosity and openness that was needed. Yet, the Naga leadership of both major factions have persisted and have called upon each other to forgive the past.

The significance of these steps cannot be sufficiently emphasized. Suffice to say that public pressure and opinions are marching ahead of the political process and forcing the political groups to come to a realistic accommodation with the Government of India. The time is perhaps more opportune than ever before to fashion a long-term agreement with the Naga political leadership – but this must be one which cannot keep any one group out. It must be inclusive, not exclusive.

It surely cannot be beyond the capacity of the Government of India to respond adequately to the demands of the Nagas, as long as they are within the political boundaries of India. Even the effort to create a Naga homeland can be put on hold, pending discussions and agreements with all neighbouring state governments where Nagas are not necessarily in contiguous areas. Here they should be asked a simple question: whether they want to continue staying where they are, under the present political dispensation, or whether they want to be part of a larger Naga homeland. This is a detailed and tedious exercise which must cover every village and individual and is far into the future.

A step in the right direction would be to develop greater autonomy in the hills of Manipur, with autonomous district councils for Nagas, Kukis, and other ethnic groups with a large presence. There should be safeguards for non-Nagas and other groups living in these areas under an Constitutional arrangement which should reflect gender justice and reservation as well as representation for non-tribals.

Other steps that can be taken could be politically symbolic but significant with a larger impact on the nation. For instance, Nagaland and every other state of the Union could be given its own flag and emblem, to be flown next to the National Flag and displayed next to the Asoka pillar. This would be a gesture of true federalism. The Constitution protects Naga customary rights over their lands; these should be codified to include rights over overground and underground resources – a facility that can be extended to other states, enabling them to get out of their internal debt traps, with a commission paid to the Centre out of the resources extracted.

The future of the Naga movement also depends on how long its leaders can serve their people, once, and if, they return. Muivah and Swu are not young men: they are in their late 60s and early 70s and the younger leadership lacks their vision or capability. Muivah and Swu have lived abroad for the last 38 years, have succeeded in keeping the issue alive and forced the Government (in the eyes of the Naga public) into recognising the legitimacy of their struggle by opening negotiations.

What is also significant here is that the Nagas, on their own volition, have reduced the security threat to India's eastern frontiers because they have realized that the future lies only in a negotiated settlement. The Government too has accepted that armed force cannot bring a solution, as the last 50 years have shown. This is a major step forward because it can have an impact on the other insurgencies on the region – and even on the conflict in Kashmir. But unlike Kashmir, there is no third country involved in the Naga issue; that is a huge advantage which makes it solvable by both parties, provided they show foresight and openness.

Human rights violations by Indian security forces are now part of Naga history and that of the North East. The security forces have done enough in the past 40 years to earn themselves and New Delhi a bad name. The ceasefire has seen a more conscious effort by all sides, including the security forces, to improve their conduct.

In addition, human rights violations by Naga fighters are also being exposed. What is equally significant is a growing demand from society in Nagaland and other parts of the region for a stake in governance. People want to take responsibility for tackling corruption, improving infrastructure and other simple but far-reaching problems, such as poor health systems and inadequate education systems. They want to be involved in decision-making at the village and district level.

In these simple decisions lie the roots of national and local security as well as a more sensitive, more humane polity based on self-governance, responsibility and the recognition of mutual respect, of each other's spaces, as the key to development and change.

****** The negotiations between the Indian Government and the NSCN (I-M), their impact on the future of Nagaland and the North East, and the issues of peace and reconciliation dominated deliberations. Mr Hazarika referred to a conversation with Mr Muivah who said, 'We understand the difficulties of the Indian government'. Problems of alienation from the Indian 'mainland', the conflict between the Nagas and the Meteis, as well as the majority-minority complex were discussed. The complexity of Naga history, language, and inter-tribal rivalries add to the troubled scenario.

Notes

1. These and other demographic statistics in this segment of the paper are drawn from various Census of India documents, including Census of India, Assam, 1971, Census of India, 1991, Series 4 – Assam, Part VA and VB-D Series, Migration Tables, Volumes 1 and II, Directorate of Census Operations, Assam and Census of India 1991 Series 4, Assam, Aspects of Population Profile of Assam, 1991 Census, N. C. Dutta, Director of Census Operations, Assam.

2. This section is based on interviews with Indian and Naga leaders involved in the talks between 1995 and 2001 and various media reports.

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Articulating the Global and the Local: Land Reform in Post-Apartheid South Africa

David Johnson

The relation between the global and the local is routinely presented as an opposition between the homogeneity of the global against the heterogeneity of the local. In this paper, I question this opposition by focussing on one particular form of the global (the World Bank), and consider how its policies impact on one particular form of the local – land reform in post-apartheid South Africa.

At first glance, the case for looking at global land reform appears rather weak by comparison to other more vivid forms of globalization, like finance capitalism and cultural capitalism. The pre-eminent form of global capitalism, finance capital generates statistics of an intimidating order: a \$2 trillion daily turnover in foreign exchange (forex) money markets; 80 per cent of forex transactions shift money for periods of one week or less; by 1995 forex transactions were generating an annual \$330 trillion turnover compared to \$5 trillion for world trade (Weiss 1999, 138). The cultural imperialism associated with the unchecked proliferation of the consumer brands of western multinationals detailed in Naomi Klein's *No Logo* (2001) alike asserts its claims as the most distinctive form of contemporary global capitalism. There are,

however, at least two reasons why I want to turn from these headline-grabbing forms of global capitalism, and consider land reform.

The first reason is that land continues to be of underrated strategic importance in struggles to resist the hegemony of neo-liberal economic policies. Joseph E. Stiglitz, apostate economist formerly of the World Bank and US President Bill Clinton's economic advisory team, makes this point in a recent interview with Gregory Palast.¹ Stiglitz mounts a scathing attack on the destructive impact of World Bank policy on developing nations' economies in the final quarter of the twentieth century, and then concludes by suggesting how developing nations might resist the World Bank's prescriptions. According to Palast, 'Stiglitz proposed radical land reform, an attack at the heart of "landlordism" on the usurious rents charged by the propertied oligarchies worldwide, typically 50 percent of a tenant's crops' (Palast 2001). Stiglitz insists an attack on existing patterns of land ownership is fundamental to precipitating 'a change in the power of elites' (Palast 2001). The second reason for taking land reform in a global context seriously is arguably more important. For the poor in the developing world, and especially the rural poor, the demand for land is frequently a priority that precedes all other aspirations, including even on occasions the demand for employment. In recent times, this has been most visibly apparent in Zimbabwe, but in South Africa too – as I will elaborate – the response from South Africa's poor to the Land Commission's promises of land reform has spectacularly exceeded expectations. Therefore, if research agendas are to be set with an eye to the local, and particularly with an eye to the concerns of the poor in specific locales, then land reform deserves attention.

Land ownership in South Africa: a brief history

The dispossession of Africans from their land started in the seventeenth century with the arrival of European settlers, and

continued gradually through the eighteenth century, and accelerated rapidly in the final third of the nineteenth century with the discovery of diamonds and gold in the interior.² In the twentieth century, the decisive legislation sanctioning the transfer of African land to white hands was the 1913 Land Act, which built on existing legislation, but sought in much more drastic terms to stamp out all forms of independent black tenancy. It prohibited share-cropping on white-owned farms, limited the number of labouring families per farm to five, and laid down that all black tenants on white farms be defined as servants. The Act specified 'scheduled' areas, where Africans could still buy land. At the time of the Act, this amounted to 7 per cent of all arable land in South Africa; the balance of 'non-scheduled' land was allocated to white farmers. The Xhosa poet St J. Page Yako writing in the 1930s recorded the experience of dispossession in the 'The Contraction and Enclosure of the Land' with the lines: 'This land will be folded like a blanket/ till it is like the palm of a hand [...]. They will crowd us together like tadpoles/ In a calabash ladle [...]. Yes, we fold up our knees / It's impossible to stretch out,/ Because the land has been hedged in' (Chapman 2002, 120).

The 1936 Native Trust and Land Act established the South African Native Trust (later re-named the Development Trust) as a state agency with wide-ranging powers to acquire and administer further land for African occupancy. It was through the Native Trust that the land for the bantustans was acquired, though it never amounted to more than 13 per cent of total land available in South Africa. The Native Trust was highly authoritarian, and proceeded on the assumption that Africans did not know how to farm, and that conservation measures had to be enforced by the state to protect land in black areas. As the bantustan system assumed its developed form, black South Africans were all allocated to particular bantustans, and could only exercise political rights, pursue business interests, and hold land in their designated bantustan. The result was that agricultural production in the bantustans was severely constrained by limited access to land, markets and services, and

agriculture only contributed a small percentage of income to family subsistence, as migrant labourers from the bantustans and employed on South Africa's mines provided the major share.

The white countryside, by contrast, had abundant land, labour and state subsidies. Labour was provided by black rural workers who had been transformed from share-cropping peasants first into labour tenants and then wage labourers. With the adoption of chemical technologies and combine harvesters in the 1960s there has been a rapid decline in the numbers of farm workers, with large-scale job losses and evictions. As a result of this polarised system of managing land ownership, a minority of white farmers acquired vast tracts of land at the expense of seven million black South Africans, who were uprooted and forcibly re-settled between 1913 and 1990. As a result, in 1994 when the African National Congress (ANC) assumed power after South Africa's first democratic elections, a white minority (13 per cent of the population) owned 87 per cent of the land.

The ANC government has committed itself to redressing this legacy, and they have attempted to do so by a combination of legislative and administrative initiatives. A press statement issued by the Landless People's Movement on 24 July 2001 in Johannesburg sums up the government's progress on land reform in its first seven years in office as follows:

Land reform, including restitution, redistribution and tenure reform, were promised to us as the country's landless people in 1994, and are required by the Constitution that we fought for during the struggle against apartheid. In the past seven years these promises have delivered very little land reform, so that about 86% of land remains in the hands of whites and the state, while African people now occupy about 14%. (Landless People's Movement 2001, 1)

While defenders of the ANC government might legitimately argue that the true picture of land reform in South Africa is rather more

complicated than these bare statistics suggest, few would disagree with the view that South Africa's progress in land reform cannot stand much comparison. Even Zimbabwe, a constant reminder of the consequences of ineffectual land reform, successfully transferred 2 million hectares (15 per cent) of arable land to black farmers in the first five years after independence.

Restitution

The re-allocation of white-owned land was to take three forms: restitution of land appropriated under racist legislation; reform of unstable categories of land tenure; and redistribution by land reform. I turn now to each of these in turn. The restitution of land in post-apartheid South Africa is regulated by four pieces of legislation. Section 8 (the Equality Clause) and Sections 121-123 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, No. 200 of 1993* (the Interim Constitution Act) provided for the setting up of the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights competent to:

- (a) investigate the merits of any claims;
- (b) mediate and settle disputes arising from such claims;
- (c) draw up reports on unsettled claims for submission as evidence to a court of law and to present any other evidence to the court; and
- (d) exercise and perform any such other powers and functions as may be provided for in the said Act.

Section 123 creates a Land Court, to which the Land Commission might submit claims for arbitration. The court is empowered to allocate alternative state-owned land to the claimant, to pay the claimant compensation, or to grant alternative relief. Secondly, the *Restitution of Land Rights Act, No. 22 of 1994* puts in place the procedures for land restitution as prescribed in the Interim Constitution. The Preamble captures the values underlying the Act:

To provide for the restitution of rights in land in respect of which persons or communities were dispossessed under or for the purpose of furthering the objects of any racially based discriminatory law; to establish a Commission on Restitution of Land Rights and a Land Claims Court; and to provide for matters connected therewith.

This Act and the subsequent *Land Restitution and Reform Laws Amendment Act, 1997* set out the details for making a submission to the Land Commission. These details include: who can make claims (direct descendants of dispossessed persons, who had lost specific pieces of land after 19 June 1913 as a direct result of racist legislation); when claims can be made (the deadline for submitting claims was 31 December 1998, and the Land Court will sit for five years); procedures for making a claim (designed to make access to the Land Court as free as possible); and the scope and functions of the Land Commission and Land Court. Fourthly, the institutions and procedures, and the limits of restitution, were cemented in the final constitution of *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, No. 108 of 1996*. Particularly significant is Section 25, which sets out to protect private property as follows:

- (1) No one may be deprived of property except in terms of law of general application, and no law may permit arbitrary deprivation of property.
- (2) Property may be expropriated only in terms of law of general application
 - (a) for public purposes or in the public interest; and
 - (b) subject to compensation, the amount, timing, and manner of payment, of which must be agreed, or decided or approved by a court.

South Africa's new Constitution thus set in place the legal procedures for addressing the land claims of those dispossessed after 1913 as a result of racist legislation.

Launched with great fanfare in May 1995, the Land Commission received many claims, which confirmed the findings of a survey commissioned by the Directorate of Monitoring and Evaluation in 1997 that disclosed that 67.7 per cent of households, or 25.6 million people, needed land. By the end of 1997 the Land Commission had already received 23,009 claims, 19,551 in urban areas and 3,458 in rural areas; by the end of 1998 the total had risen to 36,485 claims; by March 1999 the total had risen to 63,455 claims. The Commission has been severely criticised for its slow delivery, particularly by non-governmental land rights organisations, which charge that it proceeds by cumbersome bureaucratic and legalistic procedures. Statistics released by the Department of Agricultural and Land Reform confirm this impression, though the first Land Commission Chief Joe Seremane was swift to defend the Commission's record: 'We are the Cinderella of commissions [...]. If the government will deny me the R20 million (£1.3 million) I need to do my job for the citizens of this country, then they are not taking [land] restitution seriously' (Eveleth 1997, 12). By the end of 1998 only 19 land claims had been settled, though by June 1999 this figure had increased dramatically to 262 settled claims, which amounted to 310,000 ha of land to 13,500 households. Rural claimants continued to be kept waiting, however, as 80 per cent of these claims were for the restitution of urban land, and involved compensation rather than re-settlement. This improvement has been widely attributed to the shift from a judicial to an administrative review procedure. Notwithstanding this improvement, the desire for accelerated land reform is undiminished. Senior Land Commission official Cheryl Walker concludes her frank appraisal of the first five years of (very limited) restitution by first considering whether the immense frustrations of the restitution process mean that restitution itself should be abandoned, but then reflects further:

If the [restitution] programme is abandoned as too expensive, too difficult, too ineffectual, the problem of those deeply contested social relations, conflictual histories, competing

needs and parochial visions will not go away. We do, however, need to rethink what we can do and how quickly we can do it. We need to find a way of engaging serious public debate about the limits of what government can achieve and people can expect. I also think we need to situate what restitution is doing more firmly in a broader and better coordinated programme not simply of land reform but social development. (Walker 2000, 15-16)

Walker's sober reflections in relation to restitution apply in equal measure to the other state initiatives in addressing the land issue.

Tenure reform

Since 1990, there has been extensive legislation directed to securing and extending land tenure for Africans. The important pieces of legislation directed to securing security of tenure for black South Africans have been: the Abolition of Racially Based Land Measures Act of 1991, which repeals the 1913 and 1936 Land and group Areas Acts; the Upgrading of Land Tenure rights Act of 1991, which upgrades a number of precarious forms of land tenure, including quitrent leasehold, permission to occupy, short-term and 99-year leaseholds; the Interim Protection of Informal Land Rights Act of 1996, which protects people with insecure tenure pending protracted reform procedures; the Land Reform Act of 1996, which provides for the purchase of land by labour tenants and the provision of subsidies to this end; the Extension of Security of Tenure Act of 1997, which protects tenants further by laying down both procedures for them to acquire ownership and procedures existing owners must follow to be able to carry out evictions.

Finally, the Communal Property Associations Act of 1996 enable communities to acquire property under a written constitution. The general pattern in the legislation has been to confer Western forms of ownership, but this final act gives legal recognition to customary, pre-colonial, communal forms of ownership. This

legislation was influenced by the findings of the International Commission of Jurists of 1993, which reported that giving people individual title does not automatically result in more equitable patterns of landholding. Furthermore, the Commission's report notes that in addition to preserving the integrity of family and community units, customary ownership secures identity:

[T]he land represents the link between past and future; ancestors lie buried there, children will be born there. Farming is more than just a productive activity, it is an act of culture, the centre of social existence, and the place where personal identity is forged (Bennett 1996, 94).

The positive impulse of this report, however, is limited by the fact that only a very small percentage of land in South Africa is owned under customary law. More significantly, the quantity of communally-owned land is unlikely to increase significantly because the ANC government ultimately favours individual private ownership as the exclusive form of land tenure, and land use dedicated to cash crops for export markets rather than the subsistence farming associated with communal land ownership.

Redistribution

It was in the context of this new legislation that the World Bank perceived a role for itself to play in influencing land reform in the post-apartheid dispensation. Sensitive to the uncertainties and fresh opportunities of post-1990 South Africa, the World Bank presented itself as an intermediary between the new government, international donors, NGOs and rural development projects, and the landless masses.³ World Bank analysts Robert Christiansen and Katrina Treu described this role thus:

In this scenario, the World Bank was able to play a role as facilitator, bringing together players from different groupings and from government, to enter into policy dialogue. At the

same time, a South Africa cut off from international experience by sanctions had much to gain from engaging with the World Bank sooner rather than later. (Christiansen and Treu 1996, 541-2)

Christiansen and Treu suggest that four principles guided World Bank intervention in South Africa: collaboration with South Africans; the desire to provide a high-quality service and product; transparent and open discussion; and the use of South African expertise. Accordingly, the World Bank undertook elaborate consultations and a carefully planned workshop with 120 South Africans in the early 1990s that culminated in a Land Reform Options report that was finally published in 1994. Explaining the mechanics of the collaboration, Christiansen and Treu declare that, '[i]n keeping with the principle that South African expertise would be used wherever possible, international experts were paired with South African counterparts [which] resulted in co-authored background papers' (Christiansen and Treu 1996, 542). There is repeated emphasis on the World Bank's desire to *listen* to local input: 'Because the purpose of the workshop was to provide lessons of experience and not provide prescriptions, the authors of the papers presented were careful not to make recommendations or prescriptions for South Africa' (Christiansen and Treu 1996, 542).

What then does the World Bank's Land Reform Options report propose for South Africa? The organising principle for land reform in South Africa according to the World Bank is that all reforms should be market-driven. World Bank consultants Johan van Zyl, Johann Kirsten and Hans Binswanger make this very clear in the Introduction to their edited collection *Agricultural Land Reform in South Africa* (1996):

Against this background, and based on international experience, it is argued that market-assisted land reform programmes will have great advantages. The need for reliance on market mechanisms stems from the observed weaknesses of non-market oriented programmes that typically vest too much

control in public sector bureaucracies. These public sector bureaucracies develop their own set of interests that are in conflict with the rapid redistribution of land. (Van Zyl, Kirsten and Binswanger 1996, 9)

The only concession made here to the rule of the market is in relation to the provision of low-interest loans to those seeking to acquire land. In practical terms, the application of market principles to land reform has three main consequences for South African patterns of land tenure. First, the distortions in white agriculture produced by large state subsidies will be removed. The withdrawal of state support will inevitably cause bankruptcies in white-owned farms and the contraction of large-scale grain and livestock production, but it will at the same time provide the appropriate conditions for the black farmers to enter small-scale farming, especially in the horticultural sector and near urban areas. A second practical consequence of this market-driven land reform anticipated is the development of a new type of black-owned, commercial, small-scale agriculture centred on the family unit. The expectation is that this new type of farming will lead to increased employment and greater efficiency in agriculture, and the target set in the mid-1990s by the World Bank was to re-settle 600,000 black families on up to 30 per cent of available arable land within five years. The third practical implication of this model is that fundamental institutional re-structuring, particularly in the system of taxation, is required to fund this vision.

Van Zyl, Kirsten and Binswanger's conclusion is worth quoting in full, as it summarises concisely the most salient aspects of the World Bank blueprint for land reform in post-apartheid South Africa:

In summary, this book advocates that a land reform programme should avoid the maintenance of privileges to the farm sector, most of which are captured by the large-scale [white-owned] mechanized farms, for example, tax shelters and credit subsidies; general debt bail-outs and blanket debt relief to

farmers, confiscation, expropriation or any other administrative/legal 'cheap option' to get land; land acquisition by state or local land reform or administrative bureaucracies; administrative beneficiary selection; and settling land reform beneficiaries on low quality land.

Desirable design features include [italics in original]: making the law consistent with the objectives and processes of the reform; the use of a market-assisted approach, involving willing buyers and willing sellers, with targeted assistance to poor buyers; the use of self-selection by communities and individuals through the rules and incentive structures of the programme; the use of grants to target the poor and to provide appropriate self-selection incentives; limiting the restrictions on the beneficiaries, for instance, on renting or selling the farm, or choosing alternative enterprise and community models; involving beneficiaries in the planning of infrastructure and services; making use of a decentralized institutional structure; decentralizing supervision; and emphasizing ex-post rather than ex-ante approval at each step, combined with suitable penalties. (Van Zyl, Kirsten and Binswanger 1996, 17)

Many of the individual aspects of these proposals are taken up in the criticisms of the World Bank programme I discuss below, but to reiterate the key theme: state intervention in land reform in *whatever* form – from subsidies to confiscation – to be minimised, and the market to be as unfettered as possible in regulating land reform.⁴

The World Bank solution: criticisms local and global

Public debate about land reform in South Africa predictably polarises along racial lines. On the one hand, white farmers argue that the break-up of large commercial farms as proposed by the World Bank will inevitably lead to a dramatic fall in productivity, both in domestic foodstuffs and in export cash crops. On the other

hand, landless black farm workers argue that they should not have to pay for land originally stolen from their forefathers on the 'willing buyer/willing seller' basis proposed by the World Bank; rather, they insist that state confiscation of white-owned farms should remain an option.

I want to organise my discussion of the criticisms of the World Bank slightly differently, however, looking first at criticisms of the impact of World Bank policies on local South African conditions and then at criticisms that operate at the global perspective. Starting with the local criticisms,⁵ the first problem identified is that the vast majority of the rural poor will remain impoverished, as they simply will not be able to raise the credit necessary to buy land. Harald Winkler argues:

"the willing buyer/willing seller" principle seeks to entrench free market principles, which *at this point* [italics in original] will simply continue to dispossess black people This restricted vision of land reform will fail to meet the needs of most black South Africans. It does not address the issue of private land that the government forcibly took from black land-owners and then sold to white farmers. It does not even begin to address the need for land on the part of landless people in the homelands and on white farms, who have been denied access to land by apartheid. (Winkler 1994, 445-6)

Winkler backs up this argument by describing the exemplary case of the Goedgevonden Community, where he argues the limitations of land reform by market principles have been vividly exposed. As this case encapsulates many issues at stake in the relation between the global economic principles of the World Bank, the attempts at intervention on the part of the ANC-governed state, and the interests of a specific 'local' community, I want to pause to summarise its relevant details. The black community of Goedgevonden made up of 300 families was forcibly removed in 1978 from Trust land that they had occupied for 34 years. They re-occupied the land in April 1991, sparking an attack by local white farmers and a series of

court cases. After protracted negotiations between the interested parties to the dispute presided over by the state-appointed body, the Commission for Land Allocation (CLA), the following plan for the Goedgevonden community was proposed. Of the 300 families removed in 1978, 20 to 25 families would receive land as 'bona fide farmers', 60 families would remain on the land as labourers, and the other 220 families would be left to migrate to the towns or seek work on other farms in the area. In effect, a small elite would become 'smallholders' or small-scale capitalist farmers, a larger minority would become farm-workers, and the remaining 70 per cent of the original community would be ejected. The alignment of forces in this case was: on the one hand, the government-led CLA negotiators protecting private property and market principles, and, on the other hand, the Goedgevonden community desperately trying to return to some communal form of land ownership. According to Winkler, the CLA plan abandoned the landless black majority, and simply promoted 'a reduced version of white commercial agriculture' (Winkler 1994, 446). The phase of the Goedgevonden dispute described here was taking place at the same time as the World Bank's consultative workshops in South Africa, so no published World Bank opinions on the case are available. However, it is quite clear where World Bank allegiances would lie, as the private property/market-led solution to the Goedgevonden dispute proposed by the CLA accords in precise detail with the World Bank blueprint for land reform in South Africa.

A corollary of the argument that the black rural majority will remain impoverished by market-led land reforms is the argument that the only beneficiaries of such reform are likely to be a small elite of black commercial farmers. Reviewing ANC land reform policies since 1994, Lionel Cliffe argues that they promote 'the interests of a would-be agrarian black agrarian class, rather than those of the propertyless' (Cliffe 2000, 271). The resulting emergence of a class of black capitalist farmers, therefore, might re-configure the racial composition of South Africa's ruling elite,

but the fate of the landless black majority would continue unchanged. For Cliffe, there is a congruence of old and new ways of thinking about land ownership: 'first, the so-called "technical" formulae of the old-fashioned paternalist white agriculturalists and equally, the black officials and policy-makers, who have brought their assumptions of World Bank-type "smallholderism"' (Cliffe 2000, 285). Only by challenging the shared assumptions of these two constituencies – assumptions about the priority of the market, the sanctity of individual ownership of private property, and the inviolability of capitalist labour relations – can there be any hope of going beyond 'merely Africanising prevailing (massively inequalitarian) production relations' (Cliffe 2000, 285).

Criticisms of World Bank policies from a global perspective are of course also of direct relevance to developing countries like South Africa.⁶ Publications supported by the World Bank in recent years – like the Van Zyl, Kirsten and Binswanger collection *Agricultural land Reform in South Africa* (1996) – appear to be consultative, well-intentioned, sensitive to local histories and current conditions, and dedicated to serving the best interests of the poorest groups in developing countries. These declared commitments are deceptive, however, and a rather different agenda ultimately drives World Bank policy. Paul Cammack argues this point as follows:

Behind these apparently progressive aims there stands a commitment to a project to what Marx once described as the "entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world market"; its principal object is to deliver an exploitable global proletariat into the hands of capital. This does indeed involve drawing the poorest of the world's population into the workforce, providing basic health and education, and focusing particularly on young women – lending the process its emancipatory tinge. But the larger part of this strategy, in which its central logic is betrayed, is to deny the poor any alternative, and to create a reserve army of labour that will enforce the disciplines of

capitalist labour-markets across the greater part of humanity.
(Cammack 2002, 125)

Cammack's general prognosis can be applied to the World Bank's specific proposals for land reform in post-apartheid South Africa. With the possible exception of a minority who might qualify as 'smallholders', the vast majority of South Africa's black rural proletariat is to be denied 'any alternative' to farm labour, and those who do not hang on to their jobs will join the 'reserve army of labour'. The Goedgevonden case fits the general prescription: of the 300 families working on communally owned land, 20 become smallholders, and the 'alternatives' for the balance of the families are to become either farm workers or join the ranks of the unemployed.

Cammack's argument that a more cynical, self-serving agenda underlies the World Bank's rhetoric of upliftment, empowerment and development is also made by Joseph Stiglitz. According to Stiglitz, the World Bank has a four-step economic programme for all developing nations that he summarises in an interview with Gregory Palast as follows:

Step one is privatization – which Stiglitz said could more accurately be called 'briberization'. Rather than object to the sell-offs of state industries, [Stiglitz] said national leaders – using World Bank demands to silence local critics – happily flogged their water and electricity companies [...]. After briberization, step two of IMF/World Bank one-size-fits-all rescue-your-economy plan is 'capital market liberalization'. In theory, capital market deregulation allows investment capital to flow in and out. Unfortunately, as in Indonesia and Brazil, the money simply flowed out and out [...]. At this point, the IMF drags the gasping nation to step three: market based pricing, a fancy term for raising the prices on food, water, and cooking gas. This leads, predictably, to step three-and-a-half: what Stiglitz calls 'the IMF riot'. The IMF riot is painfully predictable [...]. Indonesia exploded into riots, but there are

other examples – the Bolivian riots over water prices last year and, this February [1999], the riots in Ecuador over the rise in cooking gas prices imposed by the World Bank [...]. Now we arrive at step four of what the IMF and World Bank call their 'poverty reduction strategy': free trade. This is free trade by the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and World Bank, which Stiglitz likens to the Opium Wars [...]. As in the nineteenth century, Europeans and Americans today are kicking down the barriers to sales in Asia, Latin America and Africa, while barricading our own markets against Third World agriculture. (Palast 2001)

Although Stiglitz's description of the World Bank's intentions with respect to developing nations might only be of indirect relevance to its proposals for South African land reform, the bleak picture he paints suggests that it would be naïve for any developing nation to take World Bank declarations simply on trust. Stiglitz's interpretation of the World Bank agenda suggests that specific projects – like its South African land reform programme – might appear to have positive short-term effects (transferring *some* land to black South Africans), but that the longer-term impact will be devastating for everyone other than the elites in developing countries.

Conclusion

The post-apartheid government's very modest achievements in land reform to date are of course not unique. Other nations with colonial histories have discovered that the obstacles to land reform cannot be under-estimated. India, for example, has since independence achieved some notable successes in land reform, eliminating the exploitation by *zamindars* and other intermediary right-holders, and introducing legal protection for superior tenants.¹ However, Sukumar Das in a recent survey of India's efforts at land reform since 1947 emphasizes its limitations, and the substantial challenges that remain:

Despite all the legislative efforts which generated several hundreds of land legislations by various state governments necessitating 13 amendments to the Constitution particularly to abolish the right to own property as a fundamental right and to protect 277 so-called progressive land legislations incorporating them in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution, and also payment of over Rs 6,000 million as compensation to ex-landlords, the ultimate shift of agricultural land to tillers was quite insignificant. Until the end of March 1995 only 2.06 million hectares of ceiling surplus land and 5.54 million hectares of government wasteland had been officially transferred from the ex-landlords which constituted less than 4.6 per cent of the total arable land of India. (Das 2000, 39)

Das elaborates further on the limits of land reform in India, identifies the key issues to be addressed if the slow and uneven progress is to accelerate, and concludes with the warning: "Land reforms" are therefore, an "unfinished task" in India, which must be completed without further delay' (Das 2000, 42).

In an interview on land reform in Brazil, Joao Pedro Stedile of the Sem Terra Movement registers a similar appreciation of the scale of the challenge. Stedile acknowledges the power of agricultural multinationals like Monsanto, and the energetic support they enjoy from both international agencies like the World Bank and neoliberal governments in developing countries.⁸ However, he notes that although '[a]ccording to the Gini index, Brazil has the highest concentration of land ownership in the world' (Stedile 2002, 90), the Sem Terra Movement in the eighteen years of its existence has 'won some economic victories: the lives of 350,000 families that have occupied land are improving – they may still be poor, but things are getting better. But maybe the greatest success is the dignity the Sem Terra farmers have won for themselves' (Stedile 2002, 91). Stedile's guarded optimism about Brazilian land struggles extends to his sense of the internationalization of resistance to neo-liberal economic policies. He notes that as multinationals and

agencies like the World Bank impose their global solutions on all parts of the developing world, so a loosely affiliated global network of opposition (the Via Campesina) has emerged to resist their designs:

As long as capitalism meant only industrialization, those who worked the land limited their struggle to the local level. But as the realities of neoliberal internationalization have been imposed on us, we've begun to hear stories from farmers in the Philippines, Malaysia, South Africa, Mexico, France, all facing the same problems – and the same exploiters [...]. The new phase of capitalism has itself created the conditions for farmers to unite against the neoliberal model. (Stedile 2002, 99)

Stedile's descriptions of the specific local histories and forms of resistance in Brazil are a useful corrective to the economic determinism that underwrites Cammack and Stiglitz's analyses of the World Bank's *modus operandi*. It would of course be mistaken to exaggerate or even worse sentimentalize the resistance to neoliberalism described by Stedile, but the agency of particular local formations, however diminished and compromised, remains a constant factor to account for in unraveling the dialectic of the global and the local.

** Dr. Johnson's paper elicited questions on the aspects of identity that had precipitated the recent conflict in Zimbabwe, the strong connections between land ownership, ancestral histories and memories, and the need to move away from the miniaturism of localness. Vital connections between land ownership, the issue of food security, the question of employment, and the issue of blacks vis-à-vis land in South Africa were raised. The model of small farmers failing in different contexts (South Africa, India, even the US) within larger frameworks of globalized markets further highlights the importance of land ownership and reform.

Notes

1. For Stiglitz's own version of his intellectual trajectory, see Stiglitz (2001) and, more recently, Stiglitz's *Globalization and Its Discontents* (2002). Stiglitz himself claims a consistency in his economic writings over time, whereas critics have seen his departure from the World Bank in different ways, from Damascene conversion to betrayal. For critical discussions of Stiglitz's relationship to World Bank orthodoxy, see especially Wade (2001) and also Moberg (2000). To appreciate the distance between the 'old' and the 'new' Stiglitz, see Andrews and Dor's 1999 report on Stiglitz's high-profile visit on behalf of the World Bank to South Africa. Also of interest is the recent collection of essays by Stiglitz edited by Chang (2001).
2. The recent introductory histories of South Africa by Ross (1999) and Worden (1994) include useful summaries of the struggles over land in Southern Africa. Sol Plaatje's (1916/1987) history of the 1913 Land Act remains a powerful record of early twentieth-century dispossession, and the collection edited by Beinart, Delius and Trapido (1986) traces a number of specific land struggles in the last two centuries.
3. The case for market-led land reform in South Africa along the lines proposed by the World Bank is also made by the Department of Land Affairs, Lipton and Lipton (1994), and (with important qualifications) by Marcus and Wildschut (1996).
4. In recent World Bank publications, it is striking how the word 'repression' is used to describe attempts on the part of the state to regulate the market. For example, the Introduction to a collection of essays edited by Gerard Caprio, Patrick Honohan and Joseph E. Stiglitz (2001) summarises the economic history of the twentieth century as follows: 'Much of the twentieth

century saw intensified financial repression [...]. The fad for financial repression was associated with the rise of populism, nationalism and statism. Populist opinion thought of interest rate controls as a way of redistributing income [...]. Statism may have been an even more significant factor in the increased financial repression'. And so on.

5. The case against the market-led World Bank plan for land reform in South Africa is made by Bernstein (1998), Murray and Williams (1994), Freund (1997), and Levin and Weiner (1996).
6. Increasing numbers of studies of the World Bank repeat the kinds of criticisms expressed by Cammack (2002) and Stiglitz (2002). See, for example, recent works by Harriss (2002) and, for the African context, Abrahamsen (2000).
7. The fact that land reform differs from region to region in India makes any brief summary difficult. Useful attempts at providing an overview include works by Judge (1999), and the chapters by Das and Pushpendra in Pushpendra (2000).
8. Stedile (2002) at one point describes the passing of legislation in Brazil allowing the patenting of living things, and how as soon as the legislation was in place, 2,940 applications for patents were received, 97 per cent of which were from multinationals. He notes – and this is my point – that the Brazilian government's eager complicity in this process has been repeated by neo-liberal governments around the world, and he specifically singles out the South African government for censure: 'exactly the same thing is going on in India, Chile, the Philippines, South Africa – despite the illusion that the ANC would be a progressive government, it's a neoliberal administration, just like Brazil' (Stedile 2002, 101). For a summary of opposition to neo-liberal economics in South Africa, including land policies, see Bond (2000), 171–86.

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Minority Identity, Majoritarianism and the Political Response in India and the West

Mollica Dastider

Discourses on 'majoritarianism'—or majority community based exclusionary nationalism—constitute an interesting parallel to the process of globalization witnessed by plural societies of the contemporary world. These are discourses that aim to eliminate inter-group differences in the society by targeting the minorities and making them vulnerable to attacks and subjugation. It is in this given context that the present paper seeks to understand the growing phenomenon of holding religious and cultural minorities responsible for most social, economic, and political ills in the societies of the contemporary world. The proverbial notion of an 'other' or 'them' who allegedly differ fundamentally from 'us' seems to have taken the centre-stage of political discourses in plural societies; and so far contemporary political theory is yet to find an ideal mechanism to deal with the questions of diversity, pluralism, and difference. The health of modern democracies therefore largely depend on the justice of its institutions (Kymlicka and Wayne 2000, 6) and the concurrent political will of its governing elites to respect and accommodate differences and dissent in plural societies. So, the question this paper seeks to examine is whether the existing pattern of political response to inter-group differences

in the plural societies is contributing towards a more tolerant and democratic social set up, or whether such response is merely perpetuating the inter-group divisions in order to serve the narrow interests of the political elites themselves.

The conflict between majorities and minorities over issues such as language rights, religious freedom, political representation, federalism, educational curriculum and immigration and naturalisation policy is posing a serious challenge to most of the liberal democracies all over the world. And if managing these inter-group differences, in this era of globalization, has become the most challenging task for today's democracies, it is also found that each state has its own unique way of responding to its cultural diversities. While in a multi-religious and multi-ethnic country like India a new but growing thrust on majoritarianism is opening up serious debates over majority community based nationalism, in the west, viz. in Europe, we find that volatile disputes over the rights of the immigrants, indigenous people and other cultural minorities are opening up new debates on individual and group rights. The self proclaimed liberal, democratic and human rights based values are threatened by the resurgence of exclusionary nationalism and ethnocentrism. In a country like Germany, many social scientists feel that accommodation and integration of its Turkish immigrant community has developed into one of the most conflict-ridden issues of political mobilisation in recent years (Koopmans 1999, 627-647). In studying the Indian situation, it needs to be noted that the complacent response of the ruling elites in India towards a series of disturbing incidents, committed by members of Hindu fundamentalist organisations against members of religious minority communities in the name of legitimising majority religion based nationhood, seems to have emboldened the perpetrators of violence. Interestingly, this phenomenon of public discourses on the majority religion based nationalism, and the targeting of religious minority groups as a part of that process, has gained momentum in the last few years, the period that coincides with the completion of India's 50 years of Independence. It is this particular context, of the

growing trend of interpreting democracy as a rule of the majority, that highlights the need for understanding the role of political elites in addressing such controversial modes of political mobilisations.

Understanding the Concepts

It is essential here to briefly explain the concepts that have been deployed in this paper—concepts such as 'minority identity', 'majoritarianism', and that of 'political response'—before embarking on any comparative political analysis of the situation in India and the West. The simplest definition of the concept of minority has been given by the Permanent Court of International Justice when it defined 'minority' as 'inhabitants who differ from the rest of the population in race, religion or language'. But in essence, minority identification is mainly derived from the dominant-subordinate relationship characterised by discrimination, prejudice and exclusion practiced by the former and self-segregation by the latter (Dastider 1995, 18).

In the west, the issue of minority rights is often described as group rights and collective rights, and the proponents of liberal individualism often find it intriguing that if groups do have rights, then will these rights not come into inherent conflict with individual rights? However, the advocates of group rights point out that the adoption of minority rights helps to remedy the disadvantages that minorities suffer within difference-blind (affirmative discrimination free) institutions, and in doing so promotes fairness. Minority rights, it is argued, do not provide unfair privileges but rather act to compensate for unfair disadvantages and may indeed be required by justice. As Kymlicka argues, minority rights are best understood as mechanisms for protecting minorities from possible injustices. This is so since different kinds of minorities face distinct threats from the project of state-nation building, i.e. encouraging citizens within the territory of the state to integrate into common public institutions operating under a common official language—the

project that remains the main task of liberal democracies over a significant period of history (Kymlicka 2001, 2).

By the term 'majoritarianism' I am simply referring here to the discourses of a majority community fundamentalism, presently being witnessed by pluralistic societies of the contemporary world. Many of these discourses aim to eliminate inter-group differences in societies by subjugating the minorities to the will of the dominant community. Such discourses talk of a nationalism that often invokes majority ethnicity, and views the cultural minorities as 'other', who are then sought to be contained or transformed by the symbolism of majoritarian culture (Seth and Mahajan 1999, 28). The term 'political response' primarily looks at the response of the political leadership in the context of inter-group differences, examining whether the predominant political response is perpetuating the conflict in societies to serve narrow elite interests. Or, is there any process evolving out of it, in order to make modern democracies more adaptable to living with differences.

Finally, in consonance with the opening observations on discourses on majoritarianism as an useful mechanism to deal with social conflicts in modern democracies, two basic hypothetical constructs proposed for this study are:

First, the existence of diverse cultural groups do not necessarily create conflicts in plural societies, it is the phenomenon of inclusion and exclusion or the positing of a 'We' and the 'Other' in political discourses that makes the issue vulnerable to potential conflict.

Second, the increasing pluralisation of modern societies, either in terms of internal cultural differentiation or by the empowerment of marginalised communities, is threatening the hegemony of the dominant.

The Similarities and Differences: Anti-Minority Campaigns in India and Germany

As mentioned above the disparate nature of the minority groups identified for the study present a most interesting contrast in the cases of Germany and India. The Turkish community in Germany, for instance, is taken as the de-facto minority group (as only 10 per cent of the 2.4 million population are citizens and the rest have the status of permanently settled legal visitors), who fall in the category of ethnic minorities of migrant origin—a category of social group that has become permanent in other European countries as well, and has been largely incorporated as new citizens, as in Britain, France and Netherlands (Koopmans, 1999). Muslims and Christians in India, on the other hand, are an official minority group with the constitutional status of belonging to one of the minority religious communities of the country. Furthermore, Germany is a country with ethno-cultural exclusionist citizenship, where non-ethnic German migrants are incorporated into the labour market but it is difficult for them to gain access to the political community. While India has a multicultural and pluralist model of citizenship.

However, despite this highly divergent nature of the groups, there exist a strong similarity in both the contexts, and that concerns the ongoing public discourse of majoritarianism or majority nationalism in both the countries, which perceive the minority population with extra territorial identity linkages as an impending threat to the majority culture and religion. Therefore, besides being victims of prejudices in the extreme right political mobilisations, the separate religious identity of the Turks in Germany and of the Christians and the Muslims in India also provide functional equivalents for this study, for they all (Turks, Christians, Muslims) belong to the category of religious minority.

Moreover, seen from the perspective of the responses of political elites to the anti-minority campaigns in these two countries, one can draw an interesting analogy here, namely, that the stress in both the cases is on the need for integration or assimilation. At

the same time, acts of violence committed against the minorities are projected simply as law and order problems (i.e. violation of law by hooligans or skinheads) which are paradoxically assumed to not affect or link up with the assimilative discourses on nation building.

Minority Rights and Xenophobic Mobilisation in Germany

As the issue of immigration is invariably seen as the driving force behind the increasing pluralisation of present-day European societies, in Germany too it has developed into one of the most conflict-ridden issues of political mobilisation since the 1990's. Juxtaposed between the need for an immigrant workforce in the economy and the expanding base for the politics of right extremism and xenophobia, the political leadership in Germany seems divided between two stands. The rhetoric of more integration (implying assimilation) of the largest immigrant community of the Turks on the one hand, and the popular rhetoric of 'Wir sind kein einwanderungsland' (we are not an immigration country) on the other. Identifying this trend of the context being left with only an either-or situation—the two options of either 'exclusion' preached by xenophobic nationalism or 'integration', some scholars have maintained that it was high time one stopped treating the Turks merely as guest workers in the economy. For most of them had become permanent residents and therefore should be given the naturalisation rights of immigrants (Goldberg and Sen 1999, 98).

Turks in Germany: A Schematic Profile of Perceptions

Ausländer (foreigners), Gastarbeiters (guest workers), Islamic community, parallel society and the need for greater integration are some of the phrases that are inevitably linked with reference to the Turkish community in Germany. The idea of integrating this

peripheral social group into the mainstream German society is also generating serious debates in contemporary German politics.

The conflict between the German majority and Turkish minority can be best described as a conflict of perceptions. The common perception about Turks in Germany vary from the moderate understanding of their Islamic identity to the highly prejudiced view of 'multikriminelle Gesellschaft' (multicriminal society). Following are some of the perceptions prevalent about the Turks in the society:

Türken gleich Moslems (Turks means Muslims)

Islam gleich fundamentalismus gleich terrorismus (Islam means fundamentalism, and fundamentalism means terrorism)

Türken gleich Fundamentalisten (Turks means fundamentalists)

Mehr Türken gleich mehr Kriminalität - multikriminelle Gesellschaft (more Turks means more criminals; multicriminal society in the name of having a multicultural society) (Ermisch 1999, 98).

So far as the Turks are concerned, their common view is that the Germans have never accepted them as a part of their (German) society, and would always consider them as *ausländer*s, consequently the Turks should maintain their own separate identity and should not get integrated into the mainstream by making special efforts in acquiring citizenship.

Dilemmas of a de facto Minority Group

Out of the 2.4 millions Turks in Germany only around 200,000 are citizens, while the rest of the 2.1 million are deemed 'foreigners' by German laws (Goldberg and Sen 1999, 117). But the very fact that many of them are legal residents since as early as the 1960s, and that there already exists two generations (including a very young 3rd generation) of Turks who were born and raised in this country

make the Turkish community in Germany a de-facto minority group different from the majority population by language, religion and culture.

In spite of their status as a tax paying community of legal workers, the Turkish community have so far remained a very passive and apolitical group in the German society. In terms of collective claims making, records show that due to their exclusion from formal citizenship Turks and their organisations, largely under the label of foreigners made very little claims to cultural rights. Claims for rights only amounted to only 9 per cent of all minority claims making on ethnic relations, with the remaining 91 per cent being mainly defensive claims against discrimination and xenophobic violence (Koopmans and Statham 1999, 652-96). However, with the initiation of the process of the gradual reform of its 'ethnocultural and exclusionist' national citizenship model, also known as the *jus sanguinis* model (where citizenship rights are determined on the basis of ethnic descent and therefore is not a territorial birth right), the access to German citizenship has been made somewhat easier by legislative changes undertaken in the last decade in 1990, 1993 and 1999 (Koopmans 1999 [1], 627-47). The enforcement of the new nationality act—which provides the children of migrant origin born in Germany on or after January 1, 2000, with the right to German citizenship on the condition that they should give up their parent's nationality when they reach the age of 21 in order to keep their German citizenship—would definitely mean a clear departure from the ethnic citizenship model. The impact of such reforms would be most visible among the largest ethnic and religious minority group of immigrant origin—the Turks. According to the estimates of the Centre for studies on Turkey in Essen, by 2003 there will be 900,000 Germans of Turkish origin.

The prevalent animosity between the majority Germans and the minority Turks is plainly visible in open conflicts, ranging over the exercise of religious rights and religious education in the school curriculum, formation of gangs of unemployed Turkish youths in

Turk dominated areas and frequent skirmishes between them and the gangs of unemployed German youth, and the schism between the Turkish and German students in school. All this could take the shape of a much serious conflict unless the present prejudices are addressed soon at the societal and political levels.

Realising the urgency of the situation one finds that the political elite of Germany have certainly taken the issue with much seriousness and there is a predominant public discourse today on 'integration' in contemporary German politics. The efforts for the integration of migrants, however, will remain a non-starter as long as they are not founded on the principle of equal rights and opportunities. It is important to point out here that while the migrant workers are to abide by all the existing legislation and regulatory provisions on the same footing as nationals, such as the payment of taxes and contributing to pension insurances and social security, they have virtually no say in the decision making process as most of them have no political rights for they are not citizens of the land. The presence of such a large number of disenfranchised permanent residents not only undermines the legitimacy of the decision making process but also contradicts the basic tenets of democracy.

Turks contribute DM 8.5 billion as taxes to the German government; DM 2.5 billion as pension insurance; and more importantly DM 69 billion to the gross domestic products of the economy. There are around 47,000 self employed Turks, and the Turkish entrepreneurs provide employment to 200,000 people, out of which 60,000 are Germans (Goldberg and Sen 1999, 116). Therefore, on the question of better integration, the dissemination of such information will surely provide the majority community with a different profile of the Turkish community and thus help address some of the prejudices they hold against the community at large. Similarly, on the parameters of integration, the perspective of the Turks differ from the majority opinion. They feel that while it is imperative for the Turks to learn the German language and obtain required educational qualifications for finding employment,

and joining the mainstream, they must also have the basic freedom of maintaining their separate cultural identity. And that in the name of integration they should not be expected to assimilate into the majority culture by dissolving their own. In short, they want themselves to be accepted as 'Turkish Germans' and not as 'German Turks'.¹

The Political Response: Issues of Concern

The strong opposition to the SPD-Green sponsored legislation on dual-citizenship in 1999 by members of conservative Christian Democratic and Christian Social Union (CDU and CSU) parties in parliament, and the eventual enactment of the new Nationality Act,—with the initiatives of the Liberal Party (FDP) — only underlines the need for taking into cognizance the long standing democratic rights of its immigrant community. It is however important to note here that such political moves have coincided with the resurgence of neo-Nazi attacks on foreigners and the extreme right politics of parties like the Nationalist party (NPD), Republikaner, and German Peoples Party (DVU).² The contradictions at the levels of policy making are more open when it is found that along with the initiatives, any proposal to introduce constitutional rights for the protection of minorities, is meted out with outright rejection. The proposal of a Constitution Review Commission (set up as a part of Unification Treaty of 1990 which had the representatives of all the national parties) that article 20 of the Constitution should have Clause-B, which would include a provision stating that the State should respect the identity of ethnic, cultural and linguistic minorities, was a part of the recommendations of the Commission that was submitted in 1994. However, the proposal for Art. 20(B) was outrightly rejected by the CDU government and the members of its Parliamentary group on the ground that such an article would hinder the integration of the minorities of foreign origin living in the country, for then the minorities would prefer to assert their separate identity (Ermisch

2000, 209-210). The impact of such conservative political mobilisation on the conflictual aspects of inter-group relations is crucial, for not only does it contradict the reality of existing pluralism and differences in the society but also makes the non-dominant or the minority group vulnerable.

Despite the prominence of the 'integration' debate in contemporary German politics, the statements made by various important political leaders on the subject on different occasions, have often reflected a mindset that runs totally contrary to the whole idea of integrating the permanent residents of migrant origin into the mainstream society. For instance, the SPD leader and the federal minister Otto Schilly's comment that the pressures of immigration in Germany has gone well beyond its capacity; or the hostile comments and campaign of CDU and CSU Prime Ministers of Hessen and Bavaria against immigrants; or even the justification given by the former communist party, now the Party for Democratic Socialism (PDS), leader Christine Ostrowski, for the anti-foreigner violence in East Germany by saying that 30 per cent of the German construction workers are unemployed and they are bound to be angry as they loose their jobs to the foreign workers; or for that matter the fear expressed by Heinrich Lummer of CDU that a multi-cultural society is a society of conflicts and that there can be no internal peace³—present the other side of the political debate. These debates impart a very ambiguous character not only to the whole discourse on 'integration' but even to the efforts in tackling the menace of anti-foreigner xenophobia indulged by many extreme right wing groups.

In sum, the party positions on ensuring constitutional rights for the protection of the minorities remain far from clear after the rejection of the proposal on minority rights by the CDU government in 1994. While the extreme right political discourses of NPD, Republikaner and DVU are well known on the issue of minority rights, it can be said that the conservative position of the mainstream CDU/CSU are equally detrimental to developing any *de jure* pluralistic democracy in the country. Therefore, the current efforts

in following traditional models of integrating minorities of migrant origin—which calls for high degree of cultural integration before allowing immigrants to gain citizenship—coupled with the negation of the rights of the minority groups and the reality of cultural pluralism in German society, is likely to sharpen the divide between the German majority and the Turkish minority. The Turks would welcome the process of integration only if it gives them the space to become ‘Turkish Germans’ and not ‘German Turks’ as expected by the proponents of integration theory.

India: Anti Religious-Minority Mobilisations in Recent Years

Any discussion on the current majoritarian discourses in India must be initiated by positing the development by its essentially multicultural and multi-religious heritage. The history of the Indian sub-continent has been the history of creative interplay of distinctive cultures, and the survival and continuity of Indian society over the period of history along with this cultural diversity has undoubtedly made it the oldest and most persistent plural society in the world. The rise and gradual consolidation of Hindu fundamentalism in the recent years therefore has emerged as the most critical challenge for a country, built on a civilisation that is fundamentally non-theocratical. Pluralism, as argued by Rajni Kothari, has not been a mere political construct for the Indian democracy; it has been basic to the very conception of India’s social order, and that is why there was such a perfect fit between its inherited culture and the adopted democratic institution (Kothari 1998, 10). With the adoption of the present Constitution at the end of British colonial rule, the Republic of India had resolved to transform its structural and social inequality (based on the four-fold caste hierarchy and other socio-cultural stratifications) into a new paradigm of democratic pluralism, i.e. the acceptance of dignified co-existence of religious, tribal and linguistic collectivities. Democracy, socialism and secularism became the guiding principles of the independent modern Indian state since 1947.

Seen in this light, the rise of Hindu fundamentalism and recent xenophobic campaign by Hindu organisations like Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and its youth wing Bajrang Dal, against Muslim and Christian minorities, poses a serious challenge to the very edifice of pluralistic democracy of the modern Indian state. Pointing at their extra territorial religious linkages, the forces of Hindutva brand the Muslims and Christians as 'outsiders' and hence not Indians. Hindutva as a doctrine seeks to mould the composite cultural heritage of India into a homogeneous Hindu culture, rejects India's basic identity as a highly plural, diverse and heterogenous society and raises the slogan of 'One Nation, One People and One Culture'. The ramifications of this Hindu nationalist rhetoric have been most visible in the open and unashamed targeting of the minorities by the VHP, Hindu Jagaran Manch and Bajrang Dal (constituent bodies of the umbrella Hindu organisation headed by RSS). Their provocative statements, hate speeches, pamphleteering for invoking general hostility against Muslims and Christians, and even involvements in rioting are all aimed at creating a climate of increased intolerance and hatred in the present day body politic.

Although the phenomenon of communalism (meaning conflict between religious communities), had remained a crucial feature in the politics of modern 20th century India, and as aptly pointed out by Rajni Kothari, has almost become the new face of Indian democracy in the last few decades, largely due to the erosion of democratic institutions, especially the party system dominated by Congress till the eighties with no secular alternative in sight, and the failure of the state to move forward with the developmental process (Kothari 1998, 8). But the current phenomenon of legitimisation of majoritarian public discourses on religious nationalism is an alarming new development that is taking place for the first time in the history of independent Indian polity. This version of religious nationalism being preached over the last one decade in general, and in the past few years in particular, is an alien concept to the extremely plural Hindu religion itself. As

against Peter Van der Veer's argument that religious nationalism has always remained important to the imaginings of the Indian nation (van der Veer 1994, 22), it must be pointed out that the essential identity of India has always been cultural—of being a civilisation tied together by set of cultural norms and values and an interpreting elite, first within a highly plural framework of Hinduism, and then through a multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-national society, which is there at present. It is precisely for this reason that, since its ascendance to power, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had to sideline its political project of Hindutva, under the compulsion of coalition politics. However, on a parallel track the party's ideological mentor, RSS, has reinvigorated its Hindutva campaign with new boldness. Since the formation of BJP led coalition governments at the Centre in 1998, the aggressive nationalism of RSS—that urges the 'other' (Muslims and Christians) to get assimilated into the Hindu cultural mainstream, and cautions those who prefer to remain outside it to prove their loyalty to the nation for they must 'understand that their safety lies in the goodwill of the majority'⁴—has reached new heights. And despite being outrightly unconstitutional in its public statements, the organisation remains vindicated by senior BJP ministers in the government as a nationalist organisation that glorifies India's ancient past.

It is of little surprise then that the phenomenon of public discourse on the majority religion based nationalism, and the series of attacks against Christian establishments and missionaries that began in Gujarat, and was followed in Orissa, MP, and UP since 1998, coincided with Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) ascendance to power. The incidents of attack against Christians mostly coincided with periodical statements issued by leaders of Hindu fundamentalist groups viz. VHP, Bajrang Dal and Hindu Jagaran Manch (various outfits of the umbrella Hindu organisation RSS) cautioning the Hindus about the threats that the nation faced from anti-national and foreign elements. Bajrang Dal's call for awakening against the 'conspiracy of conversion', and the oust

Christian campaign; or the building up of anti-minority propaganda through widespread distribution of hate literature in the form of pamphlets; observance of December 6th (anniversary of Babri mosque demolition) as Victory Day for the Hindus; and holding rallies on 25 December in Christian populated Dang district of Gujrat by Bajrang Dal and HJM activists—were all followed by new series of attacks against minorities in Gujrat and UP.⁵ In his annual Dussera (Hindu festival) speeches the RSS chief, over the last couple of years, has been emphasising on the imperative of Christians and Muslims joining the country's cultural mainstream by accepting their Hindu ancestry. Muslims are told that they have the blood of Hindu gods, Rama and Krishna, in their veins and therefore they should not link themselves with the invader Babur, while the Christians are told that they should set up swadeshi (Indian) churches in the country to prove their patriotism.⁶

Understanding the Political Response

While assessing the political response towards such majoritarian communalism preached by certain vested interest groups, one finds that the response of the political leadership—ranging from the NDA government at the centre to the BJP/Congress/Regional party leaderships in the states—is largely of either complicity or of perfunctory show of concern. The presence of Home minister L.K. Advani in the RSS meet—where its chief asks the Muslims and Christians to join the country's cultural mainstream by accepting their Hindu ancestry—not only endorses such majoritarianism but gives legitimacy to the campaign as well. Or the Prime Minister Vajpayee's highly controversial statement calling for a national debate on conversion amidst the VHP/Bajrang Dal campaign against the Christian for their 'conspiracy of conversion', or even pressurising the Congress chief minister of Orissa, J.B. Patnaik, to own moral responsibility for the series of attacks against Christians in his state in early 1999, only reiterate the complicity and lack of commitment on part of the political

leadership, and subsequently the law enforcing machineries of the state, in implementing the rule of law.

The explanation of such political behaviour can be traced to the degeneration of the democratic political process in the country from representing a coalition of diverse interests (of dalits, tribals, Muslims and other religious minorities) into narrow electoral calculations, with the only preoccupation of survival in office. The transformation of pluralistic democracy into mere number game politics is instrumental to the mobilisation of the Hindu heartland in which a majority of the voters are located. The increasing tendency among political parties to work out short term electoral alliances, and very little effort in actually checking the gross violation of the liberal democratic character of the state is aiding the sectarian and divisive forces to institutionalise their agenda. It is in the context of such apolitical responses to a situation of political and institutional vacuum that the phenomenon of majoritarianism is to be seen. Democracy becomes majoritarianism because of its electoral and legislative compulsions (Kothari 1998, 35). What we are witnessing today is a growing trend in mobilisation of public opinion in favour of an exclusionist nationalism by vested interest groups, members of parliament, and even ministers in the recent past. This results in the institutionalisation of discourses on majoritarianism. Hence, attacks against the Christians and their institutions over the last few years, and the very recent carnage in Gujarat can be seen as the logical corollary of this very institutionalisation of majoritarian public discourses. The inaction of the political executives over several disturbing incidents of organised attacks against establishments run by members of the minority community in Gujarat, Orissa, UP or Rajasthan in the recent past has definitively encouraged the perpetrators of violence in their project of building up a climate of xenophobia.

The unprecedented brutalities against Muslims in Gujarat, following the Godhra carnage on 27 February 2002, has therefore marked the culmination of the politics of majoritarian discourses, and has given it a shape of minority cleansing. If senior ministers

of the BJP led coalition government at the centre defended the ruling BJP in the state by stating that there was nothing new in the violence or macabre cases of torture in Gujarat as much worse things had been witnessed in the past (Defence Minister George Fernandes's infamous statement in the Parliament on 30th April 2000), the party's secular allies despite reservations failed to withdraw their support to the government. If the VHP/Bajrang Dal campaign against the Muslims and Christians over the past several years in the state has been endorsed by the ruling BJP, then the opposition in the state has played an equally important role by allowing them to have a smooth passage in their mission of identifying and vilifying the 'other'. The entire elected leadership of the state is under pledge to abide by their constitutional responsibilities of upholding the basic tenets of the Preamble of the Constitution, such as securing to all citizens the liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship in a secular and democratic republic.

Deductive Evaluation of the Politics of Majoritarianism

Around the world, extreme right forces are whipping up the issue of 'us vs. them' to grab political power. Across Europe right wing forces are making their presence felt in elected power structures riding the wave of growing resentment against immigrants. Whereas in the developing nations the impoverishment of the majority—resulting out of the structural adjustment policies and pressures of globalization—is providing fertile ground to fundamentalist forces to influence the disillusioned and the unemployed with the promise of returning them to their old time religion. Given the divergent contexts and nature of group compositions, it would be inappropriate to draw simple generalisations of the discourses in India and Germany. Yet looking at the two situations, even if one doesn't find stright forward parallels developments in both countries can certainly be put in the same framework of 'us vs. them' that perceives *threat* from

'extra-territorial identity linkages'. Testing the validity of both the hypotheses in each case it can be said that the situation in Germany aptly justifies the first hypothesis, for the internal cultural differentiation is eroding the basis of its traditional ethno-cultural model of nationhood, and the introduction of a partial *jus solis* model of citizenship has therefore evoked large scale protests from the supporters of the traditional model. In India however, it is the pluralisation of empowerment rather than the hitherto existing cultural diversity which is causing discomfort to the status quoists. As the tribal as well as other marginal communities are becoming more aware of their economic and political rights, some of their conversion to Christianity under the influence of the missionaries or the Indian Muslims' insistence on their separate religious identity, is being made an issue of cultural invasion by the foreign or the 'other' element in the society. Linking it automatically to the second hypothesis, that it is the phenomenon of inclusion and exclusion in political discourses that makes the minority group and the country vulnerable to possible conflicts.

As regards the validity of the second hypothesis in the case of Germany, it can be said that even if one dismisses the perception of Turks as *multikriminelle gesellschaft* as the view of the xenophobic fringe, the identification of the second or third generation Turks as foreigners or guestworkers by the mainstream political parties does not help the majority mindset in welcoming the integration efforts either. This is despite the fact that the status of the Turks have gradually changed from that of legal visitors to permanent residents, and has compelled the political elites to recognise this new social reality (representing both conservative and socialist coalition), leading them to embark on a process of liberalising the 'aliens' legislations. As for the situation in India, the second hypothesis of 'an us versus' them construction seems to be justified in the projection of the activities of the Church/Missionaries, or asking the Muslims to describe themselves as the descendents of Rama and Krishna. In other words, all extra-territorial religious and cultural loyalties are perceived as anti-

national acts of the 'other' or foreign elements, apparently threatening the majority Hindus with their programme of religious conversions and allegedly symbolising an inherent disregard for the Indian (viz. Hindu) tradition and culture. For all its emotional and populist logic, such 'exclusion' is but a prologue to more serious acts of vandalism and violence against the religious minorities.

Conclusions

In drawing the initial conclusions of the study it can be broadly stated that the fear of pluralisation of society and consequent empowerment of marginalised communities are instrumental in the political behaviour of those elites—who see cultural differences and the consequent assertion of the marginalised people as responsible for most of the conflicts in the society. In such an argument every accusing finger must by definition point to those 'others' who are not assimilated into the majority or dominant culture, and therefore seen to be questioning the hegemony of the dominant. As the parliamentary leader of the conservative alliance CDU and CSU in Germany, Merz Friedhelm asserts, all social groups in Germany should adapt to the German *Leit Kultur* or the defining culture, similarly the doctrinaire of Hindutva claims common Hindu origin of all Indians and raises the slogan of One Nation, One People and One Culture. The public discourses on Hindu nationalism, in essence, seek to transform the highly diverse and heterogenous character of Indian society into a Hindu homogeneous one. Thus, at heart it is the pluralisation of empowerment, more than the hitherto existing cultural diversity in India, which seems to be causing discomfort to the captains of a system who imagine a hegemonic status quo that was never there to begin with. However, the most interesting analogy of this study appears to be that while in Germany xenophobia is coming as a response, especially when the unified monolithic notion of nation is coming under pressure of growing cultural differentiations, in India, this campaign is coming from those who want to enforce a

monolithic state-nation exactly in the lines of the west, thereby challenging the indigenous pluralistic social framework that exists in the country. What remains to be seen is whether one can develop an adequate mechanism with which to resist the perpetual encoding of all differences as anathema and the 'other' as the villain in the body politic. Whether, in short, democracy can resist its tragic reduction into an intolerant monolith.

Political mobilisations, beyond the existing notions of assimilationist or exclusionist policies of accommodating differences, based on the promotion of interdependence of groups as well as expression of group differences is an imperative in the modern day world. There can be little argument in the observation that the health of a modern democracy depends, not only on the justice of its institutions, but also on the qualities and the attitudes of its citizens, viz. their sense of identity, and how they view potentially competing forms of national, regional or religious identities, and their ability to tolerate and work together with others who are different from themselves. For it is antithetical to erect social and cultural barriers in a world which is so insistent on breaking all economic barriers.

****** The relevance or otherwise of the nation state in an age of globalization, the comparative values of nationalism and universal humanism, and whether social exclusivism, xenophobia, ethnic cleansing have been exacerbated by globalization were some of the concerns articulated. The last was also particularly related to communalism in India. Particular issues relating to globalization in Germany within the context of the two World Wars, as well as the role of communist parties in the erstwhile East Germany were raised. The role of Turkey in a western alliance and yet its distancing from the EU on grounds of its human rights violations was mentioned. The legitimisation of religious xenophobia is a particular problem in respect of the Turkish minority in Germany. How are religious minorities to respond to such processes? Perhaps, as one

member of the audience suggested, one needs also to highlight the commonalities rather than only emphasising the divisions.

Endnotes

¹ Opinion expressed by cross sections of the community interviewed by the author, including journalists, heads of government sponsored organisations, and members of various Turkish religio-cultural organisations.

² As discussed in the Report of the Verfassungsschutz (Office for the Protection of Constitution) Cologne. 1999.

³ *Die Tageszeitung*, (Daily) Berlin, Aug 26, 2000.

⁴ *The Hindu*, (Daily) New Delhi, October 15, 2000, and March 18 and 22, 2002.

⁵ *The Hindu*, March 13, 1999 and June 24, 2000. Also see the Report of the Citizens' Commission on Persecution of Christians in Gujarat published by National Alliance of Women April 1999.

⁶ *The Hindu*, October 8 and 15, 2000.

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Globalization and the Management of Pluralism: A Comparative Socio-Linguistic Study

Efurosibina Adegbija

Introduction

Nigeria, with a population of about 120 million, and India, with at least 1.1 billion people, have many things in common. They were both colonised by Britain and have both become independent. They rank top on the list of the world's intensely pluralistic countries. A plural country is a country of contrasts, one that is often 'fragmented into sub-cultures demarcated by ethnic, linguistic, religious or other boundaries'. Such a country is made up of 'segmentary cleavages' (see Akinyele 2001, 59). The pluralism of Nigeria and India is manifest at several consequential levels: linguistic, cultural, religious, ethnic, and, one may add, ideological. In many parts of the world, especially in the so-called Third World, pluralism is often considered the bedrock of identity politics and social conflict, which are concrete reactions to mainstreaming and globalization. Globalization refers to the desire to integrate and to make universal the different systems of the world. It has three main thrusts: culture and civilisation; global economy; and global political and military order (see Adetugbo

2001). The ethos of globalization, therefore, are integration, fashioning the world into a cultural, economic and technological melting pot, making the world speak with one voice on vital issues, and reducing the impact and influence of nation states. It is thus the very antithesis of the credo of pluralism. There is, therefore, the temptation, especially by pro-globalization enthusiasts, to easily see pluralism as containing the seeds of tension, friction, chaos, antipathy, retrogression, backwardness, lack of cohesion and dissipation of strength.

In this paper I investigate the management of pluralism in both Nigeria and India, but with a particular focus on the former, with a view to pinpointing the vital role globalization is playing in aggravating or attenuating identity politics and social conflict. I shall also highlight ways in which pluralism can be harnessed for development and suggest how the perceived inherently explosive and contentious dimensions of pluralism can be channelled to positive ends.

Linguistic Pluralism

Both Nigeria and India are densely linguistically pluralistic or multilingual. A variety of mutually interactive social and language ecology factors explain the functions performed by languages in multilingual contexts. These include the prestige or status of the languages concerned, the level of development of the language, the historical and political profile of the languages and its speakers, institutional policies, numerical strength of speakers and the multilingual and multicultural ecology of the context in which the languages are spoken (cf. Adegbiya 2001). Muhlhausler (2000, 303) observes that ecological thinking in language planning is an approach which considers not just system-internal factors but wider environmental considerations. He emphasises the inter-linked sub-systems in an overall ecology of the language and points out that languages are not isolated systems but have interactions with other

systems outside what is considered strictly linguistic, including culture, politics, and the environment. In effect, the total context in which a language functions must be considered in effective language planning.

Nigeria, as of now, is made up of 36 states and Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory. The provisional results of the 1991 census indicates that it has a population of 88,514,501, made up of 44,544,531 males and 43,969,970 females. The languages in Nigeria belong to three out of the four main language stocks in Africa. These are: a) the Niger-Kordofanian phylum, consisting of Kwa, Adamawa and West Atlantic groups, e.g. Igbo, Yoruba, Oko, Edo, Igala, Idoma, Itsekiri, and Nupe (about 70 per cent); the Afro-Asiatic phylum, represented by Hausa, and many others that belong to the Chadic branch (about 29.5 per cent), and the Nilo-Saharan phylum, represented by Kanuri, Dendi and Zarbarma. (about 0.5 per cent). While all Afro-Asiatic and Nilo-Saharan languages are located in the Northern part of Nigeria, the majority of the Niger-Kordofanian languages are concentrated in the Southern part, as well as in parts of Jerawa and Taraba States in the north. In effect, in terms of their genetic classification at least, many of Nigeria's languages share many structural similarities (see Agheyisi 1984; Ruhlen 1991; Voegelin 1977). Three main categories of languages may be identified in Nigeria. First, indigenous or native languages, about 450. Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo have been constitutionally recognised as major, and this has been a cause of great controversy resulting in accusations of marginalisation by speakers of other languages that are, by implication, non-major. Second, there are also exogenous or non-indigenous languages, chief among which is English, also constitutionally recognised as official, though spoken by less than 20 per cent of the Nigerian population. French and Arabic also belong to this category. Other languages like German and Russian have a rather restricted functional scope. The third category is Pidgin languages, principally represented by Nigerian Pidgin English, which has a dual status of being simultaneously indigenous and exogenous. The 1979 Constitution recognises

Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo as being co-official with English. Only for about 60 of these are standardised orthographies available. In effect, at least 280 Nigerian indigenous languages have no written form whatsoever. In Nigeria, language is frequently, though not always, co-terminus with ethnicity. Consequently, language background and origin has often been a basic cause of suspicion, ethnic politics and frequent accusations of domination. For instance, the Hausa-Fulani elite ruled Nigeria, and so was accused of dominating and marginalising people from other language and ethnic backgrounds. Now that President Obasanjo, a Yoruba, rules Nigeria, the Hausa and Fulani as well as Igbos have been complaining of being marginalised. Ethnic minorities see themselves as being in a permanent state of marginalisation within the country. English has been the key administrative language or language of official inter-ethnic communication. However, this has been problematic since some still have a love-hate attitude towards it, as it is regarded as a language of imperialism.

India, on the other hand, has fifteen major or officially recognised languages and hundreds of other languages. These fifteen languages are Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu. English is also recognised as an Associate Official language. The political states were initially defined in linguistic terms even though there are more states than recognised languages. Hindi is spoken by the majority of Indians, particularly in the Northern parts of the country. It also has the status of the main national language. Because Hindi is not spoken by many in the South, this national language status has frequently been the cause of political antipathy and tension. Just as is the case in Nigeria, English has served as the key administrative or link language. This has, similarly, been problematic as English is still viewed by many as an imperialistic language. Moreover, the status given to English has enabled a comparatively small western-educated elite middle class to exercise an extraordinary and remarkable political influence, as is the case in Nigeria. In India, this is now being redressed somewhat, even

though the alternative, sometimes called Hindi imperialism, has its own problems as well, especially since people in the South feel it is being imposed on them and so resist Hindi domination or attempts to promote it as a national language. Altogether, 1683 'mother tongues', including dialects, have been identified in India. These fall into four major language groups: Indo-Iranian (used by 74.24 per cent), Dravidian (used by 23.86 per cent), Austro-Asiatic (used by 1.16 per cent) and Tibeto-Burmese (used by 0.62 per cent). However, it is estimated that 859 of these are in daily use (cf. Todd and Hancock 1986). Schiffman (1999, 431) suggests that a study of language and ethnicity in Southeast Asia, which includes India, should be focused primarily on establishing the fundamental notions about the 'linguistic culture', that is the 'sum totality of ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices, myths, religious strictures, and all the other cultural ideas and expectations that South and Southeast Asians bring to their culture and to their dealings with language'. It is such factors that highlight the plurality of India. To understand what constitutes a linguistic culture, he proposes looking not only at the 'overt manifestation of high linguistic culture—the explicit, the *de jure*, the codified, the written, and the official—but also at covert aspects of the linguistic culture: the implicit, *de facto*, unstated, unofficial, perhaps 'folk-cultural' aspects of linguistic culture'. In Nagaland in northeast India, for example, there is a situation involving the overt use of English and the covert use of Nagamese in schools, because Nagamese, a Pidgin language, even though understood by the Naga children, lacks the prestige of a suitable official language in education for the state. Assamese, though known by many, is rejected for political reasons. Thus, English, which is both prestigious and neutral, makes a face-saving solution (cf. Sreedhar 1974). In Nagaland, Nagamese is thus covertly used as the unofficial but *de facto* language of explanation even though English functions as the official overt language of education. A similar situation exists in Nigeria where English is the official language of education but the numerous indigenous languages are *de facto* used in providing

explanations in most classrooms. In essence, both Nigeria and India at one time in their histories had language ideologies that supported multilingual diversity. However, the advent of colonialism into both regions brought in ideas about appropriate language use ('monism') that were no longer in tune with their linguistic culture. This resulted in linguistic cultures that were dramatically out of tune with the general linguistic cultures of the area (cf. Schiffman 1999, 432).

There has been considerable linguistic research on varieties of Nigerian and Indian English. Attempts have been made to study the regional varieties, Nigerianisation and Indianisation of English, and lexico-semantic variation in both Nigerian and Indian English (see, for example, Bamgbose 1983, Adegboja 1989, Kachru 1983). Such research has shed light both on the globalization of English and the use of English for the globalization of the world. Both countries have made their contributions to English on a global scale, and also, maintain their national identities through the distinct varieties of Englishes that they have developed. Shared, large-scale grammatical similarities with other forms of English all over the world as well as large-scale lexical and idiomatic variations make both India and Nigeria simultaneously contributors to the development of English world-wide as an international language of globalization, and also to the native varieties of Englishes all over the world with their own distinct identities.

Language is also of great importance in both societies, being closely related to ethnicity. In India, in particular, the cultures are very much concerned about language, with the transmission of culture and cultural identity. India has also been concerned with the codification and regulation of language from earliest times. As Schiffman observes, the very existence of the earliest texts as we know them today is a factor of this concern for language. Classical languages such as Sanskrit, Pali, and Tamil exist in India and allegiance and bonding to some of them is quite strong in spite of the globalizing impact of the English language. The technique of committing to memory and transmitting the sacred texts orally was

devised for guaranteeing the purity and constancy of the texts and to avoid the introduction of errors into them. This reflects concern for the preservation of sacred texts and the purity of the language in which they were written. This kind of attitude with regard to classical languages differentiates them from Nigerian languages.

The linguistic pluralism in both Nigeria and India also manifests itself in the creation of a Diglossia situation. Diglossia is a sociolinguistic situation first described by Ferguson (1959), in which more than one variety or form of a language interacts with other forms or varieties in such a way that the high form (H) is perceived as more prestigious, purer, more beautiful and perhaps the only one deserving to be used for schooling, high literature, religion etc. The low form (L), on the other hand, is informal and is different from the H variety. It has no prestige and is devalued, even despised, although it is the actual mother tongue of the population, learned first and used by all members for colloquial—home, close associates, street, humorous—purposes. The Fergusonian type of diglossia focused mainly on functional complementarity of genetically related languages. Fishman (1967) extended the concept to cover nongenetically related languages. Diglossia permits and unites the popular diversity within unity paradox that Indian linguistic culture is famous for. That is, unity at the top, overt level but diversity at the unofficial L variety level. The diglossic situation in Nigeria is essentially between English and Nigerian indigenous languages. While the former is used in High contexts, the latter are used mainly in Low contexts. The regulation of language here, Schiffman observes, is a kind of covert corpus planning language policy that involves the structural control of the H variety in order to ensure its accuracy. It also overtly regulates the status of the H variety, but not that of the L variety. Thus, the *de facto* status of the L variety is covertly and purposely unregulated. Such overt and covert approaches to language planning are common in both Nigeria and India, only that in Nigeria it must be remembered that English functions as the H while the indigenous languages function as the L variety.

In India, Buddhism empowered the L varieties, which were largely used in its dissemination, but this has not been the case in Nigeria where the indigenous languages have not been much empowered even where they were used for the dissemination of Christianity or Islam. In India, the use of L varieties in the spread of Buddhism resulted in the abandonment of the exclusive dominance of Sanskrit but still allowed diversity to flourish because Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, Pali (the canonical language of Buddhism) and other linguistic traditions such as the Dravidian languages arose (Schiffman 1999). The arrival of Islam posed an outside challenge to India's linguistic culture. Persian was introduced as the official language of the Mughal Empire and was used in government, law and commerce in Mughal India. However, it never displaced any other variety from its domains. Instead, it affected spoken Hindustani, resulting in the development of a literary variety written in Perso-Arabic (Urdu). Eventually, Urdu replaced Persian in the scheme of things, especially in post-independence Pakistan (Schiffman 1999). The arrival of English on the Indian scene later resulted in Persian being replaced. Most of the Indian population was unaffected by English education because they received no education at all in any language, just as was the case in Nigeria. In Nigeria in particular, English later became associated with prestige, with making it in life, and with being educated. This accounts for its very high prestige as an H variety. In both Nigeria and India, the 19th century witnessed intense missionary activities that resulted in the development of indigenous languages and the writing of grammars for many of them. In spite of this, however, very little written material is available even today in most of the native languages of Nigeria and India.

Pluralism is like a two-edged sword. While one edge has the potential for tearing apart, the other is a tool for sharpening, for growth, and for nation building. Central language related issues that have continued to generate social conflict and identity politics in both Nigeria and India relate to crucial questions such as: what language is to be considered national and used for national functions

and for national mobilisation, what language is to be used in the educational system from the Primary level to the University level, what language is to be used for official functions and in international relations, what language is to be used in inter-ethnic interaction, etc. The snag, given the multi-language and multi-ethnic background of both countries, is that the choice of some of the languages implies the exclusion of others. Such exclusion politics is naturally interpreted by the excluded ethno-linguistic group as an attempt to efface their identity and is often a potential source not only of internal mobilisation for identity assertion and expression but also of deep-rooted inter-ethnic rivalry, aggression and antipathy. Liebkind (1999, 141) observes that within the social psychology of identity, a person's self-image is seen to have two components: personal identity and social identity. Social identity, in turn, is part of an individual's self-concept that derives from his or her membership in a social group. We try to achieve a positive sense of social identity, he posits, by trying to perceive our own group as favourably distinct from other collectivities on valued dimensions. This is called the need for positive distinctiveness (Tajfel 1978 cited in Liebkind 1999, 141). Since such decisions also often have profound implications for the perceived equitable or non-equitable distribution of national wealth, the intrusion of the economic question into the already volatile complex equation of linguistic, religious, cultural and ethnic factors tends to heighten grudges and bitterness relating to identity politics and thus inadvertently worsen already existing social cleavages. Omoniyi (1999) points out that evidence of the link between language and ethnic identity abounds in religious expression too. Thus, people of the same religious belief seem to flock together and sometimes, this bonding appears to be much stronger than filial ties. He observes that traditional people's names are quite often linked to religious myths and beliefs, as illustrated by the Yoruba names Ogunsanya (the god of iron rewards my suffering), Oshunbiyi (the goddess of the sea created this child), Opalana (the divine Staff of creation provides opportunities). While these names may not be

common at christening any more because of the impact of Christianity and Islam, they still constitute the majority of surnames among the Yoruba due to the group's paternity-patrimony culture, which means that family names are passed down (cf. Fishman 1989, cited in Omoniyi 1999, 374). It may also be observed that religious practices distinguish the Yoruba from the Igbo or Hausa ethnic groups. Not only are the modes of worship different, the deities worshipped also are.

English has a primordial place in education in both Nigeria and India. Both recognise that if they are to share in the fruits of economic development, English cannot be jettisoned. The desire to participate effectively in the gains of contemporary globalization with its technology, the Internet, and integrated world economy, the computer and cyber age has resulted in English growing tremendously in importance in both Nigeria and India. Whereas primordial identities are still considered important, it is not at the expense of participating in the benefits of the global village, for which the English language happens to provide a window as well as a head start. This pragmatic stance towards English by both India and Nigeria has de-emphasised, at least at the policy level, the importance of the symbolic or national functions of languages. Both Nigeria and India lack candidates for this national function because of the political reverberations that could occur from selecting one language as national. Consequently, many indigenous languages seem to have taken on symbolic values and diminished instrumental values. English thus seems, in both Nigeria and India to be playing the role of a symbolic and instrumental language, to the detriment of the indigenous languages. It is the lingua franca among people of different ethnic groups, and it is also the language used for performing most national functions. In both countries, English now appears to be dominant on the national scheme of things whereas indigenous languages constitute more or less the L variety, especially as far as national official functions are concerned. The situation may be different for regional official functions, in which regional languages may dominate functions.

In both Nigeria and India, attempts to eradicate English and replace it with some indigenous languages stirred up resentments from different quarters. The expanding influence of English all over the world and its use as the language of globalization per excellence have shot up its impact, functions and relevance. Linguistic minority groups had no sense of identity with major indigenous languages, whose speakers they see as domineering. Instead, they preferred English. Thus, in both Nigeria and India, efforts to promote major indigenous languages such as Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo and Hindi through language policies have largely not succeeded. In Nigeria, for example, there is a policy that states that each secondary school child should learn one of the major indigenous languages—Hausa, Yoruba or Igbo. The mutual suspicion and antipathy between these major ethnic and language groups as well as the suspicion and distrust of minority groups has not allowed this policy to prosper or succeed. Similarly in India, speakers of Tamil and Bengali are suspicious of any policy that appears to be promoting Hindi at the expense of their own languages. Nigeria's language policy in education is now quite similar to the Indian one in which three languages are expected to be taught at the secondary school level—English, the local language and Hindi. In Hindi areas, another Indian or European language would be taught. In Nigeria, English and any of Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo is officially taught. French was also recently introduced as a second language, in theory. In practice, however, in many parts of Nigeria, most of the indigenous languages are not taught outside their areas of dominance, nor is French taught as a second official language. The exception happens to be the Unity or Federal government schools spread throughout the country and in all regions. In Hindi-speaking areas in India, little attention is paid to English and even less to a third language. In non-Hindi areas such as Tamil Nadu, there is great support for English and literary Tamil but little for Hindi. Other areas of India such as Kerala seem to adopt a more pragmatic approach of teaching as many languages as they consider useful. Schiffman notes that a policy that recognises

historical multilingualism, linguistic diversity, and reverence for ancient classical languages is more likely to succeed in India than an imported model of any sort.

Religious Pluralism

Overt religious fervour is often conceived of and interpreted as a mark of intense devotion to a particular religion, especially by the adherents to that religion. In virtually every country all over the world, religious patronage is a sensitive, often socio-politically and culturally explosive and conflict-ridden issue. This has been evident in Afghanistan, where the Taliban, due to their strong, puritanical brand of Islam, destroyed age-long Hindu cultural relics; in Ireland, where Catholics and Protestants are constantly at each other's throats; in Indonesia, where Muslims and Christians have frequently clashed; and in the Middle East, where Palestinians, largely adherents of Islam, and Israelites, largely adherents of Judaism, have been engaged in an endless struggle for land and self-determination. On January 27, 2002, CNN reported protests by Hindu activists in New Delhi seeking construction of a Hindu temple in Ayodhya where a mosque once stood. Since 1992 security men had been guarding the site. In previous protests and conflicts over the same issue, up to 3,000 Muslims and Hindus are reported to have been killed (CNN, January 27, 2002).

Religion, an important and politically sensitive cultural phenomenon in both Nigeria and India, tends to make people, sometimes even from different language backgrounds, flock together while viciously antagonising those even from the same womb. While Nigeria has adherents to Christianity, Islam and traditional religions, India, more religiously pluralistic, has adherents: Hinduism (82 per cent), Islam (12.12 per cent), Christianity (2.34 per cent), Sikhism (1.94 per cent), Buddhism (0.76 per cent), Jainism (0.4 per cent), others (including Zoroastrianians, Baha'i, etc.) (0.44 per cent). In numerical terms

the numbers of adherents of minority religions in India are substantial: it has perhaps as many as 30 million Christians, and more than 100 million Muslims.

There have been frequent conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria, especially in the northern part of the country, which houses majority of the country's Muslims. Recent attempts, for instance, to introduce the Sharia law as state law, begun in Zamfara State, has spread to many northern states, in each with a trail of violence, conflicts and tensions in clashes with Christians. The resolve of the Supreme Sharia Council to spread the Sharia gospel to southern Nigeria, undoubtedly, is bound to meet with stiff opposition and resistance from Christians.

Although Nigerian censuses have no record of religious communities, it is estimated that Muslims constitute about 40 per cent, Christians 45 per cent and traditional religionists about 5 per cent. The coming of both Islam and Christianity to Nigeria has resulted in large-scale conversions and the waning and reduction in influence of traditional religions. In both Nigeria and India, each religion has different sects, myriads of varying beliefs, practices and liturgies that mark it out from those belonging to the same faith but from a different sect. Such pluralism in beliefs and practices often constitutes the basis of heated and deep-rooted, generationally transmitted antipathy and acrimony between one religious group or sect and the other. In both countries the last two decades have witnessed a heightening of intra and inter-religious tensions at a political level, often resulting in riots, protests and considerable loss of lives.

Furthermore, religion is a vital part of political culture in both Nigeria and India. Thus, the Constitution, government policies relating to employment quotas, appointments, etc. are sometimes directly or indirectly constrained or influenced by religious affiliation. As Omoniyi rightly observes, religion is a strong component of people's identity. Consequently, not only do ethnic groups identify with particular religious practices but also, in pre-

colonial Nigeria, fraternities developed around several traditional deities including Sango, Ogun, Okun, and Osa.

Links between religion, language, and ethnicity are evident in the changes that Christianity and Islam have imposed on societal values [...]. Suffice it to say that names from the Bible and the Koran are now considered more appropriate than those linked to the old Yoruba deities. With this change, the pragmatic and semantic properties of the cultural contexts of naming have also changed (Omoniyi 1999, 375).

Religion, in India, is closely tied to language, especially to the use of language in liturgy and worship. It is also associated with caste and social structure. Schiffman (1999, 432) notes that, 'it differs from region to region and group to group; and it cannot be understood without reference to the long recorded history of the region'. In contemporary times, language issues seem to have been replaced by other allegiances such as religious bonds. There is thus a compelling need to find a way of accommodating the language of wider communication, which happens to be English, the colonial language once hated.

Cultural Pluralism

Ethnic groups are often defined by the cultural make-up and baggage that make them distinctive. An ethnic group without its cultural identification marks is as good as dead. This probably explains why many threatened ethnic groups strive to preserve whatever is left of their cultural identities. Most often, ethnic groups in culturally pluralistic polities such as Nigeria and India, desire to, and revel in maintaining such cultural identities. Cultural literacy in ancient India was at first oral and focused on the magical power of language. However, later, it became hinged on the transmission and survival of culture. The Sanskrit language was considered to be enduring and eternal while all other languages were considered substandard and non-eternal (cf. Deshpande 1979, 18). The attitude

of high and low was prevalent all the way down the social system. It was manifest in the language and also evident in the social structure. Aryan overlords saw themselves at the top and all other peoples and languages in an undifferentiated mass below them. However, those below them did not accept the lack of differentiation but instead applied the same dichotomy to themselves and to people and languages that they felt were below them. As Schiffman observes:

[...] even Mlecchas ('barbarians') such as Tamils also imbibed these attitudes and hierarchized themselves in the same manner. Thus there were high Tamils, there was good Tamil (centamir), and there were lower Tamils and 'broken' Tamil (koduntamir) (Schiffman 1999, 434).

Emeneau (1964, 332) observes that even the tribal peoples of the Nilgiris Hills in South India hierarchise themselves: 'In the local caste system of the Nilgiris, the Todas rank highest. Small as the community is, numbering approximately 600 people, it has a most complex social structure'. Overall, according to an Indian colleague, 'there are four main castes in India, but the regional variations in the organisation of sub-castes and sub-sub-castes, and of caste privileges and disadvantages, and of those excluded from the caste groupings altogether, and of the manner in which caste interests work in underhand fashion in political vested interests—are nothing short of mind-boggling'. In essence, hierarchisation is very deeply rooted in Indic culture.

Caste differentiation, a very complex affair, is certainly more pronounced in India than in Nigeria. There are, however, a few cultures in Nigeria, such as the Igbo culture, in which caste groups, which belong to the lower rung of class differentiation, are attested. Called the 'Osu', the members have various limitations and restrictions including those they could marry, who they could interact with at the social levels, etc. Caste groups in both countries constitute a complex intermeshing of traditional conceptions, European ideas that are imported, and economic factors. Religious

communities and caste groups are connected in complex and regionally variable ways both in India and in Nigeria. Caste politics has been a matter of considerable legislative and political interest in Igbo land where the Osu caste system is observed, and obviously in India.

Ethnic Pluralism

Suberu (1999, 4) sees an ethnic group as a social collectivity whose members not only share such objective characteristics as language, core-territory, ancestral myths, culture, religion and/or political organisation but also have some subjective consciousness or perception of common descent or identity. 'Ethnic pluralism therefore refers to the existence of two or more ethnic groups within a territorial society or political community, usually a nation-state' (Moru 2000, 73). Dominant ethnic groups usually identify their own interests with the national interest while ethnic minorities experience systematic discrimination and often take political action in support of their collective interests (cf. Gurr 1993, 123). Rupsinghe (1987) analyses ethnic conflicts as products of a defective state or 'a state enmeshed in primordial loyalties'. The Nigerian President, Olusegun Obasanjo has traced the ethno-religious crisis which engulfed some parts of Nigeria to unhealthy competition and manoeuvres for power and control among the elite in the North-Central part of the country. He identified other causes to be fear of ethnic domination and lack of integration among communities. He observed: 'It is thus imperative that we expunge the attitude of regarding any fellow Nigerian as a "settler" in our country, where he or she is a citizen by birth'. Such acts of intolerance, he observed, often militated against the imperative of the integration of national economy, which demanded that men and capital must be allowed to move freely and grow wherever they choose' (see the *Nigerian Tribune*, January 25, 2002, 1-2). Undoubtedly, ethnic pluralism is solidly at the root of identity politics in both Nigeria and India. This is because very often, though

not always, difference in ethnicity tends to correlate to a large extent with difference in language and culture. Sensitivity to such differences generates fights for the maintenance of ethnic distinctiveness. Consequently, any action or inaction by the polity that hints at an attempt to underrate one ethnic group at the expense of the other, or to mainstream or globalize under the guise of building one nation is often seriously resisted. Inequitable distribution of resources, appointments, benefits, etc., fear of ethnic domination, often heightens existing ethnic tension in both Nigeria and India. Consequently, in virtually every part of Nigeria ethnic, sectional and clan clashes are commonplace. The following table indicates some of the ethnic conflicts that have occurred in Nigeria in the past few years and their consequences:

DATE	ETHNIC GROUP/TOWN INVOLVED	SOME CONSEQUENCES
April, 1999	Aguleri and Umuleri	120 deaths
May 1999	Tula and Awak, Kaltungo Local Govt. Area (LGA), Gombe State	17 deaths
May, 1999	Udu and Uvwie, Delta State	5 deaths
June, 1999	Hausa/Fulani versus Yoruba in Bodija Market, Oyo State	7 deaths
July 17, 1999	Hausa versus Yoruba in Sagamu; Hausa woman said to have flouted taboo restricting women from coming out at certain hours during the Oro festival	Close to 100 deaths; reprisal attack in Kano, July 22, 1999; 70 buildings razed; 100 vehicles destroyed
July 22, 1999	Yoruba versus Hausa in Kano, reprisal attacks	Over 100 deaths; close to 10,000 refugees

November 26, 1999	Yoruba against Hausa, battle for control of Mile 12 Market	Daggers and other lethal weapons freely used; up to 150 deaths; Govt orders police to shoot OPC members at sight; threat to launch Arewa People's Congress in Ibadan on December 27, 1999
May 22, 1999	Kafanchan	Over 100 deaths
Sept. 1998	Ilajes and Ijaws in the riverrine areas of Ondo State	At least 10 deaths; several Ijaw youths electrocuted
January 5, 2000	Accident involving Hausa tanker driver at Ojo junction	10 deaths; 30 houses burnt
2000	Ebira versus Ijesha (Yoruba) at the Federal Capital Territory	
January, 2001	Tiv and Jukun clash in Nassarawa and Benue states	Several deaths, lots of property destroyed, deepening of animosity between the ethnic groups 3 deaths; Over 50 houses burnt;
January 2001	Itshekiri versus Urhobo	3 deaths, over 50 houses burnt
February 2-4, 2002	Hausa clash with Yoruba, over alleged desecration of a Mosque in Lagos	At least fifteen deaths, several houses burnt and property destroyed.

Ethnic tension has frequently erupted, for instance, between the Itshekiri people of Okere and the Okere-Urhobo people in Edo State. A recent one, reported in the *Nigerian Tribune* of January 14, 2002, left over 50 houses burnt around Okere, Ajamimogha, Okumagba Estate, and Eboh Street. A branch of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Calvary Parish, on Eboh Street was also burnt and three persons died. The popular Okere market was also reported to have been burnt, this being the third time in three years the market would be burnt due to ethnic clashes between the Itshekiris and the Urhobos. Clashes among major ethnic groups, some with a religious motivation, have been very frequent in Nigeria, especially in Kano. Recently, many Igbo were attacked in Kano. A clash also occurred between the Hausas and Yoruba ethnic groups in Sagamu about two years ago when a Hausa lady was supposed to have flouted a Yoruba taboo of women not coming out at a particular time of the night during the Oro festival. Most of such clashes are triggered off by apparently inconsequential provocations. The real cause, however, can often be traced to the undercurrent of ethnic tension that hangs over the entire country. The Yorubas and Igbos, for several years, have felt that they have been marginalised by the Hausa and Fulani elite that has ruled Nigeria for many years. Now that a Yoruba man is in power, the Hausas and Igbos as well as other ethnic minorities complain of being seriously marginalised. Thus, in any ethnically pluralistic polity where some ethnic groups feel that their ideas, values, resources, etc. are merely being harnessed or 'globalized' and their voices are being denied under the guise of the 'national good', loud protests of marginalisation will continue to be heard, forced integration or globalization will be resisted and protests for the maintenance of their distinct identity will frequently surface. This probably explains frequent cries in Nigeria by ethnic groups that consider themselves marginalised for resource control, structural readjustment, sovereign national conference, etc. In fact, ethnic militias such as the Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Arewa People's Congress (APC), Igbo People's Congress (IPC),

Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), led by the late Ken Saro-Wiwa, hanged with eight others by the Abacha junta, the Egbesu organisation and the Bakassi Boys, etc. have emerged to struggle against the perceived marginalisation of the respective ethnic groups to which these militias belong. Other such groups are the Ethnic Minority Organisation of Africa, (EMIROAF), the Ijaw Ethnic Minority Rights Protection Organisation, the Southern Minority Movement, the Middle Belt Forum, (MBF), and the United Middle Belt Conference (UMBC). The Ogoni crisis began as an ethnic agitation for economic justice and increased political self-determination. The Ogoni are an ethnic group in Bayelsa State with a population of about 500,000. When petroleum was discovered in Ogoni land in the late 1950s, Shell Petroleum Development Company moved in. This, according to Osha (2001, 82) resulted in:

An agonizing process of neglect and abuse...Oil pipes were laid haphazardly without significant environmental considerations. In time, lethal cases of oil spillage began to occur, and plant and animal life were adversely affected. In addition to neglect and abuse of the environment, indigenes of Ogoniland were (and still are) deprived of access to the most basic amenities, education and employment opportunities.

This was the kind of background that gave rise to the formation of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), which fought for the 'political control of Ogoni affairs by Ogoni people' and requested for a more equitable revenue allocation agreement and financial remuneration for the Ogoni. The group formally adopted a Bill of Rights on August 26, 1990, and a non-violent protest rally was held on January 4, 1993, to mark *Ogoni Day*. More than 400,000 people participated. Eventually, a crisis developed which resulted in the hanging of the group's president, Ken Saro-wiwa, and eight others. (cf. Osha 2001, 82-94). Omo Omoruyi traces ethnic minority agitation to the tripod approach to

Nigerian politics in which policies are geared towards fostering the positions of the major ethnic groups represented in political groups like Afenifere (Yoruba), the Ohaneze (Ndi Igbo) and the Arewa (Hausa/Fulani). The tripod approach also applies to how oil, Nigeria's mainstay economically, that comes from the non-majority area, is appropriated. Major ethnic nationalities argue that the areas producing the oil should not be allowed to lay claim to the oil from their areas as of right (cf. Omoruyi 2000, 8). Minor ethnic groups, on their part, argue for 'resource control'. Obasanjo, Nigeria's President, in a recent visit to Asaba, Delta State, partially answered this clamour when he declared in response to governor James Ibori:

I am not a resource controller. I am a resource manager. You can control the resources but let me manage it. I don't want to argue with you about resource control but I will fight with you about resource management. So you go on controlling, I will go on managing and if you try to damage what I am managing, I will also quarrel with you. But on a very serious note you (governor) also said it that whatever we have in our country, whatever God has given to us must be seen as a benefit to all of us in this country; that is why some people rightly felt cheated and I will say there must be equity. There must be justice. There must be fairness. I believe God has not made a mistake, why put these things in the soil or whatever, the ground where he puts them wasn't the same God who made the boundary of Nigeria what it is today. So he (God) wants Nigeria to be one country [...]. (*Vanguard*, Friday, January 18, 2002)

Conflict management among the various ethnic groups, it is believed, involves taking care of disagreements before they generate into hostility, helping the institutional actors to explore a multiplicity of options for agreement and later selecting an option everyone can live with, and, most importantly, recognising and intervening on the underlying causes of conflict with a view to preventing them in the future (Akinyele 2001, 61-62). Mbabuike (2001) proposes

that style can be used to manage ethnically pluralistic societies. According to him, style is the use of language and logic for defining and responding to social violation. He mentions at least four styles identified by social scientists:

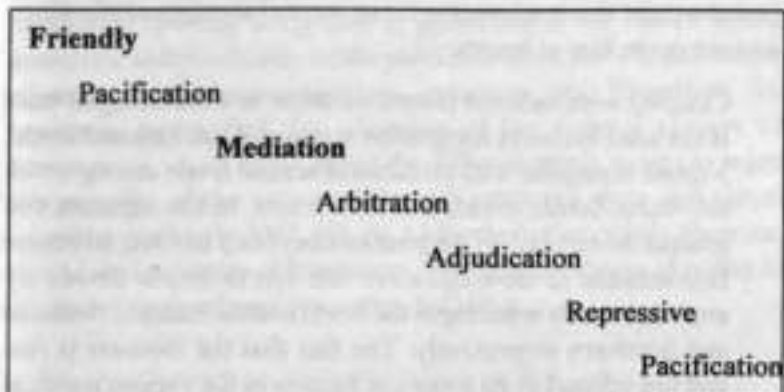
[...] penal, compensatory, therapeutic and conciliatory. Black observes that in modern societies, for example, the penal style is seen in criminal law, the compensatory style in tort and contract law, the therapeutic style in juvenile justice and psychiatric care, and the conciliatory style in negotiation, mediation and arbitration [...]. (Mbabuike 2001, 52)

Mbabuike submits that the conciliatory style is particularly susceptible to compromise management. Because it is less concerned with disputants, and more concerned with the just settlement of a conflict. Black, quoted by Mbabuike (2001, 53) puts it thus:

The conciliatory style of social control shifts the focus [...] to the relationship between the parties involved. An effort is made not to become exclusively preoccupied with any one person's or group's conduct, its consequences [...]. A relationship has been disturbed and needs attention; a resolution of the conflict must be found; social harmony must be restored.

At both the national and local levels of governance in Nigeria, Mbabuike notes, the conciliatory style offers an important and 'refreshing' dimension to managing compromise because it is based on relevant ethnic extraction. In effect, if there were a conflict, for instance, between the Igbos and Yorubas, the real issue would not be a question of who is wrong but instead a preoccupation with re-establishing harmony in a relationship that has been disturbed. Resolution would be sought through borrowing from traditional protocols relating to solving disputes from both ethnic groups and other ethnic groups. The conciliatory style, he observes, presupposes the will of all parties in a dispute to settle it and a socio-economic environment of increasing social and economic

justice. The full range of the conciliatory style is illustrated in a diagram adapted from Black (1984):



Source: Donald Black, 'Social Control as Dependent Variable', in Donald Black, ed., *Toward A General Theory of Social Control*, vol. 1, 21, 1984 (cf. Mbabuike 2001, 54)

There is an emphasis on the friendly pacification in searching deeply into traditional cultural roots that will be acceptable to all during the negotiations. It also involves face-to-face negotiations with minimal outside interference which helps to reduce suspicion and cognitive misconceptions.

The conciliatory style is crucial to compromise management because if it is relatively successful, it becomes a kind of peaceful foundation in society for mediation, arbitration and adjudication [...]. Repressive pacification is obviously a breakdown of the rational process of compromise management. The state at that level employs the machinery of violence. Authoritative intervention gives way to authoritarian intervention (Mbabuike 2001, 54).

Ideological Pluralism

Writing on language planning in Nigeria, Bamgbose (2001) makes a point that is relevant to the concept of ideological pluralism, and we quote him at length:

Coupled with national communication in a multilingual state is the need to ensure integration at regional and national levels. Nigeria is plagued with divisions at several levels among which are North-South, zonal, and state levels. In the euphoria that greeted the heydays of the post-military coup of 1966, it became fashionable to de-emphasize the North-South divide by euphemistically referring to the North and the South as Northern and Southern respectively. The fact that the division is real and has refused to go away can be seen in the various political blocks that have emerged in recent years and the groupings and ideological positions based on Northern versus Southern interests. In varying degrees the divisions typical of the North and the South are also replicated in differences between states and groupings of states known as zones. All these divisions and how to deal with them are usually referred to as *the national question*, and the quest for a national language is seen as one of the instruments of achieving national integration. Unfortunately, this quest has been dominated by the search for one language, with the result that no single language has been found as a viable national language. The official language, English, has never been, and most certainly will never be, accorded the status of a national language, but in the absence of a consensus on an alternative, it assumes that role in default.

The desire to effectively manage pluralism has given birth to ideological pluralism at several levels in the Nigerian polity. As the quotation above demonstrates, some of such ideologies relate to language. Some relate to issues of identity and marginalisation and are responsible for the frequency of terms such as resource control, structural adjustment, etc. Several ideologies have been canvassed and tried. In Nigeria, for instance, we have the structural

adjustment ideology, resource control, structural restructuring, structural adjustment programme, at the economic sphere, which all relate to the desire to maintain an economic identity and an opposition to being integrated or globalized at the risk of losing economic independence. At the political realm, there are concepts of federalism, consociationism, unitarism, etc. Pluralism, for instance, compelled the adoption of the federal system of government, which could permit the different ethnic groups to enjoy the benefits of the union while still retaining their individual identities (Akinyele 2001, 60). As Akinyele further rightly observes, the same philosophy of federalism informed the choice of 'unity in diversity' as the slogan for nation building.

An Agenda for the Effective Management of Pluralism

I want to begin to conclude this paper by proposing an agenda for the effective management of pluralism. At the very least, such an agenda should include the following:

1. Identifying, accepting and providing legitimacy for every existing pluralistic resource, whether it is in language, ethnic origin, ideas, politics, etc. This is contrary to forced integration, globalizing or forced mainstreaming of pluralistic resources.
2. Analysing the specific components, constituents or ingredients of each of the type of resource identified.
3. Mobilising and harnessing similarities in the resources for enhancing national harmony. Differences among different groups should be 'advertised' so that they don't constitute a barrier to social order. For example, similar characteristics of cultures should be pinpointed while different groups, especially those that have to interact with one another on a regular basis, should be made aware of the differences in their cultures. Similar types of pluralistic manifestation will be

discovered and harnessed for development and different types will also be pinpointed for specific attention. The value of their contributing to the variety of pluralistic resources within the polity should not only be appraised but also valued.

4. Motivating each group consciously to achieve its optimum potential. This can be done by giving each group some measure of autonomy in its own development and by the provision of avenues to each group for the exhibition and presentation of its distinctiveness. Doing so will demonstrate that the existence of such a group has official recognition.
5. Institutionalising pluralism as much as possible in all spheres of official and non-official, public or private life. For instance, as many languages as possible should be used on radio, in newspapers, TV programmes, education, etc. Such a strategy is bound to give a sense of belonging to all. Some groups may naturally be more prominent or perceptually salient at the national level, some at the regional level and some at the local level. Be that as it may, every opportunity should be seized to make each group feel a sense of belonging and acceptance and have a voice in the polity.
6. Giving participation to the representatives of each group in the governance of the country. This can be demonstrated through political posts, appointment to Boards, to parastatals, etc.
7. Allocating resources proportionally. There should also be proportionality in political representation and appointments. Room should also be given for minority veto (cf. Lijphart 1990, 495, cited in Moru 2001, 76). Lijphart elaborates on it as follows:

Proportionality is particularly important as a guarantee for the fair representation of ethnic minorities. But...minority veto—the fourth characteristic of power-sharing—is the ultimate weapon that minorities need to protect their vital

interests. Even when a minority participates in a power-sharing executive, it may well be outvoted or overruled by the majority. This may not present a problem when only minor matters are being decided, but when a minority's vital interests are at stake, the veto provides essential protection. The veto power clearly contains the danger that the entire power-sharing system can be undermined.

Conclusion

In conclusion, therefore, structural diversity and pluralism in language, religion, culture, ethnicity, etc. is the norm and the natural state of affairs in most human societies. Any attempt to undermine or streamline such diversity, therefore, is not only misguided but also bound to be counterproductive (see also Muhlhausler 2000). By its very nature, globalization, the main credo of which is integration in all spheres, tends to be inherently anti-pluralistic and contra group identity. In effect, it results in a mainstreaming tendency, the very antithesis of which is identity politics. When we face the bare facts, the fashioning of the entire world into a global village is bound to reduce national and ethnic identities.

In both Nigeria and India, mainstreaming or globalization tendencies, especially where forced, tend to challenge or jeopardise the existing pluralistic nature of the countries, and will most likely continue to be resisted and opposed by different ethno-linguistic and religious groups that strongly desire to retain and maintain their distinctiveness. Nevertheless, the flame of development can still be rekindled through a judicious management of pluralism that will empower the people by making them 'draw inspiration from their very roots' (Banjo 2001, 6). Such management should involve a dynamic investment in the human resources of each nation (see Ogude 2001, 20). As Ogude points out in reference to Nigeria, this is where the true development for the management of the many resources of the peoples must begin. In essence, pluralism in all

facets of life must be accepted as a positive fact of life in both Nigeria and India. It should be seen as a source of strength rather than of weakness. Cultivation of the attitude of mutual respect among different ethnic, language, religious and cultural groups and the acceptance of pluralism as a force for good rather than for evil is a crucial ideological bedrock for contending against whatever problems might arise as a result of pluralism. In addition, the rights of different ethnic, cultural and language groups must not only be recognised but also accepted and put into consideration in economic and national planning. The entitlements of minority groups to existence, self-identification, national rights and economic resources should be respected, honoured and actually taken into consideration in national planning. Such respect for diversity and pluralism is the key not only for ensuring harmonious co-existence but also for reducing friction, tension and antipathy in a world that is swiftly becoming a global village.

****** Questions of ethnicity, relations between ethnicity and linguistic identity, the discrimination felt by minority groups, as well as the desire for pluralism were some issues raised. The strength of pluralism in a linguistically and ethnically diverse country like Nigeria was pointed out.

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Culture and Identity Shifts via Satellites and Virtual Reality in the Era of Globalization¹

*tope Omoniyi

Introduction

Globalization research in the early days pushed an agenda of homogenisation and suggested that the emergence of a global village and a homogeneous universe was imminent. The emergent global village was controlled by those who held the reins of global capital flow, the industrialised North, with the rest of the world on the primitive margins of the system but providing the raw fuel on which the system ran. More recently, however, globalization has been described as a process of fragmentation (Friedman 2001) and a conduit for processing the death of 'originary', of constructing diversity and new identities (Bhabha 1994). The old margins flow into the old core and create new hybrid realities requiring new paradigms of analysis. Transnational cultural capital has engendered diffusion to varying degrees across the world. Neo-liberal ideologies have by choice or compulsion provided a lever for, in some cases, diversity, and parallel cultural systems (such as Bollywood/Hollywood, MacDonalds/Tandoori) have witnessed a narrowing of the gorge between them as a result of constant appropriation of previous geo-cultural specificities. This is the condition under which *Chicken Tikka Masala* is claimed as

a national cuisine in Britain (a la Robin Cook, former foreign secretary), house buyers now take *Feng Shui* seriously when making a purchase, and *samosas* are served as snack at the National Theatre Café in London. As Frakenberg and Mani note, the 'Other' is 'no longer geographically distanced' (1996, 274). The old minority cultural havens of Little India, Chinatown, Little Lagos, Little Jamaica and other 'littles' in the heartlands of the West now serve as conduits to alter the direction of culture flow. Frakensberg and Mani speak of the postcolonial project as the 'serious calling into question of white/Western dominance by the groundswell of movements of resistance, and the emergence of struggles for collective self-determination most frequently articulated in nationalist terms'.

In the sections that follow, I shall explore two instances of culture shift that involve constructions of the new SELF from elements of the essence and an otherness that is externally constructed. These formulations of new identity do not reflect the traditional margin-to-center movement, but rather relocation to Bhabha's in-between space, a compromise in which old essentialisms lose their negative edge and celebrate new identity. Enter Apache Indian and Johnny Major.

Theoretical anchor

Bhabha notes that:

What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These in-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (1994, 1)

Beyond all doubts, globalization as a social process is one of the methods by which the shifts implied in Bhabha's remark are achieved. It is thus necessary here to examine the theoretical

ramifications of the concept of globalization in order to appropriately situate the phenomenon of cultural identity shift that is the central concern of this paper.

Golding and Harris warn that the 'global culture we may presume to observe is itself the transnationalization of a very national voice, the universal triumph of a supremely local and parochial set of images and values' (1997, 9). To the extent that the contents and ramifications of an assumed global cultural melting pot have a mainly northern origin, particularly the US, cultural practices of the South's urban centres which reflect a subscription to this pot suggest that globalization may indeed be a synonym for cultural assimilation. On the other hand, appropriation and fusion mark the cultural processing of the elements from the global pot before transmission on programmes like *Groovoidz* (broadcast by marginal channels such as Minaj Broadcast International). In a sense, fusion is a hybrid cultural form, that is neither South nor North but a compromise between the two. The World Fusion Movement pursues a pacifist ideology except that the medium available for its transmission remains very much a marginal one.

Globalization as cultural imperialism—the old (dis)order? Perception and taste

The Guardian Online (13/07/00) reported the face-off between Nigeria's National Broadcasting Corporation and TV Africa, a South African programme distribution outfit. The details of this are contained in an article by Bankole Ebisemiju titled 'TV Africa is cultural, economic imperialism, say producers'.² Of note is the allegation that 'TV Africa gets free access to our homes through its local affiliates to bombard our children with often offensive moral values and lifestyles which are the main themes of the bulk of its programmes'. The Non-Aligned Movement had levelled the same allegation against the North for its 'domination of

entertainment programming across the Third World' which it saw as 'cultural imperialism that implanted alien western values on audiences' (Herman and McChesney 1997, 23-24, see also Petras 2001). It is further alleged that 'TV Africa traps advertising dollars which could have come directly into this [Nigerian] economy from abroad [...] by approaching the large multinationals such as Samsung, Goldstar, Nokia, Siemens, Elf, Total among others at their headquarters abroad and offer (sic) them the African audience (including Nigeria through its local affiliates)'. According to the article, the multinationals prefer this once and for all transaction to approaching individual African advertising companies. The fact that there is no 'reciprocal programme uptake from Nigeria' confirms the imperialist tendencies of organisations like TV Africa, which is in tandem with the inequity that the New World Information Commission set out to correct in the last quarter of the 20th Century.

Southern decay, Northern flourish – dependency theory

Surin (1998, 19) notes that the dependency and uneven development paradigm has long been associated with the proposed delinking of the economies of the South from those of the North. According to that paradigm, 'openness to global capital flows makes a lower income country more vulnerable to external shocks and to the onset of financial crisis'. In other words, globalization does not augur well for the South at least in economic terms. Surin however argues that 'polarization between the North and the South is more pronounced than it has ever been' and only recommends 'selective delinking' from 'exogenously oriented' economic policies. Golding and Harris (1997, 7) agree with Garofalo (1993, 30) that there is a need to reach beyond cultural imperialism and ensure that 'the new diversity of global culture' is not allowed to 'paper over hierarchizations of race and ethnicity, let alone the age-old inequalities associated with gender and class'. The new mechanisms of the imperialist movement are based on a thriving

and enhanced satellite and digital information industry (cf. Steven 1994, Herman and McChesney 1997), and of course satellite channels like MBI and the Internet, which are the focus of this paper, are implicated.

Globalization as appropriation – creativity of the dominated

Taylor notes that 'the very malleability of music makes possible local appropriations and alterations, particularly of North American and U.K. popular musics, resulting in all kinds of syncretisms and hybridities, which themselves continually syncretize and hybridise' (1997, xv). This is the story of contemporary popular music in Africa, both in instrumentation and lyrics. Their appeal seems to be confined to the local markets, as they are generally not stocked in the music stores of the West. The few musicians who break into the Western market are often to be found in the 'Othered' section of those stores under the 'World Music' label. On the flip side is the spicing of mainstream music by adding samples of the 'exotic' exemplified in Paul Simon's 'Grace land', Missy Eliot's sinicised 'Get Ur Freak On', or indeed Sting's Rainforest Foundation Benefit concert at Carnegie Hall (2002). In contrast to the hybrid form above, this latter music tends to gain popularity across North and South.

Thus culture forms may be theorised as falling into the following categories: centre-centre, marginal-centre, centre-margin and marginal-margin. Centre-centres comprise those cultural elements and practices that are rooted solely in the West. They represent conservative and purist interests and are dated. Marginal-centres are Western culture types that have tapped into 'other' cultural resources and therefore represent a more liberal leaning. This type is often in a process of becoming and some institutions are engaged to switch the categories around to turn this into centre-centre and the previous type into marginal-centre. Among these institutions are the One World Movement, the Multiculturalism

Project etc. Centre-margins comprise cultural icons, elements and practices, which are primarily 'other' but have become 'acceptable' to the scrutinising eyes and ears of the West (Youssou N'Dour, Manu Dibango, Bob Marley, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Nelson Mandela). Finally, marginal-margins convey the conservative Southern cultural type, which most often are unheard of and therefore 'non-existent' as far as the West/North is concerned. This typology may be represented as a continuum of global culture movement (see Figure 1: Type 1 below). Perhaps the equitable and therefore preferred general direction of movement is towards centre-margin and marginal-centre, although there are elements in the West/North who tend to prefer to move in the opposite direction for fear that the alternative direction leads to the apocalypse (Friends of the Earth, Green Peace etc). With this categorisation framework, MBI in relatively rural Obosi in Nigeria is centre-margin from the perspective of global culture formation and movement. However, its office and transactions in London constitute marginal-centre relative to global players like BBC, Sky, CNN and others. In essence, globalization can only be a process of becoming (cf. Rasool 1999), without the possibility of a 'globalized state'.

Figure 1. A typology of cultural globalization and shift

Type 1

Marginal-margin —————> Centre-centre

Type 2

Centre —————> Compromise <———— Centre

Alternatively, we could identify globalization as a process that takes its points of departure from two conservative centres, a North and a South, and is a movement towards a compromise new centre that reflects and represents all of the world's culture blocs. However,

this typology is idealistic and requires a subscription to global equality across all spheres of human endeavour by all of the world's governments and societies. In contrast to the appropriation paradigm in which exotic cultural practices of the South are appropriated and 'modernised' in the North and then patented before being exported back to the South, this alternative paradigm does not focus on patents and ownership. All of humanity has an equal claim to and a stake in the resulting hybrid global culture represented in Figure 1: Type 2 above.

Globalization as network

Globalization may also be seen as a network of relations (political, social, economic, cultural, religious etc). These relationships are often made obvious by their effects. For instance, Giddens (1990) reports an intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and viceversa. Britain's Black Monday (October 19, 1987), the Gulf War, and the aeroblasting of the Twin Towers (September 11, 2001) all reverberated on Wall Street and finance houses around the world. This is the consequence of links between transnational corporate businesses, the IMF, World Bank and other such structures, which have been linked with the inequality at the base of Type 1 (Figure 1) in the preceding section.

Another dimension to globalization as network that is of interest to the discussion in this paper is the locational identification of peoples with their origins. For instance, diasporic Nigerians have been responsible for capital flow into the country through a modernised performance of traditional obligatory caretaker roles within their social networks by using fund repatriation facilities such as Moneygram, Western Union and Moneynet among others. Government recognition of the prospect of this informal sector of the economy has led to attempts to establish a formal network of

'Nigerian experts abroad' (*The Guardian* 05/08/02). This has the same implications as the Indian government's 'People of Indian Origin' and 'Non-Resident Indian' card schemes. The former applies to people of Indian ancestry who are nationals of another country while the latter applies to citizens of India who reside in another country. The institutional recognition of these groups accords the associated identities some status and aids the emergence of several global national communities.

Globalization as a semiotic subject

Norman Fairclough (1995) suggests that it is worth investigating how discursive practices are globalized because it is an interesting and significant development in itself and because it is an important part of the wider processes of globalization. Globalization of cultural practices is to a substantive degree globalization of discursive practices, the vehicle for which is language. Phillipson (1992) argues that there is a link between globalization and the international hegemony of a few languages (most notably English, but also for instance, French). This link is embodied in text, spoken as well as written, discourse practice and social practice. The linguistic representation of new social realities, such as power relationships between North and South, in texts thus expresses the process of globalization. Specifically, names tailored after Western popular culture icons, the use of African-American Vernacular English status-raising among South artistes even though it is a marginal code in the US, and the use of Nigerian Pidgin English and Standard English codeswitches, dress and dance as codes, etc. are capable of mirroring culture shift. MBI is a potential 'site' for the construction of resistance and new identities although current patronage does not seem to convey fulfilment of such a role yet.

Of the frameworks above, globalization as a semiotic subject perhaps has the greatest relevance to the present discussion, which

is based on the analysis of text. This theoretical platform also accommodates an integration of some of the issues raised by the other paradigms. For instance, cultural imperialism, appropriation, fusion, process, network as ideological themes are conveyed in texts and therefore can be debated equally through textual analysis. I shall now attempt to define cultural texts and justify the classification of the materials I have chosen as such.

Delimiting cultural texts

At the risk of courting essentialism, it is assumed here that representative cultural texts can only come from sites that have the rights to produce them. By this I mean that the starting point for cultural practices represented in text is very much determined and locatable in space and time even though such practices may bow to other forces and spread to other sites in the course of which modifications to their original forms may occur as part of a process of adaptation or indigenisation. This reasoning is behind the traditional associations we have for cultural items such as chicken tikka masala, soul food, reggae music, sari, and Yorkshire pudding. The question that arises then is who owns the adapted form? For the purpose of this essay, the sites of cultural production are satellite television channels and the Internet as the postmodern universe in which the 'homes' of contemporary cultural ideologues are located.

If we follow Barthes's (1981, 39) distinction between 'work' and 'text', that 'the work is held in the hand, the text in language' then culture texts can only refer to the facilities of language that specifically convey culture objects. However, McGann (1985) understands [literary] 'works' as cultural products conceived of as the issue of a large network of persons and institutions which operate over time, in numbers of different places and periods; and distinguishes 'texts' as a subset of works only covering those cultural products when they are viewed more restrictively as language structures constituted in specific ways over time by a

similar network of persons and institutions. This restriction of text to language structures implicitly presupposes the existence of a homogeneous text or grammar and accommodates neither Fairclough's (1992, 1995) notion of intertextuality nor the contemporary tendency to be multiply texted, that is, the encoding of a variety of texts by one person owing to their membership of multiple networks. In this latter sense then we can argue that there are two realisations of language and/or text—(a) which is expressed in words, coordinated strings of words and a system of meaning that exists in spoken, written and signed modes (cf. Fairclough 1992, 75 on text analysis); and (b) which is expressed as materiality and triggers a system of identification by association, for instance, dress modes, musical forms and lyrics, rituals, 'attitudes' and creative output. This is often invoked to access a deeper or interpretative level of meaning, such as when people say they're making a statement by performing a certain act. It is to this expanded meaning of text, which includes (b), that I shall anchor my discussion.

The media as a cultural site

The media is both a platform (means) for the production of text and culture as well as being constitutive of cultures and texts (end). The determination and nature of what makes or forms the media are indicative of identities and all manners of social relations. Most importantly, the social practices associated with media may have local cultural traits in spite of the global profession cloak that it dons. There are only two satellite stations broadcasting out of Nigeria, MBI, which I have already introduced, and a second one, which was actually licensed first, AIT (DAAR Communications). In granting a license to Minaj Broadcast International, the licensing authority remarked that 'The license empowers the organization to operate worldwide satellite television signals originating from Nigeria', because it believes that Nigerian owned satellite stations will help counter the bad publicity it gets from the Western media.

Thus MBI as a satellite television channel is arguably a site of contestation, representation and projection of the cultures of the environment from which it is broadcast. In view of its supposedly global audience, and in line with its description as 'Africa's window on the world', it has, one could argue, an obligation to inform and educate viewers outside the African continent about the social and cultural practices of Africa through its programming. This obligation should parallel the broadcast of the social and cultural practices of the West to the continent by channels such as the Cable News Network (CNN) and the BBC and give a semblance of balance in information flow as expressed in the spirit of the New World Information and Communication Order. But this is hardly likely to be the case as the table below shows.

Table 1. The rudiments of culture identity shift

	Nigeria	India	US	UK
Population	127m	1,027m	278m	60m
GDP Per Capita	\$950	\$2,200	\$36,200	\$22,800
Telephone main lines	0.5m	27.7 m*	194m* ²	34.5m
Internet providers	11	43	7,800	245
Internet Users	0.1m	4.5m	148m	19.5m
Television Broadcast stations	16**	562	1,500	228

*October 2000 – main lines

*² 1997

** may be inaccurate

The imbalance and injustice in the structure of information flow sprung from a model that ensured only North to South transfer of culture (Roach 1990, Tomlinson 1991) and thus served the agenda of cultural imperialists.

Channels like MBI supposedly challenge the existing Western media hegemony in theory and at the same time provide channels for an African diaspora to engage with the contemporary realities of the homeland they had either left or been displaced from. These platforms nurture and facilitate the maintenance of old identities now represented as marginal relative to a new Western mainstream. In contrast, analysts often explain the inaccessibility to the channel by the primary society being represented in terms of the asymmetry in North-South relations – there are 400,000 phone lines to Nigeria's over 100 million population and the reason behind the privatisation of Nigerian Telecommunications. In the three months between December 2000 and March 2001 when the MBI data I shall discuss here were gathered, the channel was off air most of the time. Signal hitches or power supply problems produced a blank screen during some of the transmissions.

The nature of 'shifts'

The theoretical apparatus for analysing shift in identity research varies from one disciplinary framework to another. In sociolinguistics, the phenomenon of language shift (Fishman 1991, 2001) is occasioned by the co-existence of two ethnolinguistic groups one of which is dominant and the other is dominated. Convergence, assimilation and accommodation theories in variationist sociolinguistics (Trudgill 1983) and the social psychology of language (Tajfel 1982) traditions respectively explore group membership and social identity. Phonological shifts and second language learning indicate an attempt by individuals to approach the Centre. In the sociology of language tradition, language shift directs the focus more on language by observing the shift as an impact on language rather than as a social practice. In the social sciences, the phenomenon generally entails a movement between ideological camps; for example, between two essentialist polarities. In multidisciplinary themed discussions such as this, the analytical apparatus understandably may flexibly straddle several paradigms.

Identity

In ordinary everyday talk, identity is often assumed to be definitive, fixed and clear. But in reality it is far more complex than it seems. Hall (1990, 222) argues that identity is neither transparent nor unproblematic. He suggests that instead of thinking of identity as an accomplished fact, which is represented by the new cultural practices, identity should be thought of as a 'production', 'which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation'. According to Hall, 'this view problematises the very authority and authenticity to which the term, "cultural identity", lays claim'. The question then arises as to what the authentic cultural identity is and what defines it as such, or in fact, whether in view of the change that characterises globalization, there is a cultural identity per se (see Nakamura 2002 for views on the effect of the Web on ideas about race).

Participants on *Groovoidz* construct and project individual and group identities through various processes of representation. These processes are of a social nature and include names and naming practices, music, language, news coverage, and promotion of role models. At a practical level, identity, for instance, is exemplified in the attempt to map Nigerian ethnicity upon African-American singers in one of the phone-in sessions recorded and transcribed. Viewers were encouraged to phone-in and suggest probable Nigerian ethnic identities for Snoop Doggy Dogg, introduced in transcription A (pp 404-12 below), utterances 9-50 (TAU 9-50) and Lil' Kim (TAU 118-148) both of whom are African-American rap artistes. This game essentially illustrates Sreberney-Mohammadi's (1997, 67) 'cultural impact of modernity' on citizens of the South, a double alienation, 'from one's own tradition and cultural heritage' as well as from 'the metropolitan culture to which there is only selective exposure'. While one accepts her argument that many Southern cultures had been 'irrevocably changed' before the advent of the electronic media, change must be construed as a

process without an end. In this sense, digital and satellite channel television can be regarded as facilitating part of that process. The traditional role of the media is often narrowly construed to be that of informing and thus educating the public. By educating the people a more critically aware society is fostered and aided in making informed decisions and choices. However, scholars of cultural imperialism identify the media as providing a vehicle for transnationalism and in the process, cultural relations and cultural diplomacy (Alleyne 1997). In the ensuing combat between cultures, domination of so-called low by high cultures occurs especially in the era of globalization through satellite television and the Internet.

In the second recording that completes the data set, the producer challenged his co-presenter for addressing their programme guests as 'Niggers' (Niggaz in the US) claiming 'there's a difference between a *nigger* and a *Blackman*' obviously making a foray into the discourse of American race politics. Such discursive constructions of difference highlight a consciousness of the existence of an 'other' that is separate at some imagined level from 'us'. Ironically, within the framework of globalization both of these identities inhabit a marginal space and the boundaries between them can only be a fuzzy one. The mass arrival of Nigerians in the US in the 1980s and 1990s and the subsequent establishment of the category that President Clinton acknowledged as Nigerian-Americans during his state visit to Nigeria in July 2000 even further dulls such a distinction since the latter are generally lumped into the general category of African-Americans in everyday talk, except perhaps in census documents. The presenter's use of the term 'niggers' stems from a model of identity-construction that African-American rappers have popularised. In this sense, 'niggaz' or 'nigger' is an appropriation and positivisation of an erstwhile derogatory term through revaluation. Now let us look closely at some of the names heard on the *Groovoidz* programme.

Names and naming practices

Names contain clues about the cultural identity of their bearers such that it is, at least traditionally, possible to locate individuals and groups geo-culturally anywhere in the world. In this sense, Indian names (Arjun Appadurai, Braj Kachru) differ from Chinese names (Leng Hui, Chao-Chih-Liao), Native American Indian names (Ma-ka-ta-mi-ci-kiah kiak, Che-chauk-kose) differ from Anglo-American ones (Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln) and Yoruba names (Olusegun Obasanjo, Wole Soyinka) differ from Hausa names (Sanni Abacha, Murtala Muhammed). Names may also reveal their bearers' subscription to certain socio-religious or indeed cult values through membership of groups as exemplified in gang naming practices in the Los Angeles barrio that Betsy Rymes studied (Rymes 1996). This latter characterisation of names may be said to represent the popular culture dimension to naming as social practice. The category can be broadened to include the assumed pseudonyms of pop singers and groups such as Eminem, Puff Daddy, 2Pac, Snoop Doggy Dogg, Backstreet Boys and Lil' Bow Wow (US), Fatboy Slim, Spice Girls (UK) and Plantashun Boiz (Nigeria). It is this popular culture naming practice that is directly relevant to my discussion in this paper. The programme, *Groovoidz*, has six presenters all of whom are Nigerians. The two programme front persons Topsy Dogg (male), L (female) and a third in a supporting role, Nomalous (male) have all adopted names that cannot be located culturally in Nigeria except within the framework of an emerging global social practice whose origin is traceable to youth culture in the West. Two people, Blue and I-V-O-R-Y, both of whom are male present the *Groovoidz News* segment. Another male, Z (pronounced /zed/) presents the Talent Hunt segment of the programme.

Similarly, the British reggae artiste Apache Indian conjures up a lot of US racial and political rhetoric. According to *The Handbook of Texas Online*, 'Apache Indians belong to the southern branch of the Athabascan group, whose languages constitute a large family, with speakers in Alaska, western Canada, and the American

Southwest'. But the artiste was born Steven Kapur in India and taken as a three year old to Handsworth, Birmingham, England a predominantly minority enclave with a very strong Caribbean presence. His stage name, the form and content of his music reflect that social reality. He is multiply located and identified in multiple centres: Indian parents, reggae musician, British Asian, English, Punjabi Patois speaker, Hindi speaker, a reflection of the character of Robin Cook's 'chicken tikka masala nation'. He may be constructed as a global citizen because of his participation in multiple communities of practice. His cyberhome details show that he has worked in the entertainment industry in Jamaica, the US, India and the UK.

Names have a symbolic value and in this particular instance may be an indicator of their bearers' global exposure, travel and enlightenment as perceived by their fans and compatriots. Such exposure would suggest membership of an elite corps at the pinnacle of the social hierarchy. Most Nigerian parents desire to have children who go to school or live and work abroad, not only for the economic largesse that such connections generate but also because of the accompanying rise in social status. The mass hysteria among the general population over the annual American green-card lottery scheme provides evidence of the high esteem in which living in the US is held. The adopted names have implications for reading and interpreting North-South relations on one hand and representation of African cultural identities on the other. Yurchak has documented the practice of privatising business names in what he calls 'a post-Soviet linguistic market' noting that 'a process of Westernization in the Russian Language' has become apparent (2000, 411). He draws on data containing code-switching, borrowing to support his claim. Although there is evidence of code-mixing in the interactions that occur on the *Groovoidz* programme, the indigenous elements in such mixing are from urban pidgin forms that are not tied to a particular local ethnic identity.

The names, 'Topsy Dogg' and 'L' (see Transcripts A and B—the letter in pp 413–18 below) indicate a widespread social practice

in naming represented here. Evidence from claims made on the programme by the presenters and their audience corroborates this connection. As one caller remarked on the programme edition of 20 December 2000, Topsy Dogg's body frame is 'thin' and he looks like Snoop Doggy Dogg, but 'there's nothing wrong there' 'as long as you're fit'. The 'American' image is further enhanced by Topsy Dogg's braided hairstyle, a fashion form subscribed to by American rappers like Coolio and Snoop Doggy Dogg, among others, all mega stars and commercial success stories. The perception is not one of the African American artiste as an object of desire but of a larger identity that is appropriated and projected – the global American. Knowledge of the identity politics of the United States is indicated by the choice of a name that derives from a subgroup into which the bearer could be readily absorbed.

The language factor

Besides the names and the visual images, which we may directly associate with individual identities, there is also the Nigerian youth culture dimension reflecting a larger frame of American group identity (African-American to be precise) sought through language use. The most prominent linguistic feature in the presenters' language use is what I call the '*Y'all Syndrome*', a definite shift to African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) with all the political implications it attracts. Such shift does not resolve linguistic insecurity because AAVE remains a marginal dialect of American English in the global linguistic market (cf. Zentella 1998, 99). Ironically the presenters may be envied by their relatively young and impressionable local Nigerian viewers for Americanising.

The Talent Hunt component of *Groovoidz* is even more Americanised. Several of the talents display rapping skills and the presenter of that segment appears to be the most American of the entire crew. What is intriguing is that he speaks a variety that is closer to middle class America but has a lower ranking than Topsy

Dogg. This arrangement is not thought to be a deliberate policy by the MBI administration however.

Patois/Patwa

This language form which is local to the West Indies has been described as 'a symbol of 'Black Britishness' – partly because it is different from 'White British' speech, but also because it is different from the Creole speech of the Caribbean' (Sebba 1997, 232). He notes that 'its association with popular cultural movements like Reggae music and Rastafarianism is a source of pride' for Black youths in Britain. Among Nigerian popular artistes however, the prototype seems to be Jamaican Patois as popularised by the spread of Reggae and Rastafarianism from the Caribbean. This is the quintessential reversal of the location of roots. African-Americans and West Indians had gone through a phase in the mid-20th century following successes of freedom struggles on the African continent when Black pride was expressed in a desire to return. This root is celebrated in Alex Haley's *Roots*, which was serialised on many television channels around the world in the 1970s. Since then economic woes have stripped the continent of its dignity. Ironically, people on the continent now desire to be like their diaspora kinsfolk. This explains the use of Patois by Nigerian Reggae musicians and Rastafarians. One of the editions of the *Groovoidz* programme recorded opened with a short clip of a dreadlocked rastaman with a music box on the street saying:

"I man Imola all de way from Kingston Jamaica very close to Lagos. You're on *Groovoidz* and we're feel groovy ya know. Ya know. Peace. I ??????"

The utterance is rendered with the tone markings and rhythm of Jamaican English even though the string may not completely conform structurally to the target language. The obvious similarity between the structure of this text and that of non-standard JE are to be seen in 'I man Imola', and 'we're feel groovy ya know'. The

lyrics of 'Arranged Marriage' (1995, see Transcript C in appendix, pp-418-20 below) downloaded from Apache Indian's website explores the British Asian cultural practice of spouse importation from the sub-continent as its theme but the linguistic medium is Patwa with extensive code-mixing. Both of these texts contain several of the features of pidgin grammar (see Sebba 1997, 37). For instance, in the chorus:

Me wan gal fe me *Don Rani* (queen)
 Me wan gal dress up in a *sari* (saree)
 Me wan gal say *soorni logthi* (good looking she is)
 Me wan gal sweet like *jelebee* (sweet – Indian dessert)

every single line has a lexical or phrasal infusion from either Hindi or Punjabi (English translation in parenthesis). The use of the objective form of the First Person pronoun 'me' in subject position, deletion of the alveolar stop in 'wan' and the substitution of /a/ for /ɔ/ in 'gal' (girl), /e/ for /ʔ:/ in 'fe' (for) are all features of Patwa. The extract also illustrates the deployment of codeswitching as an instrument in hybrid identity construction, in most of Apache Indian's lyrics (see Transcript C).

In the *Groovoidz* script, Nomalous is a comical character of Hausa or Northern extraction – he speaks a heavily Hausa-accented English as well as Nigerian Pidgin English. Unlike in the lyrics above, the use of the non-standard form is a class indicator among indigenes and often associated with being uneducated or working class. The pidgin phrases have been glossed (see italics in TAU130ff):

130. No: If Lil' Kim is a Nigerian, **na Calabar** (*she's from Calabar*)

131. TD: Aah!

132. L: That's true, yeah! Why? Why? (accel.)

133. TD: Yeah, why?

134. No: You know **dat ting dey talk** about Calabar people
(.) (*what they say*)
135. TD: Uh what?
136. No: they're dangerous individuals
137. L: Um (.)what else apart from that?
138. No: Yes, what else you need to know about Calabar **pass dem** dangerous? (*besides they're*)
139. TD: What makes them dangerous?
140. No: **Na you sabi** (*that's your problem*)

The utterances in bold font (glossed in italics) conform with the syntactic and phonological structure of Nigerian Pidgin English as well as contain characteristic lexical items such as 'na' (it's) in lines 130 and 140, and 'sabi' (know) in line 140. Line 140 is actually an idiomatic expression, which literally translates into 'it's you who knows'.

Music and cultural identity

Music is an established identity indicator around the world and it has its own politics of representation. The initial miscategorisation of Eminem as a black rapper by many is the consequence of the racialisation of music in the United States. Even his producer, Dr. Dre, allegedly thought he was black on listening to his demo-tape. There were, supposedly, no Black country singers and no white soul singers. The boundaries were firmly established. However, Taylor (1997) has suggested that more than anything else, music exemplifies [this new world] and the changes that have occurred. Bands like Afro Celt Sound Movement and Bad Haggis demonstrate this fact.

Nigeria's Civil Rights Congress protest against the ban imposed on rap music by the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria reflects

the ideological and political dimension of music in Nigerian society. The organisation reminds the FRCN management of 'the positive role Rap music has played in ensuring good governance through the globe [sic]. Rap music is inspirational and an instrument usually employed by agitated and restive youths to fight injustices and bad government in the society' (*The Guardian* online – <http://www.ngrguardiannews.com/arts/an841903.html>). The point to stress here is the acclaimed universality of Rap as a musical form and political tool without any reference to the import of its root in the United States.

The politicisation of music depicted in the Congress's statement above is equally present in Femi Kuti's (Nigerian musician) explanation in an interview granted to *African Beatz*, that the new (Afrikan) Shrine will house a functional library that will be stocked with books on all aspects of African history noting that:

We're going a step further in our resolve to internationalise the Afrikan Shrine. It will not only serve as the home base of African music and workshop; but a place Africans and Europeans can come and read and learn more about the history, culture and religion of the propagation of African Civilisation [sic]. (<http://www.africanhiphop.com/crew/nigeria-up.htm>)

Femi confided in *African Beatz* that the Afrikan Shrine will also be the headquarters of his Movement Against Second Slavery (MASS), a political pressure group he founded. In another *African Beatz* report, Nigeria was celebrating her 40th independence anniversary on 1st October, and there was a big Jeans carnival at the Lekki Beach in Lagos. This event, which featured 'big hip hop headz' was partly sponsored by Legend Extra Stout and Wrangler Jeans, both of which are multinationals, agents of globalization.

What is described as crossover phenomenon in reality parallels what Rampton (1995) called language crossing in applied linguistics. Mostly, Nigerian musicians are featured on *Groovoidz* but much of what is aired is fusion music – locally relevant lyrics

packaged as rap, reggae etc. But there's rap in the Rai music of Algeria, in French, German, in Hausa and many other languages. Missy Elliot's 2001 'Get a freak on' incorporates a very obviously oriental rhythm. This represents the deterritorialisation of music and the emergence of a global music culture. In the Missy Elliot case, which is rare, we have sinicisation, whereas the usual trend is one of Americanisation. *Groovoidz* makes extensive and frequent references to US artistes. But the songs are fundamentally a fusion of forms from North and South. Lyrics contain a mix of Standard English and Nigerian Pidgin English. Costumes and choreography express a mix of local and 'global' fashion. Dan Foster, a DJ in one of the popular local Lagos radio stations located in the elite neighbourhood of Victoria Island allegedly favoured American music over Nigerian music in his selections. He is American. Such a visible and tangible presence supplements the penetrative force of the global media represented by dominant digital channels like CNN. In their Algiers declaration of 1973 the Non-Aligned Movement identified the political and economic as well as cultural and social fields as the contexts of imperialist operations in the process of which an alien ideological domination of the developing world is effected. In fact one could argue that in reality there is just the one hegemonic field with politics, economics and culture as its spheres.

A Southern appropriation?

An alternative framework of analysis could look at the MBI as having appropriated cultural capital that is essentially Western as a container for packaging and marketing local culture wares. Luthra remarks that:

the success of TV shows from the United States such as *The Cosby Show* and films such as *Beverly Hills Cop* and *Malcolm X*, and the relative success of young blacks on the music and sports scene, have all played a crucial role in creating a new

Anglo-American youth culture and language with a substantive black dimension. (1997, 29)

Although this might appear like a glowing testimonial that encourages African artistes to appropriate the forms and consequently the culture that informs them, the question arises as to what the sales figures are for the Americanised music forms they produce and/or broadcast. As part of the research for this paper, the author visited several music stores in London to see if some of the CDs were stocked. Unfortunately, like many other items of 'third world' culture, the music does not seem to have travelled as far as Europe, America or Asia. A spot-check in three stores in Montreal, Canada and New Delhi, India in May 2001 and March 2002 similarly revealed the same absence. A survey of students in my Discourse and Conversation Analysis class during the 2000/2001 spring semester indicated that satellite channels like MBI were unknown. A few had heard of channels like Zee TV (Indian) but had never watched a programme on it. The fact that these channels like all others charge subscription fees in addition to the normal British television licence fees indicates the significance of the economics of taste and preferences in the matter.³

The MBI satellite channel to its credit broadcasts a number of programmes that are distinctly ethnically and culturally Nigerian. These include locally produced movies rich in entertainment value as well as in constructing an essentially postcolonial Nigerian reality. Ironically, these movies are in the medium of English even when the storylines are very rural in nature. Rural Nigeria is generally not a domain of English usage. The only plausible explanation is that these 'western' programmes and their producers basically feed urban tastes. Subtitling could potentially create a forum for indigenous languages to grow wings and travel.

From a distributional perspective, the channel services an elite clientele who can afford the high-costs of hi-tech television sets and satellite dishes needed for reception. The religious programmes relayed include American-style television ministry broadcasts from

a number of Pentecostal Churches, including one in London. The religious discussion programmes focus on issues of immediate relevance to Nigerian society – prosperity in the midst of widespread poverty – a necessary therapy in the economic climate. However, evidence abounds on these programmes that the Church as an institution is contributing its quota to national renewal and social change by invoking indigenous moral values and admitting a rising number of young persons. The officials are often middle-aged and/or youthful and the audience has a remarkable generational spread.

Fairclough (1995, 55) suggests that texts are 'simultaneously constitutive of (1) social identities, (2) social relations and (3) systems of knowledge and belief (corresponding respectively to identities, relationships and representations [...])' and they contribute to shaping aspects of society and culture. I shall now examine the transcripts for these traits.

Tipsy Dogg's (TD) remarked that a guest artiste who appeared on the programme edition of December 15, 2000, must perceive Shaba Ranks and Shaggy as idols to 'sound like them' (TBU 37 & 54). This corroborates the arguments that a fusion of culture is taking place and that America offers an ideal towards which artistes in developing countries must strive. Ironically, TD the subtle challenger projects an American-ness and so is part of the process of constructing the new identity located in the in-between spaces. Johnny Major, his guest, however responded in a mix of American and Jamaican English that 'Shaba Ranks is Shaba Ranks, Shaggy is Shaggy and Johnny Major is Johnny Major', 'they're doing their own thing. But Johnny *Maja* and I'm doing ma own thing' (TBU38) drawing TD's compliment of 'You irie man' (TBU39), but actually wrongly pronounced /Irl/ instead of /a'r?/, borrowed from the Jamaican Patois expression ('Are you feeling irie?') often uttered by singers at reggae concerts to gauge audience participation. TD's language choice here takes us back to the point about reversal of fortune and associated desires discussed in the language factor section above. Although, this fits in well with the general fact that

Johnny Major plays fusion music, a certain degree of confusion seems apparent. He expresses a desire to cut an autonomous identity with reference to self rather than to territory, but the wherewithal are often ones that have already been trademarked for someone else in the West. This individual identity is typified by an agenda to 'bring the African thing into the hip-hop thing' (TBU25). Lewis, the second of the duo, also describes their work as a mixture of R&B, reggae, raga and African grooves (TBU24). The dance routine on Lewis and Johnny Major's video 'Pretty Woman' which was played on *Groovoidz* showed a mix of forms too. The dancers wore jeans pants and jackets, casual de-ethnicised Nigerian garments and frilly Igbo cultural dance costume. Two points ought to be made here briefly. First, in TBU25, the fixed and grounded part is 'the hip-hop thing' while the 'African thing' is the moveable or malleable or the assimilated so to say. The utterance is thus a metaphor of departure in some sense. Second, the individuals, in spite of their speech and dress codes being Americanised, do not see themselves as Americans or desiring to be, slotting themselves into Bhabha's (1994) 'in-between spaces' the site of emerging new identities.

The concept of selfhood and the confidence the artistes express in their individual identities is a contestation of the established discourses of Western hegemony, North-South inequality. They imply 'mutual respect' or at least recognition between cultural identity cohorts (if they exist).

Conclusion

Satellite television channels and the Internet no doubt form part of the instrumentality of globalization. The volume of business conducted via these fora bear witness to this fact. The potential that these media have for establishing access to global networks positions them as bona fide sites for the construction and transmission of cultural identity and is obviously being tapped by

the ideological South in contemporary times. In this regard, the appropriation of North cultures by the latter in the formation of new cultural hybrid identities is also apparent. The pattern of appropriation by both camps may differ but more importantly, while the resulting hybrid occasioned by Northern appropriation ships fairly well southwards, those resulting from Southern appropriations seem incapable of penetrating Northern borders sufficiently if at all to influence the consumption of culture and therefore cause any real culture shift. It would seem that Northern appropriators author any noticeable shift. The question remains however, whether the media indeed provide an adequate platform for correcting the imbalance in information and culture flow North to South and vice-versa.

****** The ways in which minority peripheral identities are propagated in media programmes along with the forces that bring about diversity in media led the discussion. There were also concerns expressed about the illusion of globalization, in that globalization did not imply an uniform spread of information or knowledge. The Americanisation of the world is often seen as an inevitable good and its attendant problems need to be recognised and analysed.

Notes

1. A version of this paper was presented at the Network Project Workshop, held at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, India, March 26-28, 2002.
2. See (<http://www.nguardiannews.com/arts/an791403.html>).
3. One of my students who watched a segment of the *Groovoidz* programme actually criticised the quality of production.

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Appendix

TRANSCRIPT - A

Program Intro: Someone in dreadlocks (Dada) on the street.

'I man Imola all de way from Kingston Jamaica very close to Lagos. You're on Groovoidz and we're feel groovy ya know. Ya know. Peace. I ?????'

1. Topsy Dogg: Yo L, what you do to your hair?

2. L: What you think I did?||

3. TD: I 'on know. All ya'll out there right, goin' ask ya'll a question (.) and em (.)

4. L: We want you to call in ||

5. TD: yeah

6. L: [so we know your opinion

7. TD: [give us your opinion

8. L: If who (.)

9. TD: If Snoop Dog ... ya'll hold on. Am goin' pick your call. I'm goin, I'm goin pick this call but listen to this question first right. Em if Snoop Dog happened to be a Nigerian what ethnic group do you think he's going to fall into? ||

10. L: We have ||

11. TD: Ibo ||

12. L: Yoruba, Hausa, what?

13. TD: Call in and tell us in the Dog House

Phone rings

14. TD: Yo, Hello, whatsup? [Oh sorry, sorry call back and tell me who

15. L: [Oh (giggles) that was too long.

16. TD: Sorry, call back and tell me who you think uh, what you think of Snoop Dog if he was a Nigerian. I think gat another call ||

17. L: Really?

18. TD: Yo, [hello

19. L: [hello

20. Caller: hello

21. TD: Eh, hello, how you doin'? ||

22. L: Hello, whatsup?

23. Caller: Guess alright. This is Laitan on the line

24. TD: How you doin'?

25. Caller: I'm doing fine.

26. TD: Where you calling from?

27. Caller: I'm calling from Shomolu

28. TD: Sh (.)

29. L: From?

30. Caller: Shomolu

31. TD: Shomolu

32. L: Shomolu. How's Shomolu?

33. Caller: Fine, thank you.

34. L: Good. So we got a question for you
35. Caller: Alright
36. L: If Snoop Doggy Dogg was a Nigerian (.)
37. Caller: hm hm
38. L: What em tribe do you think he'll be? or what ethnic group do you think he'll fall under?
39. Caller: Uhm, actually I don't really know, but I think um Hausa
40. TD: [(laugh)
41. L: [(laugh) Why?
42. Caller:[(laugh) What?
43. L: Why? Why do you think so?
44. Caller: Um, 'cos he looks like them you know, skinny, em, has a long head (giggles)
45. L: Long head?
46. Caller: Yeah
47. L: OK
48. Caller: I don't think he'll really fall into any other, you know, group
49. L: OK
50. Caller: Yeah, so ..
51. L: So, you know Topsy Dog looks a bit like [Snoop Dogg
52. TD:[Hey
53. Caller: Ah yeah, exactly, they look alike you know
54. L: So (looks at TD) laughs

55. TD: laughs

56. Caller: laughs

57. L: Why are you laughing? He's fatter than you are. Laughs

58. TD: ????

59. L: Oh ok, so you think he looks like Hausa as well?

60. Caller: Yeah, sort of you know

61. L: Anyway, so you do you have anything to say? (to TD)

62. TD: I don't. She say I'm skinny

63. Caller: En, yeah you're skinny

64. L: Ah ah (laughs)

65. TD: [Laughs

66. Caller: [Laughs

67. TD: Well it's alright, it's alright Laitan

68. Caller: I can, I can approve of skinny there's nothing there, it's alright

69. L: As long as you're fit right?

70. Caller: What?

71. L: As long as you're fit

72. Caller: Yeah, yeah, it's alright

73. L: OK

74. TD: And I'm FIT

75. Caller: Alright true. My uncle wants to speak with you, hold o

76. TD: Alright

77. Uncle: hello
78. TD: [hello
79. L: [hello
80. Uncle: This is Bayo
81. L: Hi Bayo (giggles) ||
82. TD: How you doin' Bayo?
83. Uncle: Fine
84. TD: Whatsup
85. Uncle: How are you Flip?
86. TD: Laughs
87. Uncle: I call you Flip
88. TD: Tippy, Tippy d..
89. Uncle: Hello
90. TD: hello
91. Uncle: ??? Which state are you from?
92. TD: What?
93. Uncle: Which State are you from?
94. TD: Guess
95. Uncle: Em Edo or Delta
96. TD: [(laughs) the (.) you got the first
97. L: [laughs and claps)
98. Uncle: (laughs) I know if you were a Nigerian, definitely you'll be from Edo State

99. TD: You know wha'm talking abou ha ha. Give it up for my Edo brothers

100. L: (laughs and claps) Yeah right

101. TD: Alright, alright Mr Bayo

102. Uncle: What's my prize?

103. TD: Your prize? Um (.)

104. L: Well, we'll think about that next time

105. TD: Yeah, yeah we'll think about that (laughs)

106. Uncle: Yeah. I like, I like your program

107. TD: Thank you very much

108. Uncle: So long buddy

109. TD: Peace

110. Uncle: Peace

111. L: OK so (.)

112. TD: Snoop Dogg in Edo, that makes me proud

113. L: Edo. What? Because you look like Snoop?

114. TD: I haven't said I look like Snoop (fall) (.) people are saying

115. L: You do (rise)

116. TD: He's a ??? (.) And if a ??? can (.) um um, you guys in Edo
Oba Etopaiyeh, Ise, whatsup

117. L: (laughs)

118. TD: So um (.) Lil' Kim, that's one controversial person

119. L: Uhm uhm

120. TD: What do you think? If she was Nigerian, where would she be from?

121. L: Lil' Kim

Nomalous enters frame

122. TD: Why won't you come in now, because you heard about Lil' Kim

123. L: Who's Lil' Kim, serious? (asking Nomalous)

124. No: I donno

125. TD: He doesn't even know Lil' Kim. He knows Mamman Shata

126. L: Of course he does, cos he does come on come on. Lil' Kim, I think she'll be from Benue

127. No: No, no, no

128. TD: Why Benue?

129. L: I donno

130. No: If Lil' Kim is a Nigerian, na Calabar

131. TD: Aah!

132. L: That's true, yeah! Why? Why? (accel.)

133. TD: Yeah, why?

134. No: You know dat ting dey talk about Calabar people (.)

135. TD: Uh what?

136. No: they're dangerous individuals

137. L: Um (.) what else apart from that?

138. No: Yes, what else you need to know about Calabar pass dem dangerous?

139. TD: What makes them dangerous?

140. No: Na you sabi

141. L: But some people say that most (.) ???

142. No: They're small but mighty

143. TD: Laughs

144. No: If you know what I mean (.) (smiles)

145. L: I don't know. I don't know. I don't know

146. TD: (laughs)

147. No: I don't think (.) ||

148. L: Please call in let's hear, let's hear your opinions alright

149. TD: (laughing) Wait, before we get into the next you know stars that are supposed to be Nigerian, we goin' take this next video from (.) ||

150. L: [Tunde and Wumi Obe

151. TD: [Tunde and Wumi Obe and it's called ['Away'

152. L: [Away

153. TD: But em em I guess we still have (.) ???

154. L: Why not?

155. TD: Um um, I'm trying na, I'm trying na, you guys help me here. I gat some'n' in ma troath

156. L: What's wrong with your throat?

(Nomalous pats him hard on the back of neck)

157. TD: No, no, that's not what I mean. I brought you and I can take you out (threatens Nomalous)

158. L: I hope you guys know that you're on air

159. TD: Yeah

160. L: So behave yourselves

161. TD: We're behaving

162. No: Come here (holds L's hand)

163. TD: Why?

164. No: I don't want you to (.) ???

165. TD: OK, next video from Tunde and Wumi Obe and this one is called 'The Way' and I'm showing Nomalous the way out of this place right now after this video

Introduces guest artists Plantation Boys: Black Face, Two Face and Face. Their mentors are: Fela, Bobby Brown, 2Pac, Wycliffe and Majek.

TD: Something about you guys that ??? is well, I'm also trying to preach although people don't really understand it is AFRICAN know what I mean? I mean you guys are real good (rise). You guys are spor'n' some real local fabric ...

Groovoidz News Segment anchored by Blue and I-V-O-R-Y

TRANSCRIPT - B: GROOVOIDZ: DECEMBER 15th 2000

INTERVIEW REPLAY:

1. Presenter: Hi people. Still on Groovoidz. Today we've got Dan Foster on Groovoidz. You've heard the voice, now you see the face. Hi Dan how you doing?

2. Dan: Ha what face? (laughs and covers face) You don't see a face yet. Yeah, how you doing?

3. Presenter: (laughs) I see a face. How you doing?

4. Dan: I'm doing fine

5. P: How was your show today?

6. Dan: Great, good. I enjoyed it.

7. P: We luckily caught him after his morning show.

8. Dan: Yeah.

9. P: Now how do you cope with it? You have people calling you in all the time. You don't see their faces. But, how do you get what they want? How do you ...

10. Dan: Radio is like the theater of the mind, so you wanna paint that picture. I'm in there all by myself painting a picture, hoping that they get it. With faith, that you know, I can create a thought and I wonder sometimes if they get it but that's radio, you know, it's a drama thing.

11. P: Don't worry we get it

12. Dan: You get it, I know

13. P: We get it

14. Dan: In fact there's one book that says er erm, you wanna be confident, you don't wanna play usually a laugh card after a joke

because that's proof that (.) you don't have confidence in your joke. Why not just give the joke and then just say 'what the hell, I ain't goin' have nobody laugh after all it's either they get it or they don't, you know, it's a, it's all good. Um um.

15. P: Em, you don't play Nigerian music. You don't play indigenous music. You don't REALLY play indigenous music.

16. Dan: Ni .. um, well, Nigerian music? Yeah, yeah, yeah we do. Ah, we play a couple of Nigerian songs and shower, er, you know, we got it.

Main phone-in segment:

1. TD: Whatsup yo? This is still Groovoidz with me Topsy Dogg and L up in the house. Whatsup girl?

2. L: Yeah, whatsup? I'm alright. How are you?

3. TD: ??? we had to like em roll back something from last week with Dan Foster and em, you know, some people wanted to see him again and we felt it's really groovy to do dat. Anyways though y'all saw the video that came up before Dan Foster, Lewis and Major and we got them up in the Dogg House, right L?

4. L: Yeah. Whatsup niggers?

5. Major: Yeah, we're cool

6. Lewis: Cool, cool

7. L: Are you alright? (laughing)

8. Lewis & Major: Yeah, yeah.

9. TD: Why you calling my brothers niggers?

10. Lewis & Major: How about you?

11. L: Yeah, I'm fine

12. Major: SnIPER, how you doing?
13. TD: Wha? wha? Yo Johnny Major. You cool, you cool (they pump hands)
14. TD: I ain't no nigger. I'm a blackman.
15. L: You're a nigger
16. Major: You are
17. L: OK, so em ...
18. TD: There's a difference between a nigger and a blackman.
19. L: Alright sorry, So em...
20. Major: He's Lewis
21. L: Lewis, how are you?
22. Lewis: I'm cool
23. L: Right can you tell me about this, your music. What kind of music do you play?
24. Lewis: Yeah, we play R&B with some African grooves, you know, mixed with reggae, ragga and things like that.
25. Major: It's a kind of fusion where you have hip-hop, ragga, reggae, you know, and what we're ???? is to bring the African thing into the hip-hop thing. Well the video you just saw now, Pretty Womman' is a track from the album 'Answer my prayer' And very soon you'll be having the video of 'Answer my prayer'.
26. TD: Alright
27. Major: And also you'll be having the video of 'Colo, dem don colo'
28. TD: I know that tune! I know that tune!
29. L: Alright, so how many videos do you have right now?

30. Major: Right now we have ????
31. L: Ok, but how many do you have on air?
32. Major: Just 'Pretty Woman' on air
33. TD: Oh men,, Johnny man, you as an artiste, you know on a solo tip right now, that's
34. Major: Yeah, yeah
35. TD: Talking about you, I know you guys are like a ????. I've heard your work reggae and all. You strike me, you know, ...
36. Major: Oh, are you ...
37. TD: You kind of sound like a mixture of Shaba Ranks and Shaggy. How did you come up with this?
38. Major: Well, Shaba Ranks, Shaggy, they're doing their own thing. But Johnny Maja, I'm doing ma own thing.
39. TD: You irie man
40. Major: Yeh man.
41. L: Alright, alright we've got a phone call
42. TD: Yeah, Whatsup caller? What's your name? Hellooo
43. Caller: Hello
44. TD: Eh, hello. Whatsup caller, what's your name?
45. Caller: My name is Abubakar
46. TD: Abubakar, where are you calling from?
47. Caller: Abuja
48. TD: Eh, how's Abuja? Is Abuja groovy?
49. Caller: Yes.

50. TD: You got me Topsy Dogg with L up in this with Lewis and Major. What you got to say (2) Hello. What you got to say to Lewis and Major?

Phone cuts off.

51. L: Alright, we lost him

52. TD: Oh menbye.

53. L: Thanks. Anyway, you were saying, what were you saying?

54. TD: Yeah, yeah, yeah. You do your own thing, they do their own stuff, but definitely they must be your idolsyou sound like them.

55. Major: Yeah, yeah, I do like Shaba, I do like Shaggy, B-Man and the rest of them (sarcastic)

56. TD: Hey, watch what you're saying

57. Major: Alright, alright the thing there is that Shaba is Shaba, Shaggy is Shaggy and Johnny Major is Johnny Major.

58. Lewis: Johnny is Johnny

59. Major: And er, very soon you'll get to hear more of JM. You'll get to see more of JM.

60. TD: May be you should take off this thing (pulls at his head scarf).

61. Major: No, no.

62. TD: What you got to hide? What you got to hide?

63. L: OK, alright. Come on Topsy Dogg. Em, how did you start?

64. Major: We've been around for a long time. We had our first demo, whatever, master tape

65. TD: Oh Johnny, I think we've got a caller, let me cut you guys. Hello caller

66. Major: Alright go on.

67. TD: Yo caller

68. L: Hello

69. TD: You ain't got all the time in the world

TRANSCRIPT - C (Downloaded from <http://www.apacheindian.co.uk/artists/apache/>)

ARRANGED MARRIAGE

The time has come mon fe Apache
Fe find one gal and to get marry
But listen when me talk tell everybody
Me wan me arranged marriage from me mum and daddy

Chorus

**Me wan gal from Jullunder City
Me wan gal say a soorni curi
Me wan gal mon to look after me
Me wan gal that say she love me**

Now nuff of them a come a mon from all over
And who find them a no the buchular
Me say that a the man we call the match-maker
Fe him job a to find the right partner
Him have fe trod go a east and trod go a west
And the north and the south fe find which gal best
But no lie say me lie me have fe confess
The Don Raja me want a princess

Chorus

**Me wan gal fe me Don Rani
Me wan gal dress up in a sari
Me wan gal say soorni logthi
Me wan gal sweet like jelebee**

Now nuff of them a sweet and some a ugly
And some of them a marga mean she puthlee
And some a mampee that a mortee curi
And some too English talk no Punjabi
Say the gal me like have the right figure
In she eyes have the surma
Wear the chunee kurtha pyjama
And talk the Indian with the patwa
Ca the time has come a mon fe the Indian
Fe find the right gal say a pretty woman
But listen when me talk tell each and everyone
Say me arranged marriage are the tradition

Chorus

Me wan gal fe me arranged marriage
Me wan gal say me can manage
Me wan gal from over India
Me wan gal take her fe me lover
Say the engagement that are the Kurmi
Where me have fe mek sure say me is satisfy
Two family them a meet is called the Milni
Pure sugun where them bring mon fe Apache
Then you have fe me wife mon called the bortee
And me have fe tell she about Apache
Me no mind what you do from you respect me
And after the roti bring me the sensi

Chorus

Me wan gal respect Apache
Me wan gal go bring me sensi
Me wan gal o meri serva curee
Me wan gal respect me mum and daddy
The doli are the time everyone start cry
Ca the wife she a leave and she have fe wave bye
Go to the in-laws called the sorea

To start a new life in a next somewhere
So next time you a pass and see Apache
Just say buthai to congratulate me
But if me yard you a pass and you want greet me
Bring the ludoo the beson and the burfee

Chorus

Me wan gal from Jullunder City
Me wan gal say a soorni curi
Me wan gal that say she love me
Me wan gal sweet like jelebee
Now me done get marry say me start to worry
Me have fe tell you something mon would you help me
About me arrange marriage me have a problem
When is the right time to tell me gal friend!
Beca the time has come mon fe Apache
Fe find one gal and to get marry
But listen ragamuffin tell everybody
Me want me arrange marriage from me mum and daddy

Chorus

Me wan gal fe me Don Rani
Me wan gal dress up in a sari
Me wan gal say soorni logthi
Me wan gal sweet like jelebee
Me wan gal from Jullunder City
Me wan gal say a soorni curi
Me wan gal mon to look after me
Me wan gal to mek me roti

Lyrics Written and Performed by Apache Indian
Produced by Simon Duggal and Diamond Duggal
MCA Music Publishing, A division of MCA Inc. (ASCAP)
Released by Island Records 1992

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