UNDERSTANDING THE POST-COLONIAL WORLD
THEORY AND METHOD

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Edited by
Neera Chandhoke

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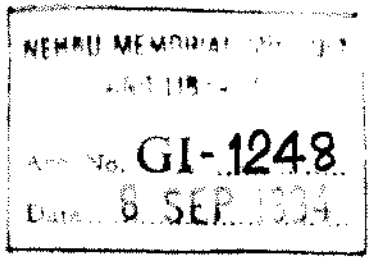

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FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to say a few words about this book while placing it before the scholarly community.

Sometime ago, in November 1993, Dr. Neera Chandhoke, who had earlier taken leave from the Department of Political Science, University of Delhi, to accept a Fellowship with the Centre for Contemporary Studies of the Nehru Museum, organised a Conference with the objective of exploring how post-colonial societies could be advantageously studied. This Conference was jointly organised by the Nehru Museum and the DSA Programme in Politics of Developing Countries, Department of Political Science, University of Delhi.

The Conference stimulated very substantial interest amongst those who participated in its deliberations. We, therefore, encouraged Dr. Chandhoke to edit the papers presented on the occasion for publication as a book.

I am hopeful that this publication entitled *Understanding the Post-Colonial World: Theory And Method* will generate debate and discussion among scholars interested in questions of theory as well as empirical exploration. This is all the more so because we live in an era when existing systems of discourse seem to be inadequate to the purpose of understanding and transforming societies.

Ravinder Kumar

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Introduction

THEORY, METHOD AND UNDERSTANDING THE POST-COLONIAL WORLD*

Neera Chandhoke

A crisis develops in the social sciences when its practitioners become apprehensive that existing epistemologies and modes of cognition are no longer capable of perceiving or grasping the complexity of social phenomena — in other words when realisation dawns that a particular way of comprehending the world is inadequate or even faulty. This may be due to the fact that the object of theoretical investigation is seen to have changed, or that the particular mode of inquiry is flawed in its inner logic and structuration. The theorist realising that the concepts hitherto available for understanding the world are no longer capable of doing so, seeks either to restructure conceptual hierarchies, or to incorporate another theoretical tradition which seems to be more promising. That particular social theories have been marked by shifts, switches and ruptures is not surprising, given the fact that modes of knowledge are being constantly redefined and restructured in response to such developments. Such self-reflection, it has been generally agreed, leads to the progress of knowledge itself, because in the process of reflection an

* I wish to express my deep gratitude to Prof. Ravinder Kumar for his comments on the first section of this editorial.

alteration takes place in the way that the object was originally conceptualised. Given also the fact that social sciences are characterised by competing frames of knowledge systems, switches or the appropriation of one tradition by another have been possible. Indeed, even when one tradition of knowledge acquires hegemony, others exist as alternatives on the horizon.

However, the crisis that characterises the world of social science in the current intellectual moment is qualitatively different. Hitherto, whatever the disenchantment with a particular discourse, scholars have been confident in the ability of systems of knowledge to grasp the complexity of social phenomena. This confidence has been shared across perspectives by all schools of thought. But recent theoretical events have challenged the very manner in which knowledge formation takes place in the social sciences. The modernist notion of science — a notion which is based on the natural sciences as method generating knowledge; its privileged medium of reason; its enunciation as theory; and the philosophical foundations, languages and texts of these theoretical formulations — has been at the centre of a stormy debate. The debate is taking place between those who argue for a scientific grounding for theory and those who reject all efforts to provide foundational knowledge which can unify the social science project. The core of this debate is around the issues that are of perennial importance to the philosophy of sciences — namely, how do we go about producing knowledge, who is involved in this production and what kind of knowledge is being produced. But, whereas such debates and contentions have been a part of the philosophy of science, the question that plagues analysts today is that of what constitutes knowledge. In its extreme and provocative form, in the assertions of the French post-structuralists, for instance, the issue is posed thus — given the fact that social science has been unable to live up to its claims, is knowledge as an over-arching system of thought at all possible or even desirable? Agnes Heller in a work titled *Can Modernity Survive* speaks of this state of profound doubt and conceptual disorder:

> Social science has promised certitude and self- knowledge as the result of a new, rationalist quest for meaning. This promise has not been kept. Where there was certainty, there was neither meaning nor self-knowledge; where there was meaning and self-knowledge, there was not certainty (1990; p.40).

The contemporary crisis in social sciences, as Jameson (1989); and Eagleton (1985) have pointed out, is one of the crisis of representation or rather a series of crises of representations, "in which older modes of defining, appropriating and recomposing the objects of artistic, philosophical, literary and social scientific languages are no longer credible and in which one common aspect is the dissolution of the very boundary between the language and the object" (Boyne and Rattansi; 1990, p. 12). The critiques of such modes of knowing come from many sources, indeed many of them are from within the modernist tradition itself particularly from debates within the philosophy of science, hermeneutics and criticism of positivism; they also come from more recent developments such as post-structuralism and deconstruction. These converge in what has come to be known as post-modernism.

II

Post-modernism is a theoretical condition which is essentially plural and diverse and which does not readily yield to simple description or placement within a category — indeed post-modernists would resist being reduced to a simple anything or be framed within a category. But if one were to attempt to characterise this condition it can be depicted as an attitude which is sceptical towards the notion of *fixation*. This is an attitude which goes back to Nietzsche, who argued that no system of thought can fix a world which is in the process of becoming. Fixation is regarded as an attribute of a modernist social science project which seeks to analyse human history in terms of basic laws and tendencies such as historical materialism; which seeks to depict the human condition in terms of essences and categories such as exploitation and class; and which seeks to predict the direction of societies

towards a predefined end. Such social theory, it is considered, in its attempt to pin down, to fix, the human condition has engaged not only in a process of reductionism but created these categories of knowledge through processes of exclusion and marginalisation of that phenomenon which does not fit into its schemes.

Post-modernity is a code word for all those practices which mark a break with modernity, whether as a revolt against the international style in architecture, or in aesthetic representations, or literary forms. Its most significant challenge has been in the challenge it has posed to modern science and it is this dimension of post-modernism that I wish to discuss, since the confrontation with modern science is at the heart of a wider dispute about the premises, values, aims, priorities and achievements of modernity. The criticism of modern science is on two grounds: firstly, as a mode of knowledge promising certifiability and certainty it has given us rules of thought which have led to unwarranted and misplaced confidence in the act of knowing. Secondly, the promises of modern science have been disproved, indeed condemned, by history. It has not only failed to live up to its promises but is largely responsible for the tragedies of the human condition, from the Holocaust, to the failures of developmental projects, to the horrors of nuclear wars.

Post-modernists make a historical claim in a very specific sense. One version proclaims that we are seeing the end of the modern project and thus of the historical era of modernity. The other versions do not make quite this claim but they do interrogate the assumptions and modes of knowing which marked the modern experience and argue that these need substantial modification, even rejection. Aronowitz argues that, "most post-modernist discourse is directed towards the deconstruction of the myths of *modernism* while leaving *modernity* as the best context within which its eclectic and diverse activities may flourish" (1992:p. 253). Both versions launch an attack on the modern concept of science, both revolt against the rule-bound methods of intellectual inquiry and against the foundations of such rules.

The critique holds that modern science based as it is on methods that were adopted in the natural sciences, is deeply embroiled in the ethos of the Enlightenment. The attack upon social sciences and their epistemological categories is at the core of the attack on the Enlightenment ethos itself. This ethos believed that, (a) the social world is independent of the processes of thought, and that (b) it is lawful, regulated and ordered. These two facts among others make the social world knowable. However the process of knowing is not a simple and straightforward one since these laws are not discernible to the senses. It is the task of science to penetrate superficial layers of symbols and meanings using the medium of reason so that discovery of the real world is possible. The modernist project of social sciences is, in part, a search for complex and self-reflexive tools of cognition. The process of inquiry is a rule-bound one where theoretical foundations, concepts and methods, are based upon conventions accepted by a community of knowledge. To modern philosophers there is a rule-governed relationship between truth and reflection of that reality, and these rules have to be constantly reconstituted as the social world changes or if these modes are found to be inadequate. The rigour and the validity of a particular method can be evaluated by its ability to comprehend the social universe in as exact a manner as possible, and in the process of understanding predicting the likely, possible and desirable direction of social change. Contestation among various modes has been built around this ability and the capacity of a particular mode of knowing to comprehend this reality in as exact a manner as possible.

The post-modernists hold that modern science is based on a false perception of the universe; of human history and human nature. Sceptics such as Lyotard argue that the unity which modern science imparts to the world is an artifact (1984). The world is fragmented and disordered and history proceeds in a random fashion, subject to the contingent and the undecided. Such contingency makes the human experience undecipherable, how can one make sense of a world which is marked by "undecidables, the limits of precise control, conflicts characterised by incomplete

information, 'fracta', catastrophes, and pragmatic paradoxes" (Lyotard: 1984, p. 60). Modern science which integrates and relates parts to each other to create patterns, it is considered is mechanical and an imposition upon the real world. In the attempt to find regularities and in the effort to predict, the irregular, the unexplainable, the differential, and the spontaneous are sacrificed. The aspirations to accumulate knowledge makes the project of modern science at best optimistic and at worst, totalising and reductionist.

The inability to accumulate knowledge is highlighted by the dismissal by the post-modernists of the entire notion of a reality "out there" whose laws are waiting to be discovered. The distinction between the object and the observer, it is held, is pure illusion. The distinction is based upon a double fiction, that the object of theoretical investigation is independent of the observer and that the process of observation is untainted by the values and the subject position of the observer. On the contrary, reality is what is constructed by the observer — "We are acutely aware that observer and what they observe construct one another, that political developments are ambiguous entities that mean what concerned observers construct them to mean; and that the roles and self concepts of the observer themselves are also constructions, created at least in part by their interpreted observations" (Edelman: 1988, pp. 1-2). Modern science has assumed that the process of observation and that of interpretation were temporally and procedurally different, post-modern critiques assert that the process of observation is simultaneously that of interpretation - what we see, what sense we make of it, and what we prioritise are not apart.

The claim of science that it can make sense of an object external to it is thus revealed as impossible. Such claims are according to Derrida (1976) logocentric, they assert validity by reference to an outside world but they are in actuality self referential and circular. Once the distinction between the object of knowledge and the knower is dismissed as pure linguistic practice — and some provocative statements deny the existence of reality altogether — attention shifts to languages and intersubjective communication of the

community through which such constructions take place. What an observer wishes to observe, how the process of observation is constituted, what sense is made of the knowledge generated therein, what are the criteria against which these knowledge claims are adjudicated are dictated by how the knower is himself constituted. This constitution is partly carried out by the intellectual tradition within which the theorist is placed, but it is also a result of the cultural location, the class, gender and national placement of the practitioner. Each interpretation is an attempt to pursue an agenda of power.

Such a view, it can be pointed out, is not new. For one, modernity and the modes of cognition it generated have been constantly questioned from within the experience. Marxism as a system of knowledge, for instance, has challenged the notion of a world out there which is independent of the process of knowledge; and has also challenged the very idea of a value free method. Marx brought back science which to the empiricist social scientist is seen as being outside society into society, as part of the way a society legitimises certain ways of conceptualising itself and thus subjected to the same constraints as society itself. We have to recollect how Marx, in his critique of classical political economy, could reveal the problems and inconsistencies of this method since he *located* the practitioners in the emerging system of capitalism and as constituted by this system. Marx while claiming the status of science for his method of knowledge, and while believing that there is a real world whose nature can be comprehended through this science, also taught us that how we see this world is an integral part of what we want to do about it. The laws of history can be changed through the production of knowledge, and the primary function of radical social science is to provide knowledge which can be related to a political project.

Secondly, modernity in contrast to the way it is being projected by much of the literature on post-modernity has been a dual experience, even a bifurcated one. Modernity has been composed of many movements which were ambiguous, even contradictory. Rather than being permeated

by the Enlightenment ethos of certainty and certifiability which Heller has decried, much of this condition was concerned with scepticism and doubts about the possibility of final or ultimate knowledge. As a cultural movement, modernism was suspicious of certitude, even in the realm of natural science.

Despite the heroic examples of Newton, Einstein and others and present attempts to construct grand unified theories that link together mathematical and material phenomena in the natural world, grand holistic explanations are the exception, not the rule, in the scientific tradition (Scott: 1990).

As a bifurcated experience, modernity was marked by self critiques and the consequent revelation of flaws in self representations. This dualism is mirrored in the debates on method. If on the one hand positivism bred perspectives that were independent of cultural and historical contexts and which dealt with social life in abstraction, critiques of positivism have been a regular feature of contestations in the philosophy of science. The notion of a verifiable, falsifiable body of truths based on the separation of fact and value was challenged repeatedly. Empiricism has become a pejorative term for very many social scientists who pointed out that the methods applicable to the physical world cannot be applied to social phenomena.

These debates in the philosophy of science were paralleled by the struggles over the meanings of modernity. If Liberalism could celebrate the fact that modernity allows individual subjectivity to flower in the absence of traditional restrictions, Marxism could critique the institutions and sensibilities of modernity such as the "market", social structures, and "alienation", as constraints upon the capacity of the individual to realise himself. Marxism is a child of modernity inasmuch as it believes in the fact that the individual has an essential human nature and that history is governed by laws, but it emerged as a powerful critique of the assumptions of modernity and that of the modern experience. The alternative epistemology it offered forced social science to rethink the process of the production of knowledge and the positioning

of the theorist. One thinks of the critiques Marx offered of Hegel and of the classical political economists to realise the power of these alternative ways of conceptualising the world. Liberalism was constantly beset by doubts internal to the project itself, doubts which continuously renegotiated the presuppositions of liberal theory. If the earlier classicists celebrated the power of human rationality, Weber advanced a powerful critique of the iron cages of instrumental rationality as exemplified in the bureaucracy. These critiques are powerful not only in the fact that they propose alternative ways of thinking, but that they forced the reexamination of accepted ways of knowledge.

Despite these contestations, modern philosophers were in agreement on the need for science as knowledge, for rigorous rule-bound methods to guide inquiry to prevent subjective formulations, and they were committed to the idea of criteria against which knowledge could be evaluated. Arbitrary knowledge was ruled out by the presence of such rules and guidelines that governed the process of the production of knowledge. Post-modernists dismiss modern science because they deny that there can be any foundationally grounded thought, they call into question the use of rules of thought to achieve statements of universal validity since the construction of rules is itself an arbitrary act and they renounce the need for criteria on the same ground.

III

Scepticism, hesitations and doubts are the *leit motifs* of post-modernism, but it is exactly these qualities that are problematic in the epistemological and above all in the political sense. Epistemologically post-modernism is destructive, politically it is defeatist and paralysing. The claims of modern social science to be precise and exact, to predict and to guide can be questioned as they have been questioned repeatedly within the canons laid down by modernity. But knowledge formation has taken place within a rule bound frame, because it was understood that without any kind of rules which impose rigour, knowledge degenerates

into arbitrariness. Method as a set of rules ensured procedural correctness and therefore precision in the process of inquiry.

Post-modernists bringing scepticism to knowledge and to the processes by which knowledge is produced, reject the very notion of method. They prefer to use the term strategy to signify the process by which dominant meanings can be subverted. This subversion or contestation takes place through the restoration of the margins to the text, the focus on the uncommon and the unique and through the effort to bring vast ranges of the hitherto untheorised under consideration. Post-modernists renounce the possibility of creating new forms of knowledge in the sense of modern science. If any method is adopted, it is that of deconstruction of accepted texts so that the ambiguities, the hesitations, the silences and the marginalisations can be discovered.

Deconstruction holds that a text — whether it be a theoretical formulation; the methods that have guided such formulation, or the real world — can be read in a number of ways and none of them is final. A text is open to multiple and infinite readings none of which is privileged because every reading is an interpretation. *In fact the text does not construct an interpretation, interpretations construct a text.* This of course is a notion that makes the project of post-modernity itself problematic, because then there is no reason why this form of reading should be considered valid. The other implications are more disturbing because deconstruction leads to methodological relativism. If the claim of post-modernists is that every reading prioritises something at the expense of other readings which may be equally valid, if every reading is a misreading (Norris: 1988, p. 129), then we are caught up in a never ending stream of doubt and cynicism. And if every reading is as good as every other then we have no method of adjudicating between interpretations. Relativism is unsettling because it leaves us without a reassurance that some interpretations are better than the others, alternatively, it leaves us with the feeling that all interpretations are arbitrary. It is problematic because all knowledge is seen as tentative. But more importantly, relativism is morally and politically dangerous.

Morally every representation of the world is seen as being as good as every other because each must be examined on its own terms and not against an external criterion. Since each mode of praxis, where a particular interpretation leads to practice and practice in turn informs theory and interpretation, has its own logical follow-on, we in contemporary India are caught in a situation where it can be asserted, indeed it is so being asserted that a communalised Hindu India is as acceptable as a secular democratic India. But the votaries of *Hindutva* are not asserting only this, they assert that a Hindu India is *better* than one based on western alienated notion of secularism. The problems of deconstruction are that it fails to see how the balance of power facilitates such a formulation. The granting of equality to every reading ignores the relations of power and domination which give a particular interpretation clout at a particular historical moment, it ignores how a particular reading is prioritised by the political situation.

To shift the argument slightly, even if the text of communalism is deconstructed, to explain its cultural origins and placements, even if it reveals its biases and exclusions, its silences and its oppressions to reveal its arbitrary and tyrannical nature, there is little it can do to replace or suppress it, because deconstructionists by their own admission do not construct, they merely rework the text within its own boundaries. If one text cannot be privileged over another simply because it is based upon sound foundations, because it is ethically and morally right and because it is just a better way of organising the world, then any kind of political action which believes in the authenticity of a text is impossible. Deconstruction tells us everything about the text except its wider significance. And if this is so then we cannot politically engage with it.

Post-modernists assert that it is the kind of political engagement that has stemmed out of confident forms of knowing that has prompted their challenge. It is certainty not doubts that have led to totalitarianism, or which have led to human tragedies such as the Holocaust or the Gulag. Unfortunately in their eagerness to demolish dogma, in their

rejection of accepted answers they are not even asking the original questions which received these answers, nor are they examining the political trajectories of their own positions. The grant of equality to all narratives has uncomfortable implications, one such implication has been pointed out, but others follow. The mid twentieth century is marked by many events but since the nineteen-sixties one event can be considered to be momentous. This is the period when the marginalised have found a voice, not that these voices were not articulated earlier but the social explosions since the 1960s ensured that these voices were heard. Can these voices which speak from a particular standpoint be as valid as that of voices speaking from a different standpoint? Can the voice of feminists or that of the dalits in India be equal to the privileged male voice or the upper caste articulations? It would be a grant of equality to incommensurable phenomena.

There is a related argument which makes the post-modernist project problematic. The demise of grand theory as a presentation of the world in terms of a complex of causes and consequences, at a time when the marginalised have found a voice is suspect. The hearing of these voices as a restoration of the margins is important, but it still does not allow us to understand the causes as to why these voices have been stilled in the past or what impact they will make in the future. In the absence of grand theory we cannot locate either these voices or where they will stand after being heard. Feminists are rightly ambiguous about post-modernism, if they hail the fact that the predominantly male narrative is no longer privileged, they cannot sympathise with a view which will not grant their narrative any special hearing or that will ensure that something can be done about it. Even if we are sceptical about grand theory as being too ambitious, as enclosing diverse phenomena within clear cut categories and thereby divesting them of their complexity, middle range theory which focuses on a particular phenomenon and yet places it within a wider perspective, gives us an insight into the interrelatedness of such phenomenon. In the absence of such placement, locality specific studies are liable to be what in modern social science is known as empiricism, and subject to all the flaws of empiricism.

IV

The grant of equality to all interpretations is close to classical pluralism but without the commitment of pluralism or of its parent ideology liberalism. Indeed it is unable to make a political commitment. Social sciences have believed in knowledge as intervention. Perspectives such as liberalism have been permeated by a confidence that in uncovering certain truths about human nature, society and history, it was contributing to a better world. A social science project, it has been believed, which privileges universal reason would abolish superstition, prejudices and blind faith and lead societies to progress. Liberalism is a humanitarian perspective which has continuously sought the ways to help it to build conditions within which the individual can realise his potential. Marxism has always distinguished itself from other perspectives on the ground that the test of a theory is practice and theory must act as a guide to action. But even those variants of social science which do not speak of revolution have been moved by a desire to set a normative pattern for human interaction, both social and political. Thus intellectual quests were motivated by a desire and a commitment to better human nature and society and fashion a social order that would be equitable and just. Social science as intervention has been the rationale of committed practitioners of theory. This intervention has been possible because every narrative is partially a response to its own intellectual tradition and partly a response to events in the social world. Whereas intellectual perspectives give us an insight into the social world, these perspectives are also altered by the events which have an independent existence. It is this tension in theory which has enabled theory to be in a constant process of redefinition and renegotiation, as also allowed it to be responsive and open ended. Secondly, the most desirable forms of knowledge have been ones that flow from the coexistence of certitude and scepticism. Whereas the latter has mediated the former, the hope has been that better and not the final forms of knowledge are possible in the search for certitude.

The retreat from grand and middle level theory signifies the retreat from politics as a transformative venture — the ephemerality of the human condition defies any long term project or plans. If meaningful knowledge in terms of a grasp over the dynamics of history is impossible then purposeful practices are ruled out. Grand theory has aspired to portray the world in terms of causes and effects, it has been a critical project in an attempt to zero in on fundamentals which can provide a starting point for grappling with such reality. Contemporary theory presents the world as piecemeal and fragmented and thus cannot contextualise the phenomena. If there is no necessary essence to the human condition then the very idea that this essence needs realisation in a particular kind of society is also thrown into doubt. Emancipatory politics is rooted in the assurance that human beings possess an essence and the creation of a society where this can be realised is the object of politics. Politics assumes a core both to the human subject and to social structures, the transformation of which will provide the leverage for the transformation of society. Post-modern politics are enervating, they encourage the notion that the world is ephemeral, and thus effective action is prevented .

Post-modernism initially started off as an exploration of what had been left out, but instead of rearranging priorities, it has been caught up in exploring the ambiguities and the problems of the modernist project. Whereas such explorations are the essence of any theoretical venture it should be pre-requisite rather than the object of social science. In the absence of commitment to any large scale transformations at a time when capitalism has become more organised and able by virtue of its technology to commandeer far flung areas, at a time when it through the informational media is constituting the very structures of thinking, the retreat from a holistic understanding signifies a withdrawal from engagement. In the absence of such engagements, theory becomes self indulgent and self referential, an excessive focus on method both signifies and presages a retreat from politics. The Derridan notion of logocentrism can be applied more relevantly to this theory than to any other.

But, it is not as if post-modernism is apolitical, it is simply that it does not privilege any particular politics. In its more creative *avatar*, post-modernism gives us a *melange* of local narratives. However with no guide as to how these narratives can be brought together politics has been condemned to fragmentation and individuation. The notion of politics is purely individualistic and personal. An individual may rebel, equally an individual may not. All sorts of rebellion is allowed — even encouraged — at all sites, but there is no rebellion with a capital R. Heller and Feher capture this spirit thus:

> ... there are many and various things and patterns of life against which modern men and women should rebel, and post-modernism indeed allows for all sorts of rebellion. However, there is no single great target for collective and integrated rebellion. "Anything goes" can be read as follows: *you* may rebel against anything you want to rebel against but let me rebel against the particular thing I want to rebel against. Or, alternatively speaking, let me not rebel against anything at all because I feel myself to be completely at ease (1988: p. 139).

The notion of politics has both expanded as well as contracted. Whereas the expansion of the notion allows resistance at every level, the contraction is of the notion of politics as organised activity. How can we explain this expansion as well as a contraction of politics. The presence of all kinds of rebellion, alternatively of no rebellion, at all can be read as a retreat to the liberal insistence on the sanctity of the private domain and the right of the individual to choose his own politics. Indeed the most visible aspect of post-modernism is retreat to the individualised world of personal feelings and sensitivity. It is not that it is blind to the issues of oppression and human suffering, but simply that this oppression and suffering is located in the experience of the victim as an individual and has nothing to do with his location in the social structure or his empathy with other individuals similarly placed. The theme of personal emancipation from oppression through awareness raising is one of the major planks of the agenda. The notion that

personal freedom should not be restricted is another plank to enhance the range of autonomy of groups. This obviously gives rise to an insistence that struggles should be left alone and not merged under a master discourse such as class.

Post-modernism signifies a retreat to a personal world of refuge from harshness and an erosion of confidence in public life. What has taken place is a disintegration of the public sphere and a privatisation of social life. Privacy is the insulation of ourselves from the pain of others. As the domain of politics is seen as bereft of any potential or promise the retreat into the personal is the only recourse, it is the politics of helplessness, of despondency fuelled by the renunciation of any theory of progress or of amelioration. The two feed upon each other, the politics of the public arena forcing withdrawal and the withdrawal fuelling further shrinkage of this arena and leaving it open to dominant class practices.

The contraction of the public arena has been one of the problems which has followed the notion of the personal being political. Liberal theory while recognising the right of the individual to privacy has emphasised the need for a public arena of common concerns for two reasons. Firstly, it was recognised that in the era of modernity the individual has been stripped of traditional resources and the protection which community life provided in earlier times. The public arena came up as a buffer between the individual and the all powerful state as in the formulations of De Tocqueville for instance. The individual found in this arena marked by publicity and freedom of opinion protection against the state. Secondly the public arena as an area of common concerns was the space where a public discourse on the limits of state power could be forged. It signified a mature community able to regulate itself socially and politically. In fact liberal theory has been constantly marked by a tension between the notion of the private and the public, because it was anxious to build a public sphere alongside privileging privacy. In Marxism no such dichotomy between the private and the public is made, the private is constituted by the public, here the public arena was the domain of politics

where contestation took place between the dominant and subaltern practices. The public arena was a normative concept in both theories where the particular could be mediated by the universal. The denial of this space where commonality can be forged has meant that attention is focused on the particular and the subjective. This implies in turn that, one, society has no space where it can struggle with the macro policies of the state. Secondly the focus on the particular and the subjective and the insistence that any grand project is totalitarian means that we are left with no mediations between different histories and cultures, between one subjectivity and another. And this is at a time when the conservative forces are unleashing their own notions of homogeneity and difference. In effect the expansion of politics has simultaneously led to its contraction.

That the political world needs to be engaged with is undeniable, that capitalism is becoming even more holistic and totalising, seeking to stamp its own image on societies which have till now resisted it is obvious. The hegemony of capitalism, of patriarchy, of racial discrimination, of religious fundamentalism still functions as a totalising ideology in need of opposition and critical theory. The avoidance of totalising theory is also an avoidance of political action and agendas, since it avoids practical alternatives. Post-modern politics are reactionary, "in its attempts to repress our sense of other possibilities, of different ways of living, of a change that goes beyond piecemeal modification, the aspiration, shared not simply by Marx and his followers, but by Fourier and other Utopian socialists, to an emancipated society. A social theory that denies that there are other possible social worlds thereby gives up any pretension to be critical" (Callinicos: 1990, pp. 114-5).

A related point is that the world in this mode of theory is removed from praxis and the notion of the human agency. The manner in which the notion of human capacity has been constructed has come under a great deal of debate but in the process the human being has been stripped of any vestige of an essential essence which can be realised in appropriate conditions. The entire idea of social actors who have the

capacity to know what they want, who have the capacity to act on this despite odds, who have spoken back to history despite the tortures and the disciplines the human body has been subjected to, has disappeared from the stage of history, thanks to Foucalt. Surely a radical critique of the way in which the individual has been shaped by, has been punished by the processes of history has to be accompanied by a vision of the society where individual and social interaction can realise the potential of humanity, where the project is of the transformation of the social conditions within which the individual lives and works can be realised. If there is no essential essence of the human condition then the question of the desired society does not arise. Theory is stripped of its normative considerations. Foucault who is considered to be the most authentic spokesperson of the post-modern condition tells us a great deal about the kind of individual society needs, he cannot tell us about the kind of society an individual needs. Theory as social intervention lapses into despondency because if the Foucaultian subject cannot talk back to history, then he can never alter the conditions which offer him nothing except eternal despair.

V

Despite these misgivings there is no denying the fact that post-modernism has raised issues of crucial importance for social science and posed philosophical questions which are pertinent to our times. The institutionalisation of the social sciences in the universities and the privileging of certain disciplines as guides for the future, the legitimations of political practices by reference to theories often stripped of their complexities has led in practice to more certitude than constant vigilance. The return of scepticism in a big way to the processes of the production of knowledge, the emphasis on the social conditions within which knowledge formation and dissemination takes place, I think has been good for us. One can assault post-modernism for being politically pessimistic and conservative, one can assail it as pretentious because it poses as new, questions which are as old as social science itself, but one cannot avoid the fact that these

questions need to be asked, as they have needed to be asked in every age when social science becomes excessively confident and stops interrogating its foundations, contexts and texts. Post-modernism is subversive and ironic in its attempts to demolish existing gods, and this "tendency towards exaggeration itself" as Wagner points out, "has its own intellectual context and, at least in part, should be appreciated by social theorists. The theoretical claim of post-modernity namely should largely be seen as a response to reductionist and reified conceptions of the modern in conventional social science and social theory... there is a considerable significance, though often less in the exact terms of such works but rather in terms of a sensitising with regard to issues that are neglected or repressed in a social science that often was all too modern" (1992: p. 470).

The contemporary intellectual moment offers us the possibility of critically examining our own presuppositions, of exploring the margins and restoring to the centre stage of debate what has been marginalised and excluded in dominant discourse. It in other words offers us an opportunity to sensitise ourselves to issues often too neglected in conventional social science and it is in this spirit that we can accept this particular theoretical event. It is in precisely this spirit that the contributors to this volume have questioned accepted methods and theories.

VI

For the scholar of and in the post-colonial world, uneasiness with prevalent categories of knowledge is compounded by the fact that increasingly these categories are seen as the outcome of uncritically accepted "received knowledge" — knowledge which emerged in Europe as a part of that experience, and which was transmitted to the colonial world as an important component of the colonial legacy. Colonialism, it has long been recognised, is a mode of power not only because it exploits economically but because it sets the cognitive frames within which entire societies and peoples come to think of themselves. One has but to remember Fanon and Cabral, Mao and Gandhi and their critique of

colonialism as a mind set which distorts the psyche of the colonised. The people of the colonial world and for long after independence, come to comprehend themselves and their experiences in the same ways that the coloniser has handed down to them. Not only are entire traditions of indigenous thought and normative conventions set aside by this encounter, the very system of thought, the process by which a society comes to grips with itself in cultural, aesthetic, and political practices are distorted. The full import of this is still being worked out but it is increasingly being recognised that the extent is far wider than we can imagine. This has important political connotations, if the ways societies understand themselves are flawed because they are based on the experiences of people placed in different societies and cultures, the practices that flow from this understanding are equally flawed. The flawed nature of social theory has been evident in its inability to either understand or predict or explain the tragedies which have overtaken the people of the post-colonial world — hunger and starvation, communal holo-causts and ethnic tensions. In addition to the criticism of the way that categories of received knowledge have displaced indigenous modes and ruled out any possibility of creating new and independent ways of comprehension, there is now a systematic critique of modernity. In effect, from anti-Imperialist critiques of modernity and its systems of self representation, current theory in India has begun to interrogate the historical location of these knowledge systems in Europe and the implications they had for the self understanding of European as well as colonial societies.

This is the focus of Ravinder Kumar's paper. Kumar examines the setting within which modern forms of historiography emerged in Europe, "a crucial factor behind the development of modern historiography was the recognition of archival documentation as the authentic base for exploring the past. Such a narrative, so Ranke and others believed, would possess a rigour with which the physical sciences could explain the behaviour of matter and the character of natural phenomena". The claims of objectivity such as Acton made, Kumar points out, appear wholly unwarrantable

today. But history is not only a way of interpreting the past, the writing of history is placed within a specific discourse and therefore is penetrated by a vision of the good society and how it can be constructed — "In drawing upon social theory, therefore the historian is not only engaged in passively reconstructing the past of a society but involved in shaping the future". European historiography was therefore in the nature of a mirror held up before a community in order to give it a glimpse of its possible and likely future. This form of history born out of the European experience and meant as a project for the future of these societies was transplanted to the colonies. India with its different social structure and vision and radically different notions of time was sought to be understood and interpreted according to norms and contexts devised elsewhere. It is obvious that the tools of textual analysis proved unequal to the task of reconstructing the Indian past and yielded flawed history not only for the British civil servant turned historian who sought to understand in order to control, but also for the first few generations of Indian scholars. The divorce of tools of analysis from social reality led to an inadequate understanding of Indian society and alienation of the historian from the cultural traditions of the country.

Ravinder Kumar's paper is instructive because it helps us to understand that if the way in which we understand our past is faulty then not only does it lead to conceptual confusion, but our understanding of ourselves, our relation to nature and society, our notion of the good society is compromised. The paper in its subsequent argument delineates the forms of historiography that arose as alternatives to the colonial model, and focuses on contemporary debates that mark a vibrant field. But the period in which European historiography dominated the project of history writing was also the period in which a project for the construction of a new nation and new society was being formulated. This made the period historically significant and modes of knowledge became equally significant because they were the bases of the new society sought to be constructed.

One such understanding which was pivotal for self comprehension and our relationship with others, was that of nationalism. Javed Alam's paper traces the transfer of this understanding from Europe to India and the political situation in India which building on these understandings as well as a response to them created the idea of the nation. In Europe, the concept of the nation was fully formulated after the nation state had been fashioned, "The world of nations slowly forms itself before it is reflected upon and reduced to forms of knowledge. It is in the nature of such knowledge about social reality, that there is, relatively, a much greater correspondence between the world as it is and its conceptualisations". In India the whole idea of the nation was an "anticipatory projection". As a projection it has weak and tenuous links with ongoing historical processes. The Indian case was not only a matter of describing what exists, but what had to be constructed, but the project was informed by, and modelled on another experience. This led to "intellectual hesitations and epistemic uncertainties".

Such problems Alam suggests are a part of the transfer often of "a apriori nature, of knowledge from one society to another". The author is of course speaking from a temporal location where the project of the nation and of nationalism has been found wanting, and at a time when the fascist right is bent upon forcing its own version of nation and nationalism upon Indian society. He like many others disenchanted with the concept as popularly understood seeks to inquire into not only what were the influences which went into the construction, but more importantly seeks to recapture the alternatives which had emerged during the course of the debate on nationalism during the freedom movement.

Alam charts out the political compulsions, which led to the nationalists to declare that a nation exists and in fact has always existed in India. It was a language that served to express the aspirations and wants of a new society that was being born in the period. The language was in part borrowed, but it adapted itself to felt needs. The problem Alam points out is that it was not grounded in an intensive critique of either the concept or of its origins and so it came about that

a vocabulary was lifted from the European context and inscribed onto India's past without adequate self reflection.

The post-colonial world in the aftermath of independence engaged in a massive socio-political and economic restructuring. Though most of the societies declared allegiance to liberal democratic ideologies even if the end was declared to be the establishment of socialism, the full establishment of classical liberal institutions was, it was decided, neither desirable nor possible. State intervention in the economy and in social practices was a necessity, and the period was dominated, as my own paper argues, by the ideology of statism whether of the Keynesian variety or of the Soviet command economy model. The experience of the interventionist colonial state during the second world war had laid the infrastructure for this. The premises of classical liberalism that the autonomous individual associated into groups will be able to control his/her destiny was never given serious consideration. The reorganisation of societies ranged from Nehruvian Socialism in India and Ujaama in Tanzania to collectivisation in China, in every case the emphasis was on the control of social processes. In some societies individual liberties were constrained in the name of a grand collective project. Political discourse became limited and even critical theory accepted the need for guiding society in the direction of growth together with social equity, with often the former dominating the latter. Thus the discourse was that of modernism with emphasis on progress through technology and science.

Mohanty's paper speaks of the demise of the freedom discourse: the discourse which had adopted a holistic and comprehensive notion of freedom; a notion that was "a mutual engagement about fighting domination and seeking liberation and fulfilment in the anti-colonial struggle". This was abandoned by the spokespersons of the nationalist movements as they became integrated into the capitalist modernisation project with the West as their model.The implication of the argument is that modernisation became, as it is now, synonymous with authoritarian governments. The state given its mandate to guide social change is not

compelled to give any rationale for its actions as it has moved into areas traditionally thought of as private in Liberal theory.

The connotations of this movement and expansion of the state, for social theory have been highlighted in Upendra Baxi's paper. Baxi speaks of the noological state — a state which constructs the individual and shapes discourses, which provides the "very images of thought". This is the context within which the theory and the practitioner of theory are situated. If theory itself is shaped by images provided by the state, even that particular variant of theory which claims to interrogate social practices is inadequate unless it launches an enquiry into the modes of its own construction. Baxi is located in that philosophic tradition of thought which investigates the positioning of the practitioner and the purposes of social theory. What are the needs which theory meets when it seeks to grapple with reality? Who do we as "socially engaged theoretical labourers" talk to when we seek to criticise the social world? The author charts out the lapses of social theory in India, the gaps in its understanding, given the fact that it has not enquired into the most venal of social practices. He directs a devastating critique against social theory, "the role models accepted by academic activist labourers is different, their practices of engagement and postponement are, at the end of the day, directed to the production of reflective knowledge, critiques of power structures and alternative agenda for action for transformation". Yet these tasks have been left unfulfilled and critiques of power lack authenticity outside peer groups. We have failed to be vigilant about our alienated modes of production of theory and we thus occupy a space which both overlaps with socially transformative action and with power structures, making us complicitous with power itself.

The production of sanitised theory brings home the fact that we have a long way to go, "in archiving, fashioning and appropriating narratives of victimage and resistance as providing even minor looking pathways of escape from complicitous relation of social theory". Scientific silence concerning violence, concludes Baxi, is also violence. It is

the violence of night which suppresses all discourse. Echoes of the same criticism find expression in Mohanty's paper, much of the discourse is derivative and even that discourse that claims to provide alternatives to dominant models is but permitted dissidence which capitalism allows its critics while simultaneously shaping the discourse. Not only theory which is supportive of the establishment, but also theory that asserts its radicality is criticised by these authors as non reflective since it fails to examine its own foundations or biases, absences and lacunae.

It is not as if critical theory has not emerged in India as elsewhere to query the philosophic underpinnings of knowledge. Theory imbibed with the post-modernist ethos has looked into the construction of modernism:identified its flaws and affirmed that it can provide alternative modes of cognition, but what do these alternatives give us? The political implications of these alternative theories have been examined by Sarah Joseph in her paper on cultural approaches to the study of social phenomena. Joseph argues that the concept of culture which has become a prominent feature of political analysis both as an investigation of culture itself and as the context for political processes is problematic. She identifies two streams in this approach: the first is engaged in the search for the authentic culture of India in the period preceding alien rule. This "culturological" approach attempts to simultaneously construct an identity for society and to criticise alien imposed categories of knowledge. This is done by holding up the wisdom embodied in pristine indigenous cultural resources both as an alternative to imported concepts and as the authentic base for political understanding. The privileging of an authentic culture, asserts the author, overrides the traditional concerns of political analysis. This perspective in her opinion, conceptualises culture as a given timeless category; it excludes economic, political and social concerns and leads to cultural nationalism by laying down boundaries between the authentic and the alien even when the proponents proclaim the openness of such cultures. "Thus if the desired project is defined in exclusivist terms then the past also is

defined by the exclusion of sub-cultures termed alien and denied a history in society". In an argument that is parallel to that of Ravinder Kumar's, Sarah Joseph argues that the past is used to present a model for the present but the present can also uncritically be projected upon the past.

The second mode of cultural analysis interpreted by the author is one which sees culture as a terrain for domination and contestation. The attempt is to unearth the sub-texts: the exclusions and the marginalisations and privilege them in order to give a voice to what has been till now peripheralised. The politics of culture is a way of controlling meaning systems. The twin criteria Joseph uses in the evaluation of this trend is that of criticality and the kind of politics it generates. The interrogation of this form of analysis is the most interesting part of this paper. Both Baxi and Joseph engage with theory which presents itself as critical and show how the basic need for this theory is to examine its own presuppositions, who it speaks to and what it speaks of. It is an important reminder in the present context when much of theory has become polemical given to criticising others without adequate self-reflection of its own foundations.

This theoretical critique is complemented by the critique of accepted theories which has come to us from political activists. Political theorists have been long aware that the testing ground for theory is practice — that practices may start from theoretical formulations but then move on to expanding and subverting these formulations. Mohanty and Gail Omvedt focus on the shifts that have taken place in the domain of theory through political activity. Mohanty asserts that the freedom discourse which has been abandoned by the leaders in their preoccupation with capitalist modernisation has been taken up by the social movements in India and China. The ideals of the freedom movement have been carried on by these social actors, and in turn, this becomes a testing ground for the projects launched by the elites of these countries. At a time when the "force of the global trend now compels all political and intellectual perspectives to fit themselves into its well-defined parameters", it is these social movements that "keep the freedom discourse alive".

Mohanty's argument is underlaid by regret that the project of freedom which could move millions during the anti-colonial period could be forsaken by the very intellectual and political elites who charted it out in the first place, at the same time he is hopeful that the ideals have found a new social base and become more meaningful. It is an interesting sociological study of how social bases of discourses shift, confirming the validity of discourse itself, and confirming the shallow allegiances of those who articulated it in the first instance.

Omvedt's paper is in the same vein but she argues that categories which we use to understand the world such as class have undergone profound shifts in the hands of subaltern movements and this process has expanded their horizons and meanings. This is essential in the given conditions, indeed, she calls for an intellectual restructuring of analysis in order to explain the situation in India, "as tumultuous and unexpected forces of social change are calling into question the traditional categories used to understand society". The author argues that notions of class and exploitation have been enriched as a result of political expressions resulting from the experiential. Omvedt indicates in her presentation, the continuous redefinition of classifications of inquiry such as the oppressor and the oppressed by three social movements. The dalit movement has for instance articulated the notion of class with that of caste. The challenges to traditional class methodologies by the dalits was not the replacement of class with caste but a revised understanding of exploitation and revised conceptions of political practices. Shard Patil for instance could call for a new methodology of Marxism — Phule and Ambedkarism which would integrate class and caste in an indigenous form of historical materialism. It is an additive historical materialism, Omvedt points out, which adds caste to class, but it helps us to centre on the way in which specific modes of oppression articulate with class to constitute structures of domination — it is thus simply a more pertinent form of analysis. The women's movement has not only demanded that patriarchy be taken seriously but it has redefined

exploitation and brought under its critical gaze a whole set of issues and questions. It has insisted that exploitation does not only reside in paid wage labour but in the unpaid labour of women in the household. The movement that, however, Omvedt privileges is that of the farmers. The movement she holds, has reconstructed the category of exploitation as defined in Marxist discourse. The farmers' movement contends that exploitation is not only at the level of production but at the level of the market and the state and the low rewards it allots to the farmer. Class thus cannot be interpreted solely on the basis of the possession of private property and on the basis of surplus labour. The author focuses on a problem that is common to the post-colonial world, viz., the extraction of surplus from the peasantry. The claim is a contentious one as the debates generated on this position in India have demonstrated, but the discrimination accorded to the peasantry in these countries needs to be looked into more rigorously and these reconstructions of the classical modes of understanding and classification are a pointer in this direction.

Raghavendra Rao in the same manner interprets the way in which the traditionally understood relation between religion and politics has been extended by actual practices. The classical understanding and resultant declared state policy, has been heavily influenced by the Western notion of secularism. This has to be rethought in the light of Indian tradition and culture and Rao explicates the alternative models of the understanding of religion and politics found within the country. Though secularism is a desirable goal for all societies it has to be worked for from within rather than from imposed categories. The author extensively documents the changes brought about in the conceptualisation of the relationship between religion and politics by political actors which have a bearing upon the conceptualisation itself. It is an important comment upon the manner in which received theory impinges upon state policy and in turn how these policies can be subverted by actions in society. The argument is relevant for all post-colonial societies besieged as they are by problems of ethnic tensions, religious fundamentalism

and tensions. No ready-made solutions or recipes from other countries can serve the purpose of establishing a project where different communities can live together in harmony and mutual respect.

Emphasis on the kind of social theory that has dominated the field of social science since independence, emphasis on the wider concerns of social theory and the way it has been expanded by practice marks these papers. This is complemented by four papers which examine happenings in the field of political science and inquire into their political and intellectual implications. The first of these deals with the problem of perspectives towards the study of social phenomena. Chaube looks at the relevance of Marxism for the study of "third world", societies. Recent events have taught us that a fruitful dialogue can be initiated between the practitioners of Marxism and other perspectives in the field. But this, Chaube points out, must be done without the distortion of the categories of Marxian analysis - "The social scientists are of course free to use each others tools but they are not allowed to misuse them, that is to say, distort the meaning of the terms and concepts of others". In such dialogue the position of the participant has to be made explicit, upon this will depend the meaningfulness of dialogue. "If social sciences", asserts Chaube, "are to be located in a place better than the Tower of Babel... standardisation of meaning is extremely important". The paper makes an impassioned plea for the pertinence of Marxist categories of analysis while cautioning against the uncritical acceptance of this mode, one must be aware of the limitations of any mode of analysis keeping in mind that philosophies are the products of their specific historical periods.

Hargopal and Chandrasekhar examine the subdiscipline of public administration, this is a major need given the fact that public administration as a policy oriented subject is particularly prone to accommodation with the state and lacks criticality. The two authors give the subject a new slant because they relate it to, and place it within the nature of the state in India. The state they point out tracing its link with the colonial state, "has been one of the principal extractors

of surplus without any active participation in raising the productive forces". This it has been able to do largely by virtue of its monopoly over force. The centrality of the state in all spheres of life make the state apparatus which carries out the dictates of the state of tremendous importance, but equally an inquiry into this apparatus cannot be without reference to the state. But public administration has ignored the wider setting of this apparatus: "The study of the administrative systems of the Third World in general and India in particular, is governed by the western theoretical and methodological determinants. It is the structural - functional approach with a predominant equilibrium orientation that determined the nature of the studies. With the result the type of problems studied and the issues thrown up are more related to the administrative processes and not the larger questions". The two authors bring out the incapacity of conventional literature on public administration to deal with the administrative state in the historically specific conditions of the Third World. Focusing on the nature of the administrative apparatus, the authors point out that it is an offshoot of the colonial state and this has structured its nature. The Indian state in the course of civilizational development has acquired developmental functions, but the discharge of these functions is impaired by the nature of its bureaucracy. The inability of the state to perform the tasks it has laid down for itself has resulted in discontent among the people. The social movements that have erupted against the state has forced it to revert to its principal role of coercion and abandon the developmental impulse. Hargopal and Chandrasekhar make out a case for administrative studies to situate themselves in the wider concerns of political science and for political science to orient itself to the study of these apparatuses and make a move away from purely abstract theorising.

My own paper is focused on the shifts in state theory which has characterised much of Marxist literature on the political. Three moments of state theory are charted out and the shift, I consider, has been from an exclusive preoccupation with the state studied in abstraction of civil society, to that

of civil society itself. This in part is a reaction to intellectual exhaustion with an exclusive focus on the state, but it has been more importantly prompted by the numerous social movements that have come up in all parts of the world to challenge the state. In the post-colonial world these movements have queried the concept of development which in the immediate decades following independence has become a rationalising ideology for state action. While the shift to the concept of civil society is important because it answers many of the questions state centric theory was unable to do, and because it seeks to ground the state in the practices generated in the civil domain, an exclusive preoccupation with civil society fails to understand how this sphere itself is constructed and reproduced by the state. If state centric theory was faulty because it could not comprehend the processes outside the strict limits of the state, any theory of civil society which neglects the state is unable to understand the way in which these practices are influenced, indeed constituted, by the state. Much of the current debate takes civil society as the arena of freedom and rights without interrogating the nature of this domain itself, this debate, in addition posits civil society against the state, a stance which I consider is completely contrary to the norms of classical political theory. The paper concentrates upon the domain of civil society in order to explore the contradictions and the oppressions within this sphere.

No inquiry into the post-colonial world can be carried out without an analysis of Imperialism. Somehow the discourse of Imperialism seems to have disappeared from that of social science. Yet it has become more not less relevant in the contemporary period where the post-colonial world is being ordered into the policies fixed by the multilateral lending agencies. Achin Vanaik in his focus on the New Imperialism reveals the helplessness of the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America in this historical moment. Vanaik's paper is double edged. On the one hand he critiques the conventional methods which have dominated the field of International Relations, such as realism and neo-realism as inadequate and faulty — "That International Relations must be about

the internationalisation of domestic conflicts and about the domesticisation of international conflicts is something that Realists can hardly hope to cope with". On the other he reconstructs and restores Lenin's theory of Imperialism and shows its validity in the understanding of the global conjuncture. This Imperialism, he points out, is flexible in its modes of accumulation, it has "the capacity to behave in more and less imperial ways. It can ignore or woo. It can persuade and co-opt as well as threaten and coerce its targets. Indeed, its ability to exercise ideological hegemony has for some time at least been *qualitatively* advanced by the collapse of the Soviet Union and its deformed socialist project". Thus the relationship between the metropolitan bourgeois fractions and Third World bourgeois fractions will range from subordination to partnership. Vanaik's very comprehensive paper is a vital contribution to the understanding of the world situation and the presence and the lack of options for the post-colonial world.

The range of papers in this volume cover vast grounds of social theory — from the interrogation of received wisdom to the analysis of current trends in theory and its implications for practices. They are bound by a common concern that hitherto uncritically accepted modes of cognition have to be rethought and reworked if social theory has to retain relevance for the human condition. They are not marked by the extreme positions that are a characteristic of some strands of post-modernism, indeed arguments like that of Gail Omvedt criticise the shifts in social theory where everything is doubted. This is partly due to the fact, and this is the feeling common to all papers, that the project of social theory as we have come to know it has not been exhausted. Practices and experience has generated fresh ways of conceptualising the world as Ravinder Kumar points out. Partly it is the certainty that much needs to be done in our part of the world to ameliorate and transform the lives of individuals and collectivities, therefore guiding theory is necessary. What these arguments do confirm is that the project has to be rethought and reworked. We must begin to examine the state of our knowledge and the presuppositions of that knowledge.

We do not reject western theory but see its flaws clearly, as we see the problems of indigenous social sciences, and in the process of accepting relevant theory wherever it comes from we mediate it by constant references to our own experience. In the words of Rao the universal has to be mediated by the particular. This is the project and the challenge that overwhelms social scientists today.

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1

EXPLORING THE HISTORICAL CONJUNCTURE

Ravinder Kumar

The problems encountered in exploring Third World history can best be illuminated by referring to an experience I underwent sometime ago. In the autumn of 1984, I visited Canada, in response to an invitation from some scholarly bodies to give seminars on South Asian history. In the course of my stay in Ottawa, the capital city, I visited the National Gallery of Art. As I looked at the landscapes executed by Canadian artists in the 18th century, I was struck by a curious phenomenon. Here were distinguished artists, familiar with European traditions of visual representation, trying to capture an altogether different world. However, when they fixed their gaze on the Canadian scene what they perceived — and painted on the canvas — was a European rather than a Canadian landscape! With the passage of time, however, this aberration gave way to a more faithful portrayal of what was around them on their canvases. Indeed, as I traversed the Gallery of Art, it became obvious that it took Canadian artists about two generations to record "faithfully" the characteristics of the landscape that stood before their eyes.

The problems of visual perception that confronted early Canadian artists also illumine the dilemmas of historical writing in Third World societies. For it is important to

emphasise, at the very outset, that history is not a discipline which originated out of the evolving intellectual experience of such societies. Instead, history came to the Third World as part of the cultural baggage of imperialism. The discipline sought to explain the past of non-European societies through discourses which facilitated political control at the same time as they facilitated the appropriation of the material and cultural resources of such societies. It is necessary to emphasise this fundamental relationship between Third World history and imperialism because we shall have to deal with these issues later in this essay.

Before we dwell upon the character of history in the context of Third World, it is necessary to reflect a little upon the nature of the discipline and the circumstances which originated within Europe, in the first instance. Not surprisingly, humanist scholars in the West have speculated about past of their society since classical times. Indeed, we have seen in a work by Herodotus an exercise in contemporary history which fully meets the requirements of modern scholarship. Yet the discipline acquired a form recognisable as such to present-day scholars in the first half of the 19th century. Besides the crystallisation of a tradition of hermeneutics, a crucial factor behind the development of modern historiography was the recognition of archival documentation as the authentic basis of exploring the past. Such a narrative, so Ranke and others believed, would possess a rigour which was comparable to the rigour with which the physical sciences could explain the behaviour of matter and the character of natural phenomena. Perhaps the positivist vision which shaped the mind of the historian, at this juncture, can best be illustrated by Ranke's observation that he sought to construct the past as it actually was.[1] A similar sense of self-confidence was reflected in the communication which Lord Acton addressed to the contributors to the *Cambridge Modern History*. Staking a claim to a level of objectivity which appears wholly unwarrantable today, Acton observed:

> Our scheme requires that nothing shall reveal the country, the religion, or the party to which the writers belong.

It is essential not only on the ground that impartiality is the character of legitimate history, but because the work is carried on by men acting together for no other object than the increase of accurate knowledge.[2]

I

Apart from the philosophical milieu which characterised the genesis of modern historiography, a few other characteristics of the climate in which the discipline took root need to be highlighted in the present context. Perhaps the most significant fact about modern history was that it took birth in a context in which the emergence of nation-states was the most conspicuous feature of the European landscape. What this inevitably meant was that so much of the scholarship of those times — as well as the scholarship of subsequent times — was devoted to the exploration of emerging nation-states in the West. Not surprisingly, such an emphasis in historical writing created several problems. While civilisations and empires had characterised the course of human history since ancient times, nation-states were relatively late arrivals on the scene. Indeed, so much of the historical scholarship of the 19th century, in the period subsequent to the genesis of modern historiography, was a part of the praxis which created new form of political consciousness — more particularly, consciousness of nationhood — among different linguistic communities within European society. Inevitable, therefore, whatever be its positivistic pretensions, historical writing in Europe, at this juncture, leaned heavily towards interpreting the past through the prism of the nation-states that had already made their appearance on the political scene, or were in the process of doing so.

Apart from the question of political bias and Whig distortion, the scholarly concern with the nation-state also exercised a decisive influence upon the raw materials which went into the construction of the historical narrative. The European polities of the 19th century were relatively well organised institutions, and they maintained a record of their activities in different spheres. Such documentation was preserved in archival repositories, since individuals holding

public office relied upon the past history of particular issues as guides to action in the future. As a result of this, the construction of historical narratives, at this juncture, was largely based on documentation in archival repositories. Needless to say, there were other institutions in European society — like the Church, or Commercial Corporations; or learned bodies — which also preserved a record of their activities. But the bias of historiography was statist; and it drew largely upon the documentation generated by leading political actors as the basis of an understanding of the past. Of course, apex political narrative was complemented by cultural and religious narratives, where sources were available. Superimposed upon all this was a romantic projection of nationhood, in past centuries, as the great fly wheel of liberal historiography.

Our brief review of the genesis of history enables us to highlight some of the philosophical characteristics of the discipline. In the first instance, we need to dwell briefly upon its positivist pretensions.[3] If this was a limitation, it simultaneously enabled history to enrich itself as various disciplines in the social sciences extended their horizons through fresh theoretical formulations in the course of the 19th and the 20th centuries.[4] Such theory enabled history to acquire a range and a depth absent in the initial formulation of the discipline.

In dwelling upon the genesis of modern history, and its growth into a mature discipline, a central feature of the historical narrative needs to be highlighted because of its implications for our theme. Disciplines in the human sciences can either adopt a deductive orientation or they can rest upon inductive logic. The discipline of history, however, partakes of both. It is partly deductive and partly also inductive in character. Indeed, it rests on the interface between the social theory, on the one hand, and empirical explorations, on the other. Such a view of history has important implications for the insights it throws up regarding nation-states and civilisations. Inevitably, any historical narrative rests upon theoretical formulations which are substantially deductive in character. Yet the knowledge

generated through historical analysis is not wholly tied to the social theory utilised by a scholar. Indeed, the scholarly examination of a society, or a polity, results in an historical narrative containing facts, interconnections between facts, and insights, whose validity transcends the theory upon which the scholar relies initially. Moreover, such data and insights often provide the basis for further discourse formation. Thus historical writing has an autonomy on its own, and it may generate novel social theory at the same time as it provides enduring insights about the society, or the polity, explored by the scholar.

II

Before we proceed to examine the problems encountered in writing the history of Third World Societies, a few more observations about the discipline need to be recorded. In doing so, it is necessary, once again, to refer to the fact that modern historiography crystallised in an age when liberal social theory was extensively utilised for organising nation-states, resting upon capitalistic systems of economic production and democratic political institutions.

Our emphasis upon the temporal location in which history matured as a discipline is important because of the relationship between historical writing and social praxis. Let me spell out the implications of this assertion. It is widely accepted among philosophers of history, no less than it is accepted among practising historians, that the past of a society can be constructed in an infinite number of ways. A particular past is constructed on the basis of a specific discourse — it can be liberal discourse, or radical discourse, or whatever — since the infinite variety of facts makes it imperative that the scholar adopt some guiding principles for selecting them and then transforming them into a narrative. Now the discourse utilised by a scholar reflects his vision of the "good society" and how it can be constituted. In drawing upon social theory, therefore, the historian is not only engaged in passively reconstructing the past of a society but he is also involved in shaping its future. Indeed, the historical narrative can be compared to a mirror held up before a

community, in order to give it a glimpse of its likely, and possible, and desirable future, all rolled into one. If this argument were to be taken literally, then it follows that in writing about the past, historians are, in fact, engaged in constructing the future. Perhaps nobody knows better than the historian how utterly dead is the past. At the same time, nobody also knows better than the historian how reflecting about the past is a way of influencing the creation of a desirable future!

Nothing illustrates our argument better than the course of liberal historiography over the past century. We have already indicated that this mode of construction of the past came in vogue in an age of positivism; and also in an age when national communities, whether free or in bondage, were transforming themselves into sovereign states resting upon democratic institutions. Indeed, there was more than a mild element of teleology in the application of modern historiography to analysing the past of European societies. Various assumptions were implicit in such an exercise: the belief that the past was linked through a chain of cause and effect to the present; the belief also that the most desirable form of collective existence was the one reflected in a nation-state, undergirded by representative institutions. Last of all was the belief that all societies, whatever be the state of evolution they represented, were ultimately destined to become liberal polities organised into nation-states. Indeed, this argument has very recently been voiced again in journalistic circles, after the collapse of socialist communities in the penultimate decade of our century.

III

In view of the circumstances associated with the genesis of history in Europe, it should occasion no surprise that the pioneering historical writings on India, on the one hand, produced deeply flawed insights, and on the other, created deep cultural tensions within society. The reasons for this are not difficult to see. The structure of Indian society and the texture of its social vision were quite different from that obtained in the West. Liberal historiography, so far as India

was concerned, was applied to a social context in which the values from which modern history grew as an organic discipline were totally absent. This necessarily created a very distorted understanding of the course of Indian history in the mind of the Western scholar.

Take the question of time, for instance, which is so crucial to the historical narrative. The linear concept of time, as a temporal category divided into units of equal magnitude, was alien to large sections of Indian society. This notion, in its full rigour, was a product of the industrial revolution and closely related to the organisation of work and rest for the proletariat. Indeed, the labour force in emerging industrial societies was forced to reorient earlier notions of time, measured in terms of agricultural cycles and the rhythm of climatic seasons, to conform with the rational metaphysics of industrial temporality. The social history of Great Britain in the 19th century, for instance, is replete with instances of the imposition of such a draconian temporal regime upon a recently proletarianised peasantry; just as it is also replete with instances of the resistance offered by the latter before they succumbed to the industrial order.

Time as a linear and calibrated concept was, of course, only one of the notions afloat within Hindu society. This is a complex issue of which we can only give a brief glimpse in the present context.[5] The cyclical understanding of temporality in the Hindu epics is something with which scholars of other traditions are familiar. However, it is not often realised that Hindu society harboured within its diverse traditions more than one concept of time. A British scholar has recently illustrated the peasant's view of time, as a circular rather than a linear entity, which meshed not at all with the linear time of planners, thereby causing disorientation within the development process in India.[6] Equally widespread was the fuzzy notion of time, wherein a linear relationship was established with the recent past; but events in the more distant past were telescoped into a single frame on the temporal horizon.[7]

In drawing upon the resources of liberal historiography to explore the Indian past, therefore, the Indian scholar was

faced with a situation of great complexity. Over and above the altogether different aspirations which motivated the human actor within Indian society, the historian had also to contend with the simultaneous existence of multiple notions of temporality as the overall basis of the social order. Since this complexity shaped those texts which provided the raw material for historical writing, the tools of textual analysis developed in the West were unequal to the task. The results of such inadequacy are clearly reflected in attempts, in the 19th century, to reconstruct the past of Indian civilisation. Since the documentation available to the scholar did not conform to the "rules of the game", as prescribed in the West, the reconstruction of social and political history was a frustrating task and yielded results which were far from satisfactory.

Although I have touched upon the problems faced by European liberal scholars, when they attempted the historical reconstruction of Indian civilisation, I shall mention only cursorily the more obvious political distortions which marred such exercises. I refer here to the "imperialist" rendering of the Indian past. It is clear, for instance, that the liberal historical mode, transformed into the imperial idiom, produced results which were far from satisfactory. The scholar, often a civil servant, was primarily interested in gaining an understanding of the society over which he presided in order to control it all the better. This requirement led to a focus upon those segments of the past whose exploration could facilitate the imperialist purpose. Such an emphasis was often compounded by a lack of familiarity with indigenous cultural traditions and an inability to empathise with the subjects of historical analysis. The recently enunciated notion of "orientalism" attempts to present, in the language of Foucault, all these diverse factors which lead to a distorted perception of colonial societies by European scholars.[8]

Yet orientalism is a term which needs to be interrogated. Said, in formulating the concept of orientalism, has focused mainly upon the asymmetry of power between the Western scholar and the Asian society which he examined. The

scholar, therefore, generated knowledge which was more hegemonising than it was illuminating. Yet Said failed to focus upon the limitations of history in its European habitat. These limitations flowed from the flawed vision of history in its original formulation in modern times.

IV

The problems faced by the first generation of Indian scholars, who sought to utilise liberal historiography for exploring their past, were no less formidable than the problems faced by European scholars, "orientalists" and others, who turned their attention to the past of Asian societies.

Besides the inherent limitations of history, the first problem faced by the indigenous scholar was how to establish a satisfactory relationship with his intellectual heritage and his society as a whole. As emphasised earlier, the historical mode of analysis did not spring from any tradition within India or other Asian societies. The first generation of historians, therefore, faced the task of taking a mature discipline and grafting it to the intellectual fabric of their world. Inevitably, therefore, the insights gained through historical research generated a measure of alienation from their peers and from the social body in which they were placed. The results of such pioneering attempts at the historical construction of the past are a part of the intellectual history of modern India. Those scholars — and Raja Rammohan Roy was pre-eminent among them — who accepted the premises of liberal historiography were successful in fashioning a critique which satisfied the most rigorous requirements of Western scholarship. Yet they achieved this at the cost of alienating themselves from their peers, and the liberal project conferred upon its initiators utter marginalisation.

Quite the contrary was the fate of men like Bankimchandra, who attempted to graft the discourse of history on a structure of feeling indigenous in character. In his writings, therefore, Bankim was successful in portraying the Indian past in a manner which met liberal requirements at the same time as it reinforced, even as it reinterpreted, the

Indian tradition. Of course, Bankim went considerably beyond such a limited objective. He was also successful in planting that consciousness of Nationhood — constructed through this sentiment was in an indigenous idiom — which gave him substantial influence among the middle classes of his times. The price Bankim paid for such success was the necessity of relying upon only *one* of the *diverse* traditions — the high culture of Hinduism — which went into the making of the composite culture of India. As is well known, by singling out a solitary tradition, in a composite culture, he laid the basis for Hindu reassertion at the same time as the Hindus were distanced from the rest. This, in turn, resulted in the upsurge of communalism in modern India.

If the liberal scholar faced the problem of alienation in his attempt at introducing the historical mode of thought within India, then the fate of the radical scholar was an even less enviable one. It did not take the radical long to realise that in his concern for praxis, he was pitted against traditionalists belonging to one of the most hierarchical societies in the world. For he faced much more than mere divorce from the cultural traditions of India. He also sought to turn the Indian world upside down; to break up caste hierarchies; and to prevent also that skewed distribution of power and wealth which flows from liberal social experimentation — witness class structure and wealth inequity in capitalist societies — even before liberalism had had any time to draw into a state of embourgeoisment what was essentially a pre-modern society; "feudal" in the wider sense of the term.

Nor were the questions of alienation; and the resistance of vested interests; the only problem faced by liberal and other historians within India. The sources out of which the historian traditionally culls a narrative were hard to locate in Indian society. In describing the genesis of liberal historiography, we have emphasised that the discipline drew upon the documentation generated by those institutions — like the State; or the Church; or commercial and academic corporations — which underpinned the polity within Europe. The institutional structure of Indian society was markedly different from that of European society, even if it was not

exactly identical to the "theatre state" outlined by Clifford Geertz,[9] or the amorphous Chola polity described by Burton Stein.[10] Moreover, neither Hinduism nor Islam could boast of an institution like the Church, with its priestly orders and the immense bodies of documentation, about matters sacred and profane, which they generated. Finally, commercial entrepreneurship, too, had not acquired within India the institutional strength which it has acquired in the European world after the medieval centuries. For all these reasons, over and above the problems of conceptual confusion, the more mechanical tools of historiography, for instance, the raw materials of the discipline, too were not readily available to scholars within Indian society.

Notwithstanding these constraints, the substantial corpus of historical literature generated by Indian scholarship over a span of three generations and more represents a considerable achievement. The first generation of historians, located in the opening decades of the 20th century, was in some ways situated differently from their European peers of the 19th century. Perhaps the most outstanding example of this generation was Jadunath Sarkar, whose attempt to trace the declining fortunes of the Mughal polity, in the 18th century, resulted in a monumental work to which we can turn even today with profit.[11] The liberal cast of Sarkar's historical work is obvious when we look to his secular critique of human motivation and historical causation, no less than when we look to this reading of the reasons behind Mughal decline. Unlike his liberal peers in Europe, however, Sarkar was not drawn into nationalist praxis. Nor did his scholarship rest upon sources of comparable depth or range, flowing from a variety of institutions, to buttress his narrative or provide documentary underpinning to his analysis.

Sarkar was followed by a generation of scholars whose work spanned the second quarter of the 20th century, when the ideology of nationalism had made a powerful impact upon the intelligentsia as a whole. Their placement in time and space encouraged this generation to shape a romantic sensibility which enabled them to embark upon a somewhat uncritical reading of nationalism in pan- Indian and regional polities of earlier centuries.

Perhaps the most outstanding figures of this period were men like R.C. Majumdar and A.S. Altekar, who perceived the spirit of modern nationalism in a period as remote as the classical past of India. Indeed, such scholars also perceived in the classical centuries, some of the institutional underpinning and values of liberal discourse. The works of these scholars, imbued as they were with a powerful sentiment of romanticism, reached out to wide sections of the intelligentsia beyond academia, and they fed into that nationalist ferment which was so powerfully reflected in the anti-imperialist struggles which liberated India in 1947.[12]

The breakthrough to a new understanding of the Indian past is reflected in the scholarly work of a third generation of historians, whose writings appeared in the decades after 1947. In the works of the most profound scholar of this generation, D.D. Kosambi, both the objectives as well as the methods of explorations were completely novel.[13] With nationalism triumphant in 1947, such scholars turned to a critique from radical premises of the problems of production of wealth and its distribution in society. With such concerns, Kosambi focused on the pre-colonial centuries in order to understand, over a long time rhythm, the strength and the weaknesses of social and productive systems within Indian civilisation. In doing so, he criticised those romantic nationalists who were inclined to argue that the social development of Indian society pursued a unique path. Yet the documentary base of Kosambi's scholarship, for reasons already spelt out earlier, was rather fragile. He proposed the existence of a centralised social system in the classical at the same time as he discerned the presence of a feudal order in the medieval centuries. According to his reading, colonialism was the result of the failure of Indian society to go beyond feudalism. Kosambi finally believed that Indian society was in no sense unique; that it pursued an evolutionary path identical to that of Europe; and that it contained within its social matrix the capacity to experience industrialisation and thereafter proceed towards socialism.

Kosambi's writings were followed by a great upsurge of historical research in the sixties and seventies, which accepted

his thesis as valid, and addressed itself to the aggregation of data and its analysis in the light of such a thesis. Needless to say, this research greatly enriched our understanding of the processes of wealth generation and social formations within Indian society. By the same measure, cultural and intellectual phenomena did not feature to any great degree in the research agenda of such radical historical exploration.

V

Our brief survey of the areas explored by scholars in India provides us with a glimpse of the principal currents within Indian historiography, at the same time as it suggests how this historiography pursued or departed from trends within the European world.

Such a survey should enable us to dwell briefly, in conclusion, upon the future prospects of historical scholarship within India. However, since we have throughout this essay looked upon knowledge formation in the context of wider social and political trends, it would be appropriate also to dwell upon the setting in which scholars in India are today seeking to enrich our understanding of the past and the present.

A striking feature of the contemporary situation within India (and, indeed, within the world as a whole), is the profound crisis which envelops humanity no less than it envelops social theory and notions of praxis. Since the decades when history crystallised as a distinctive discipline, liberal and radical world views have not only been utilised in gaining an understanding of the world; but they have been equally utilised in transforming it. Yet as we approach a new millennium, conventional wisdom seems to be incapable of providing solutions to the problems which threaten to overwhelm systems of economic production; or the management of democratic polities; or the sustenance of moral communities. Indeed, the events of the last decade seem to question, in a very fundamental sense, those assumptions upon which humanity had not only comprehended its past but also shaped its future.

The manner in which world developments have overwhelmed the existing resources of the human sciences

has stimulated new reflection among historians within India and elsewhere. Here it must be confessed that no grand theory — which would provide the basis of understanding, as well as of social intervention — is immediately visible on the horizon. Yet slowly but surely, new domains of knowledge are being explored, which may enrich our understanding of the past and our capacity to shape the future.

The historical scene in India, in this context, is no different from the historical scene elsewhere. There has been, in past decade, a striking movement away from the somewhat mechanical questions which radical scholars were prone to ask about the modes of wealth generation; or their articulation in ideology; or how societies were (or were not) drawn into revolutions or counter-revolutions. Such a movement has led scholars to ask a whole range of new questions about social identities, structures of feeling and forms of consciousness; about civil society and other formations which mediate between the societal and the political; and about ideology, discourse and social power.

As already suggested, the break from the past came about largely because of the inadequacy in the findings of radical scholarship about the mechanisms of social transformation within India. Related to such inadequacies was the growing realisation that the vast social undergrowth on Indian society, rested upon multiple loyalties and social configurations, had to be accorded a proper recognition before a true understanding of its over-arching identity and dynamics. Moreover, within radical scholarship, too, the growing familiarity with Gramsci posed a range of new questions about culture, consciousness, hegemonising ideologies and base/superstructure relationships, which were vastly illuminating. Such questions were seen in a novel context through developments in linguistic theory and semiotics as well as through the insights which scholars like Foucault placed before historians and cultural critics.

The result of these developments in social theory and its reflection in empirical exploration is manifested in the growth of a new corpus of literature which focuses on intellectual and cultural history, with a new armoury of

concepts; a novel range of questions; and a changed realisation of the variety of sources that are grist to the historical mill.

The exploration of identities, local, regional and Pan-Indian, and their relationship to structures of feeling and power have thrown open an entirely new field of exploration to the historian. In the work of the "Subaltern" historians, for instance, we have a corpus that has not only already enriched our understanding, but also point to the direction in which future scholars may find inspiration. The literature this school has thrown up enables us to look with an enlarged vision upon "underclass" identities, social solidarities and political cohesion within Indian society, in the past as well as in the present. Not surprisingly, subaltern scholarship has also spilt over into the domain of religious history, as it pertains to spiritual belief, sectarian organisation and institutions. The result of explorations in this field have changed our understanding of religious phenomena, particularly among "the wretched of the earth", at the same time as they have thrown light upon religious upsurges which are defined as fundamentalist upsurges. Both the methods of historical inquiry and the notion of data thrown up by subaltern scholars can be utilised profitably by the historians of other societies.

In our brief survey of the explanatory potential of new agendas triggered off by writings in the field of culture and consciousness, we have by no means exhausted the possibilities thrown open by the newer history. Besides the light such agendas of enquiry have thrown on questions of identity, belief and consciousness, they are valuable also for their tangential bearing on social institutions and political processes. The notion of nation-state, with which modern history came to age, for instance, now stands revealed to be a notion whose visualisation in popular consciousness is quite different from what intellectual elites, in Europe or in the Third World, have assumed in their scholarly and interventionist roles. That such doubts should come to light in an era when the idea of the nation-state is also being questioned on grounds of economic rationality is in itself a question worthy of exploration. I do not propose to dwell

more upon this particular issue, beyond pointing to the rich possibilities of exploration and praxis in such a field. Relevant here is the belief that the overarching identity of contemporary India can be expressed more cogently through the notion of a "Civilisation-State" rather than a "Nation-State".[14]

In setting new agendas for historiography of India, it would be a fallacy to assume that only novel social theory can provide the basis of fruitful scholarly work. Not surprisingly, a number of well traversed areas of research, too, have acquired a new prominence of late. From the very outset, for instance, geography and history enjoyed a close relationship which developments in the discipline, in the middle decades of the century, on occasions tended to overlook. But the recent interest in environmental history — flowing out of the political struggle waged by green movements — has already encouraged scholars to examine themes based upon geographical context and social activity as a most fruitful line of historical inquiry. In a country where the geographical environment contributes so signally to the shaping of the material life of the people, and to their cultural and spiritual activities, the growing interest in environmental history merely raises the question why more emphasis on this area had not been placed earlier. The few pioneering works in this field, which dwell upon cultivating, pastoral and nomadic communities in the Himalayan uplands, or in the alluvial plains, or in the terrain in between, are mere pointers to what needs to be done in the years which lie ahead.[15]

A by-product of environmental history is the attempt to explore the demographic character of Indian society across the centuries. No overview of this problem has been attempted since a magisterial work appeared more than four decades ago.[16] There are questions about demographic history, and the sources on which such history can be based, to which there are no easy answers at present. Indeed, for centuries prior to the 19th, the demographic history of India will remain highly conjectural, since the hard data available to European scholars in this field is conspicuous by its absence in India. Yet even qualitative studies of demographic trends could render a useful service, by illuminating a whole range

of issues, ranging from productivity to social structure, cultural norms, spiritual beliefs and religious identities. Indeed, the multifarious issues on which demography impinges is unrivalled in its richness.

Yet another domain of study which is most promising is the history of migrations in India. It is generally believed that the social formation of Indian civilisations took place through a creative interaction between two factors; the evaluation of indigenous communities; and the integration into these communities of migrating groups from the highlands of Central Asia. Equally fascinating would be studies of migration of communities from one region to another within India; or Indian diasporas to the rest of the world in the past, remote or recent.

In a brief essay, it is possible to do little more than to give a glimpse of what historical scholarship has already achieved in its exploration of South Asia, and the prospects for the future. If in doing so, I have ventured to make a few observations about the genesis of modern historiography in Europe, then it was necessary to do so because of the close connection between the human condition, on the one hand, and the manner in which societies explore the past and come to terms with it, on the other. For history occupies a pride of place in the wide array of disciplines which constitute the human sciences. Moreover, this central placement of history enables it to play a pivotal role in man's growing understanding of himself no less than his growing understanding of the means whereby he can move towards the "good society".

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2

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT NATION
Nehru and Continuities in Nationalist Thought in India

Javeed Alam

This paper is not so much about nationalism as it is about how the nation has been conceptualised in nationalist thought in India. This shift in emphasis has been dictated by two considerations. One of which is due to the fact that there already is a considerable body of literature on the question of nationalism as it emerged in India and subsequently shaped its politics. But the other reason, which is the more important one, has to do with the connection the notion of the nation has with one type of nationalism as distinct from another. A corollary of this is that the refraction of these notions in the society at large, work as internal parties articulated to the directions that nationalism can take in that society. As such, these make some kinds of articulations of nationalism legible in that society and put other articulations at a disadvantage in the contentions that may go on among the community of people. An invigorating conception of nation corresponding to the specificities of a social formation can work as a corrective to the possible excesses of nationalism, which it is prone to in conditions of stress. It is for these reasons that I would rather like to focus on the conceptions of the nation in the various hues of nationalist thought in India and as to what are the socially

relevant concepts with which it is surrounded. One purpose of this endeavour is to see how the conception of the nation that has got refracted in the Indian society provides a certain environment for political contentions going on today, contentions about what it means to be an Indian.

Within this perspective, this paper is centred around two themes. It seeks to, at one level, probe the deeper continuities, since 1880's and 1890's, about the sense of the nation in Indian nationalist thought. These continuities, I will try to show, cut across all shades of opinion even when these opinions are located in incompatible intellectual and ideological outlooks. Indian nationalist thought from its very beginning had been made up of two clearly recognisable streams which did not really meet but which ran a concurrent, friendly route. While both grew out of a growing, as yet non-hostile, alienation towards colonial rule and a deepening disaffection with the notion of foreign domination over India, there was a fundamental difference in the way they looked at the question of rejuvenation of the Indian nation. The two streams can be categorised as, to use short hand terms, the liberal, enlightenment based trends centred around the "idea of progress" — the secular, the democratic, the man-centric conceptions of national destiny. It, therefore, looked at political rights and economic opportunity as the basis for building national strength.[1] The other stream was the culturally centred, religiously oriented one which sought to restore the nation to health and revive its strength by revitalising its culture and energising the personality of its members.[2]

At another level this paper is also a comment on the epistemological bearings of the thinking that goes around the notion of the nation. It also sees how the nation is treated in a rather different way from other related concepts with which it was historically tied up in the earlier European experience. The allusion to the European experience here has a specific reason. The meaning of the word nation can be treated at two levels: there is a sense on the one hand, and there is a reference on the other of what the nation means. The sense of it is widely shared and is drawn largely from the

European context, whereas its reference is widely questioned and there is a great deal of confusion about what it refers to. This leads to, as we will soon see, the fact that the argument about the sort of nation India is, does not quite reflect its inner structure nor the historical trajectory of its development.

In much of the nationalist thinking that survives today the one that is being frequently cited and used to legitimise one's positions, the nation has been closely surrounded by cultural and religious categories. Nehru in this respect is an exception. He buttresses his notion of the nation and grounds its future existence in relation to categories drawn from the enlightenment tradition, both in its liberal and Marxist incarnations. The terms in which the nation of the future is conceived are democracy, secularism, socialist transformation, universal destiny of man and so on. He is so deeply embedded in this tradition and takes it as so self-evident that thought in general or intellectual concerns as such are not so much a matter of innovations but much more a case of creative applications for the specificities of India. In Nehru's case, it seems to me, the intellectual treatment of the Nation in his thought, gets detached from what is for him the surrounding conceptual world for conceiving the future India. Instead there is a recourse to, as we see later, modes of thinking which are not quite in tune with his treatment of other problems. As such in the discussion of the nation that follows I will be mainly dealing with the stream which locates itself in the cultural range.

II

When we look at the crystallised knowledge about nation based on the early European experience, we find that the theory centred around the phenomenon of nation or its conceptual elaborations is post facto. The world of nations slowly forms itself before it is reflected upon and reduced to forms of knowledge. It is in the nature of such knowledge about social reality that there is, relatively, a much greater correspondence between the world as it is and its conceptualisations. The nation in the early European experience (in that context), is a type of civil community; that

is so in the sense that its origin and consolidation was somewhat coterminous with civil society. There non-political relations provide an underlying grid in terms of which people could relate to one another. If we are right in looking at its historical trajectory as in many ways bound to the rise of civil society, then emerging national awareness and growing democratic struggles can be viewed as having common roots. If we snap this connection, then we will face problems in understanding the grounds of its legitimation, because the object we are talking about has been an integral part of the new social unification located in the public sphere as a result of the rise of capitalism. These common roots made the struggle for political emancipation and the acquisition of nationhood a common search for sovereignty and self-determination. That is how the state came to be viewed as the embodiment of the actualisation, defence, and furtherance of the democratised mass national feelings.

While the state has been a strategic concept in liberal thought, from Locke onwards it is also viewed in relation to protection against tyranny and fanaticism, a defence of plurality and an agency for ensuring tolerance. The framework of the state provides the essential embodiment for the national community; the form of its secure existence. But the state cannot be allowed to assimilate society. This is in the same way that the civil society is closely tied up with the modern state but cannot be subsumed by the state. The emergence of nations and their consolidation as the basis of state framework was thus backed by the strong democratised national feelings. What provided strength to these feelings was a genuine, in the sense of being deeply rooted, historical experience, the rise of new productive forces, dissolution of feudalism, emergence of new autonomous classes, and so on. Tied to all this was the slow process of de-sacralisation, that is, the emptying of the public sphere of the religious content as of defining significance. Thus the cultural foundations of the capitalist nation-state grew within single nationalities which too were getting purged of sacred and holy from the public sphere.

In European nationalist discourse there is little of the intellectual hesitations, epistemic uncertainties, moral doubts or anxieties of imagination, as in societies which deliberately try to model their conceptions on the earlier European experiences, which are not a pronounced feature of intellectual deliberations and reflections on the object. There is in the latter cases an implicit transfer, often of an *a priori* nature, of knowledge from one society to another.

In India the nation became, in the nationalist discourse, an anticipatory projection. It is in the nature of such projections that they have weak or tenuous links with the ongoing historical process. Anticipatory projections about nation also compel a search for continuities with the past; past as antiquity and nation as a part of that antiquity but conceived in terms of a universal model of the nations. Anticipatory projections of nation in the nationalist thought in India had, as such projections generally have, a tendency to become parasitic both as an *a priori* transfer of models and understandings entailed in the term as well as on seeking a permanence in the immemorial past.

III

In India the trajectory of the nation and its knowledge follows a route altogether different. Various nations-nationalities were getting consolidated out of the linguistic-cultural communities which had been taking shape since the medieval times. An incipient idea of Indian nationhood was also gaining ground. This two-way process was different from what had happened in Western Europe. There the popular urge and the global tendency was towards a boundedness of national and state-territorial boundaries in a secularised, unified public space. In India, capitalism was no doubt the basic trigger in the crystallisation that had begun. But this capitalism was far from having become the dominant force even if it was an irreversible tendency. Moreover, the kind of market that this colonially induced capitalism was creating was in no way coterminous with the linguistic-cultural communities. It was pan-Indian market within which, together with the imperialist capital, the trans-regional bourgeoisie

was the leading force of capitalist transformation.[3] Furthermore, the colonial education and the experience of an induced modernity had completely altered the conceptual world of a very sizeable proportion of the Indian elites; who, in addition, had become relatively quite mobile, so much so that certain regions like Bengal or Madras had become big exporters of elites, in services and educational institutions and for sundry other activities, to different regions of India. Now to understand the specific role they played in the creation of knowledge and the new categories that the understanding of the emerging capitalist with its social relations required, a detour is in order. We will come back to the problem of the nation again after this.

On a larger canvas these elites were confronted with the problem of translating new experiences and popular urges and perceptions into a language capable of conveying the sense of these experiences. It was in this world of genuine challenge and honest striving that conceptual transfers, often in an acritical manner, became common. The search for new terms and conceptual tools to capture a different thematic world was unavoidable. The old world of learning, whatever its philosophical richness and complexity, did not possess the kind of conceptual language that was now required. Even the way the old categories could carve up the social world would not do for the kind of society capitalism was bringing into being. Colonialism was an overwhelming presence. It deeply conditioned this enterprise. Yet to consider all that came out of this encounter as "derivative"[4] is hard to defend. The conceptual response to the swelling popular yearning was towards some form of equal respect and dignity for the person; to be counted in society as agents; that the social difference based on the physiology of human being be devalued? And so on. The language drawn on the philosophy of egalitarianism or rights and liberty would seem to many people in such situations to be appropriate. This certainly would be an invasion into the existing conceptual world of rendering experience in communicable terms. Likewise, what could have been the alternative possible languages for translating the spread of feelings in society

that poverty and hunger and diseases and deprivation are not natural conditions of social existence or of karma(ic) chains? It is not simply that the conceptual world of the elites was altered or that their consciousness was convulsed. It is equally true that the commonsense of the society was imperceptibly but dramatically changing or how else can one explain or understand the reception of messages based on themes of freedom and emancipation and well-being in the Indian society? All this was there in spite of the, often talked of, breach between the colonially conditioned world of knowledge of the "elites" and the commonsense of the society.[5] What the elites were doing was no doubt in their perceived interests or unfelt compulsions. While the breach between these two worlds did exist (if not it would be a socially unified world with a high degree of democratic attainment), it was not a kind of breach we have between the world of tigers and honeybees; a non-communicable world. Between the dramatic changes in the commonsense of the society and the runaway ambitions, intellectual and material and spiritual, of the elites there were links of commonality; this being defined above all by the highly deferentially refracted need to negotiate this new thematic world. Unless, we can demonstrate that the breach between the commonsense of society and the altered conceptual world of the elites was, analytically speaking, like the world of tigers and honeybees, we cannot reduce what was happening in the intellectual world as something totally "derivative", whatever be the depth of conditioning of this world by the grids of colonial power and knowledge. The subaltern project and its incarnations in discourse analyses (I mean, its Indian embodiments) live in a world of make believe that is predicated on the absence or unreality of the search within the commonsense of society of anything which had to do with what is entailed in the language born in the ferment of enlightenment even if it sits with a bourgeois cap on its dizzy head.

Now the point I want to raise is that a new world was emerging in a very uneven way in the whole of the Indian

society. Of this world the elites were closely a part and could articulate it. The common people were inserted into it without being very clearly aware of what it entailed. Yet this world created a range of thematic concerns in which these non-elites had a stake without being able to articulate it clearly except as broad anti-feudal demands. None the less what they sought out of this new world was in no sense any less real. Their major disadvantage was, apart from that which is common to class exploitative societies, that their own concerns were also articulated for them by the elites without fully realising its intent. The elites did go about these as if the new being created was the universal interest of man in the Indian society. In this sense what was being talked of was seen as being given to the ordinary people, this is how the sense of benevolence of the advantaged would look at it.

One small qualification here will be in place. Unlike in the societies of successful bourgeois revolution, the gap between the ordinary people and the highly educated as reflected in their world outlooks remained wide, in fact, very wide. What does it socially indicate? That the Western elites were more efficient in that they could intervene and guide and monitor and unify the common sense of the society. Nothing could be more fallacious. The problem here does not hinge on the intentionality of the elites. It has to do with deeper socio-economic processes within which the elites were just one element, and may not be the most important one. The greater correspondence between the world outlook of the people and the elites was more a result of the successful completion of the bourgeois and a long history of stubborn democratic struggles by the exploited people and the way they forced settlement from the dominant groups in their favour. The bourgeois revolution in India is far from complete, may be we are in a situation of stalemate, and the history of democratic struggles is only too recent and in a society with backward capitalism where the ruling classes are much less prone to democratic concessions. What, however, remains important is that at some imperfect level the thematic universe of the people was getting a conceptual vocabulary, whatever is

wholly artificial in this has not gained popular currency but remains a part of the pastiche literary games, and this was to become a weapon later in the anti-feudal struggles and democratic demands of the people against the rapacious rule of the colonial state and still later on against the bourgeois-landlord curtailment of democracy. So while a gap remained between the world of elites and the people and may remain unbridgeable, a social need too was catered to in the way the elites tried to come to grips with the new world. If a social is fulfilled in whatever an imperfect manner then it just cannot be called derivative, it certainly is open to a different kind of critique. This indeed is the point. A conceptual language is not imported simply in the sense in which commodities get imported; the consumption of a language cannot be entirely coerced or artifically induced. What seems to me the most important point in this enterprise is the manner of addressing the problems involved in the translation of new experiences in colonial/imperialist discourse[6] or a derivative exercise is false intellectual populism.

So what came in of the new conceptual language together with the eclectic knowledge systems was not an imposition of the "colonial" in the way the revenue demands or industrial policy restrictions were. The infirmity of the new conceptual language was not in its artificiality but in the failure or inability to put them through the prism of a grounded critique; a critique that would have given to this enterprise a deeper level of relevance rather than just leaving it fulfilling needs at a surface plane. The category of "nation" was no exception, it too suffered from the same infirmity as the rest of the conceptual baggage. It was never put to the test of going through the historical intricacies of India's past heritage or of its social complexities or of the then current linguistic-cultural and religious balance. Some term like the nation-national was needed to encapsulate the inner changes in the Indian society but it was simply lifted from the West European context with its full connotative load. Not only this but it was inserted into the entire past of the Indian society. To the consequences of this we will come later.

IV

The conception of the nation that finally got accepted in the nationalist thought in India was through involved manoeuvres of inclusion and exclusions, the criterial properties of what came to be accepted were never properly examined. The ground for its being was getting created, it was also, as noted earlier, an anticipatory projection.

The conception of the nation in the nationalist thought took shape within a structure of ongoing dialogue with the colonial presence, both as physical domination and an intellectual accent that it had been putting on the Indian society. This dialogue was, to put it schematically, conducted around two axes and was made up of four themes. The two axes were, first, an argument about the foreign power and its presence and domination and combating its claims to superiority and, secondly, a positive formulation of the Indian nation and an ingenious recollection of its roots and genesis; a collective self with a uniform national complexion. Around these axes the four themes which preoccupied the imagination were: one, how best to come to terms, on the level of thought, with what the British power represented — its technology and organisation, military capacity and strength, instrumental reason and worldly superiority, and so on; all this was to become and remains a script around modernity. Two, there was the imperative need to combat as lies the British insinuations about Indian culture and religion; the capricious colonial propaganda that these are irrational and superstitious and socially divisive and so on. Three, there was the further necessity to repudiate the canard that there is no such thing as an Indian nation and that given the conglomerate nature of the Indian society, it cannot ever be fashioned as a nation. And, four, to show that these uncertainties about the Indians/Hindus being a nation are due to the falsifications of the Indian history by the foreigners.[7]

Early nationalist thought can thus be seen also as an attempt on the part of Indians to get over the disagreeable imputations of colonial historiography. The structure of the

dialogue set the limits to what could be said and what could not be said. What could be said had to be in favour of the nation. And what had to be said in faovour of the Indian nation could not be at random. Rather it had to honour the Indian nation but in term already set by the four themes around the two axes mentioned above. It is precisely this that also compelled the need to set up an argument about the intrinsic worth of the Indian culture on the one hand and proving the presence and viability of the nation in India. But as it did turn out the attempt at proving the intrinsic worth got entangled with the sense of subordination and humiliation and the attempt became one at proving the superiority of the Indian culture and the untenability of the claims of the foreigners about the Indian nation on every count. The predicament was in the nature of the following: how does one go about certifying any one particular version or reading of the Indian culture as the culture. There was no identifiable basis of defining the Indian culture. So long the culture was taken for granted and one got along with it on a pragmatic level there was no problem; one could take any lived pattern of day-to-day interactions as culture. The difficulty arose when it had to be defined or a reading of it had to be certified as the Indian culture. In a society which had yet to go through a process of desacralisation, culture, at the plane of reflective possession and conscious appropriation, was too closely bound up with one or other religion. And in the nationalist thought it did happen that the effort at proving the cultural or spiritual superiority of India got sidestepped into an extended and elaborate exercise about the worth and superiority of Hinduism. If Hinduism was facing a crisis at that time, it was partly due to the violence inflicted on it by the foreigners. Foreign tyranny became a recurring theme. As it got elaborated into a polemic over time, it was also systematically extended backward into time; far back into history to include the pre-colonial period, the Muslim rule in particular. This conflation of the notion of domination — subjection to foreign rule — became a part of the anti-colonialist discourse. With this conflation, the "foreigner" now became a conceptual weapon to fight for the retrieval of

the cultural identity of Indians. As a consequence, this search for identity became defined more and more in Hindu terms. As an aside, as a part of this, all earlier struggles against the Muslim rule were being unified, although in a confused manner, as one single process in the Indian history to be rid of foreign tyranny.[8]

Let us now recapitulate, briefly. From either side of the exercise — defence of culture and getting rid of the foreign rule — it became predicated on working around the image of Hindu. It became a central concern. Now given this, how could the search for the nation in India be handled? And, what would be the case for inclusion or exclusion into it? Logically, anyone who could not be a part of the twin crusade noted above ought to get excluded from the anticipated Indian nation. In that sense the early nationalist thought was quite consistent. It did not suffer from the qualms of hedging every assertion with qualifications; as its apologists would do today.

The search for the Indian nation thus went back into antiquity and, as was to be expected, found that the Indian nation was already formed and a national heritage always existed. The Indian nation, at least of all other things, was a definite presence and therefore not to agree to this presence or to question its existence, as postulated, was, if not anti-national, to opt out of the anti-colonial national aspirations. The European model of the nation was not just one possible type but was being propagated as the only possible and universal form; but with a strong qualification, it had always existed if one looks back into history. This I would categorise as the immemorialisation of the nation in India. This conception of an immemorial nation has a number of implications to which I will come later. But before that I want to make one, slightly long, digression here and go into one aspect of Indian history, an aspect which had a bearing on the process of the formation of the nation and got tied up with the way it was being talked about. Through this detour I want to highlight a rupture that had existed and was widening between the intellectual enterprise going on in favour of the nation and the actual process of national

formation as well as to indicate the repercussion of this enterprise on the process.

V

1880's was the period of the coming to age of the contentions of the modern elites. The elites from among the Hindus had by this time become socially established and were taking over the political leadership as well as asserting the cultural identity of India as a nation. Those from among the Muslims were only beginning to take shape and were trying to get a foothold in the society as well as seeking acceptance within their own religious community. This unequal ascendance of the elites based on the religious affiliations was going to have far-reaching repercussions on the relations between Hindus and Muslims on the one hand and the Indian people in general and the British colonialists on the other; equally important, this was also going to set a pattern of politicking including about the whole import of nation and nationalism, out of which we as a people have not as yet come out; may be getting deeper into its mire.

There were two central concerns of this politics. The conflicts and contentions between the elites from among the Hindus and Muslims were also centred around these. One was the constant stress being laid on questions of culture and reform of the communities in light of demands of the times. The other was the intense competition for jobs, power and other entitlements.

Among the elites from within the Muslim community — as best represented by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan at the pan-Indian level or people like Abdul Lateef in Bengal — who were relatively newly ascendant and less well established as compared to the elites from among the upper castes of the Hindu community, the struggle for equality and power and entitlements was not vis-a-vis the British colonialist but in opposition to the advantage enjoyed by the Hindus. Forms of struggle were not dissimilar but the trajectory and the targets to aim at were quite different. Thus arose among the Muslim elites a pronounced disinclination to combine with the others, especially when to combine meant nationalist

action against the British. It should be evident by now that with the coming to fore of the politics dominated by the elites, distinct modes of articulation and political participation were shaping up within the elites from among the Muslims and the Hindus. As an aside, the way the British played the divide and rule politics here is interesting; they conveyed to the Muslims that their demands were essentially economic and could therefore be easily met, whereas the politics of the Indian National Congress being nationalistic was hard to concede; the Muslims therefore better keep themselves away from it if they want to negotiate concessions from the British.

If the Muslims were to seek equality not vis-a-vis the British rulers as the non-Muslims but as such against the "Hindus" then the internal logic of the situation dictated that they stay with the British rulers, who as the arbiters in the situation, could tilt the conditions for the flow of concessions in their favour. The pattern of politics as a consequence that the Muslims took to was non-anti-colonial. No critique of the British rule or of cultural reassertion against being dominated by the British emerged from among the Muslim intelligentsia at that time or later. But it is important to realise that the absence of cultural reassertion against the British did not mean that on this issue they were silent There was in fact a two-way reaction. There was on the one hand a systematic effort to initiate moves to equip the Muslim community to come to terms with the new economy and the job market, education and cultural upliftment in the direction of the "modern" became important concerns. But on the other hand what happened was somewhat more significant in the sense that the attempts, noted above, to reassert the cultural superiority of the Indian culture and to seek the basis of the Indian nation in the antiquity of this culture took a distinctly "Hindu" from the perception of the Muslims. There could not have been a way in which the Muslim community would find a common ground of joining in what was going on in the name of Indian cultural reassertion. This was unfortunately disastrous. The breach that came about between the Muslims and Hindus was a two-way divide; the secular world of jobs, power, etc., became as divisive as the religio-cultural affinities.

In any case, the collaborationist politics of the Muslims created a breach between the Muslims and the Hindus, whose postures now mattered more than anything else. This gave rise to an atmosphere of bickerings, a mutually conditioned pattern of responses which was one of reacting to each other rather than assessing issues on merit; these cumulatively resulted in deep-rooted mistrust and suspicion and over time a store of bitter memories.

Let me now come back to this drift towards the immemorialisation of the Indian nation in terms of the European model of the nation. This is something that is common to all shades of nationalist thought in India. To see this drift, let us look at Nehru — the best spokesman of the enlightenment thought in all its variants in India. Let us see how he conceptualises the Indian nation, a manner of looking at it that privileges it over all other nations.

The substantiation of the assertion that Nehru immemorialises India as a Nation can only be inferentially sought in his writings. Nowhere does he explicitly assert that the Indian nation has existed from ancient times. On the contrary, he says, that "In ancient and medieval times, the idea of the modern nation was non-existent, and feudal, religious or racial or cultural bonds had more importance".[9] Having said this he immediately adds: "Yet I think that at almost any time in recorded history an Indian would have felt more or less at home in any part of India."[10] There is a sense implicit here that in the case of India other "bonds" mentioned above may have been transcended in some sense. This implicit sense becomes more marked when writing on "The Variety and Unity of India", he says:

> The Pathan and the Tamil are two extreme examples; the others lie somewhere in between. All of them have their distinctive features. All of them have still more the distinguishing mark of India. It is fascinating to find how the Bangalees, the Marathas, the Gujraties, the Tamils, the Andhras, the Oriyas, the Assamese, the Malayalis, the Sindhis, the Panjabis, the Pathans, the Kashmiris, the Rajputs, and the great central Indian block comprising

> the Hindustani people, have retained their peculiar characteristics for hundreds of years, have still more or less the virtues and failings of which old tradition or record tell us, and yet have been throughout these ages distinctively Indian, with the same national heritage and the same set of moral and mental qualities.[11]

The key words here in looking at the "immemorialness" of the Indian nation are not simply that the people here are immersed with an imprint which is peculiarly Indian but that this has existed throughout the ages, as an overarching national heritage over the individual, linguistic features of the various people who have been living in India. What is observed today as the intersection of the regional-nationality and the pan-Indian features is not a modern phenomenon but has existed for ever. It is being clearly suggested that this Indian nation is immemorial in the sense that what has unified the innumerable, distinct, linguistic-cultural groups in India has been the same national heritage coming down for hundred of years.

At another place Nehru says:

> Though outwardly there was diversity and infinite variety among the people, everywhere there was that tremendous impress of oneness, which had held all of us together for ages past, whatever political fate or misfortune had befallen us.[12]

And adds immediately:

> The unity of India was no longer merely an intellectual conception for me, it was an emotional experience which overpowered me.[13]

The underlying notion of oneness is spoken almost in the sense in which it is, now-a-days, used for a nation.

This sense of oneness or national heritage existing for ages comes through to Nehru not by a rational mode of appropriation of social reality, as one finds it being so when Nehru talks of other social phenomena like secularism or socialism or democracy and so on, but by an overpowering

emotional experience, a kind of a mystic peep into India's uniqueness as a nation.

This is Nehru in his nationalist mould; non-rational in the way he seeks to understand reality. Nehru in all other respects is the child of enlightenment who searches for the specificity of the process of becoming of any social phenomenon in the world.

This aspect of Nehru's nationalist thought, I would like to argue, is indicative of a deeper continuity across all shades of nationalist thought. The immemorialness of India — the nation being unique — is the one pole that unifies the two distinct streams that make up the nationalist tradition and which together give a specific imprint to Indian nationalism.

Common to both the streams has been the unexamined equation of the "national" with the "civilisational". But then historically, regions of all sorts representing a kind of civilisational uniformity (uniformity here is a more appropriate term than unity because unity implies a reflective, throughout appropriation of social basis of existence which was clearly not possible in antiquity) has rarely been a basis of politically unified nations. The Arab world, the Spanish America, the Western Europe can be taken as classic examples of the inappropriateness of such an equation, even if China can be cited as an exception. No historically based reasoning can permit one to infer that one form of unity (civilisational) can necessarily lead to the other (national). Nehru would have been on a sound ground were he to limit his assertions to India's civilisational uniformity, or even unity at a later period. But he makes an unwarranted jump into the national, unwarranted because there is no attempt to specify the inner logic for such a transition which may have become a possibility at some point in history.

I have talked of Nehru for one specific reason. Nehru the radical liberal is so much out of step, when reflecting on the nation, with his own intellectual pedigree. It is no doubt true that he surrounds his idea of the nation with future oriented goals like industrialisation and economic development, science and scientific temper, democratic agrarian relations, secularised society, socialist social system, democratic polity,

and such other things. In spite of all this we also find that his core sense of the Indian nation is so different from the one about the nations in general. It is in this we find that Nehru the nationalist is in tune with his peers and predecessors; Gandhi and others before him, the chain that started with cultural reassertions in the 1880's. The core sense of the Indian nation has a surprisingly high degree of agreement. It is furthermore based on a sense of culture and its antiquity as a historical actuality. All these definitional positions of Nehru and Gandhi and Tilak and Bankim Chandra implied a pre-reflective link to culture and tradition of a rather restrictive kind. The nation is immemorial and cannot be viewed otherwise. To do so is to do violence to its spirit.

Now to round off the discussion, what has all this to do with the situation prevailing in the country today? I want to suggest that with the crisis of the nation or serious threats to "national unity" the immemorialness the nation has come to become the main plank of its defence. And who can best defend this immemorialness located in the cultural antiquity of India? It is precisely here that Advani's claims on behalf of Hindutva that let people decide what Indian nationalism is all about become important and gain credence.

It is, I believe, important to recognise that Hindutva is not only seeking legitimacy by locating itself in the religiously based cultural foundations of the Indian nation but more important it is soliciting to be accepted as the spokesman of the dominant nationalist tradition as developed by Nehru - Gandhi, even if it finds it inconvenient to mention Nehru's name. Hindutva stands and fights for that particular conceptualisation of nationalism which equates the identification of the nation with the country-wide territory called India and its immemorialness. This is what Advani is exhorting the political parties to let people decide what this contention around the nation is all about.

The extent to which this conceptualisation of the nation has refracted in the Indian society and seeped down into the consciousness of the people, it is not simply because of the earlier religio-cultural reassertions but also due to its contemporary legitimacy as it has been the plank of secular,

radical nationalist thought in India. It is really this deeper continuity of the nationalist thought or the way in which the nation has become an object of knowledge in the nationalist thought that has become a source of strength for Hindutva or national chauvinism and a ground on which the secular option in India finds itself in a quandary. The secular state in India is not strong enough or fairly bold to allow people to question this notion of the nation in India or allow people to come to agreement with India in terms of their varying historical experience of it. This will call for a very high degree of democratisation of national relations in India. This does not seem to be likely in the near future nor is there a possibility of the threats to Indian unity becoming any less serious. This is what is going to give a distinct advantage to Hindutva. The secular trends in India will continue to fight the battle of national unity like the soldiers under duress who cannot really come to know the terrain on which the fight is going on.

References

1. I include here representative thinkers like Ranade and Gokhale and many others. The most important contribution of this group was the economic critique of the colonial rule which they turned out. This stream of the nationalist thought culminated in Nehru who induced the mainstream nationalist thought to debate and take seriously the idea and possibility of socialism as the route to transform Indian society. This stream of nationalist thought first gets diluted and then dissipated after Independence.
2. The early main spokesmen of this point of view were "sages" like Bankim Chandra and Bhudev and Vivekananda and Aurobindo among many others. This stream of thought did not crystallise in any one representative thinker. It became a kind of foundational thought but with the intensification of the freedom struggle it lost its moorings and became scattered.
3. These issues have been discussed in some detail in Javeed Alam, "Dialectics of Capitalist Transformation and National Crystallisation: The Past and Present of the National Question in India", *Economic and Political Weekly* (Review on Political Economy), 29 January 1983. Subsequently published in Panigrahi, D.N. (ed.) (1984), *Economy, Society and Politics in*

Modern India (New Delhi, Vikas); Iqbal Ahmad (ed.) (1985), *Fresh Perspectives on India and Pakistan* (Oxford, Bougainvillea Books) and in (1987) Nationality Question in India (Pune, T.D.S.S.).

4. Partha Chatterjee in his (1986) *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Delhi, Oxford University Press) used the notion of derivative for ideas and thought in a new and unusual way referring to the imprisoning grip that the colonial grid of power and knowledge exercised on the minds of the colonial intelligentsia. It was used in a systematic way for the first time in India.
5. This idea of a complete breach between the world of the elite thinking and the common sense of society has been most systematically argued by Sudipta Kaviraj in his many writings; see, for instance, his recent one "On the Structure of Nationalist Discourse in India", in Sathyamurthy, T.V., *Terms of Political Discourse in India*, Vol.1.
6. This tendency is very pronounced in Sudhir Chandra; see his recent work (1992), *The Oppressive Present: Literature and Social Consciousness in Colonial India* (Delhi, O.U.P.).
7. I have discussed these in my "Contemporary Implications of the Making of the Nationalist Thought in India", in Pathak, K.K. (ed.), *Nation and Nationalism in Modern India* (New Delhi, Sage, forthcoming).
8. See Ranajit Guha's analysis of how the British are displaced by the Mussalman in Bankim Chandra's analysis of the foreigner and the way Muslims are held responsible for the systematic misrepresentations of Indian history; see his, (1988) *An Indian Historiography of India: A Nineteenth-Century Agenda and Its Implications* (Calcutta, K P Bagchi & Company).
9. See Nehru's (1948) *The Discovery of India* (Calcutta, Signet Press), p.41.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 40.
12. Ibid., p. 38.
13. Ibid.

3

COMPLICITY AND STRUGGLE
Theory and Society

Upendra Baxi

I

When I look around trying to make sense of myself and an India which is in the process of traumatic change, I am puzzled and pained by a sense of intellectual diaspora. We, the community of social scientists, are, I believe, socially engaged theoretical labourers. Most of us are stretched too thin, moving from one agonised arena of action and concern to another. Most of us are bloodied and scarred by practices of politics, if not directly, in the lived imagination of what power does to groups and individuals we work for and with.

Even if we do not say it aloud, we must share Mohandas Gandhi's feeling when he said, memorably:

> ... if I seem to take part in politics it is only because politics encircles us today like the coil of a snake from which one cannot get out, no matter how much one tries. I wish therefore to wrestle with the snake....

But we must also recall that the same Gandhi burst uncontrollably into tears (according to Rajendra Prasad's account) after Champaran. Bapuji said, in an uncharacteristic gesture of diffidence:

"... What indeed am I doing? — Hardly do I accomplish

> one task when I get involved with the second; while the second is unfinished, I get involved in the third. This [Sabarmati] Ashram I had created with great enthusiasm and expectation. It was my wish to live here and make this Ashram an ideal one and make Ashramwasis into ideal workers. But even before this task can properly begin, I had to go to Champaran.... Sure, in some ways the task of ameliorating the conditions of peasants was attained but did the peasants really gain anything out of this? The basic task of living with them to improve their life-style, to make them fearless, and to provide them *Kelavani* [an untranslatable notion, impoverished by its usual rendering as 'education'; perhaps best signified as continuing empowering pedagogy] .... But before this constructive work could commence, I had to go to Kheda.... Should my whole life be thus spent in unfinished tasks?" (This is a free translation from Gujarati.)

On the one hand, wrestling with the snake of politics, even to the extent of axiomatic activism (Gandhiji wrote: "... it is better to die helpless and unarmed and as victims rather than as tyrants"); on the other hand, he felt unmitigated despair at journeying through life without accomplishing transformative possibilities, where life itself begins to be lived as a narrative of how structure of engagement transforms itself into structure of postponement. Heroic activism merges with tearful accountability — a syndrome that was articulated in another time, at another place, by Adlai Stevenson: "It hurts to laugh but I am too old to cry".

Gandhi, of course, articulated the dilemmatic situation of a nationalist activist. He sought to unify theory with practice; he did not struggle with colonial reality to produce a full-fledged theory of human emancipation. Theories may be derived or gleaned from his burgeoning corpus of texts as well as political action read as a series of texts. But the model accepted by academic, activist labourers is different; their practices of engagement and postponement are, at the end of the day, directed to the production of reflective knowledges, critiques of power structures, and alternate agenda for action for transformation. Very few of us are as actively

engaged as Gandhiji was in the praxis of total transformative action; but if his tearful self-bewilderment finds a resonance within us it is perhaps because (at least speaking for myself) we have been ourselves unable to perform well the tasks we have set before ourselves, consciously or otherwise. Our critiques of power and our agenda for transformation seem to lack authenticity, outside the charmed circle of cognitive entrepreneurs operating grids of globalised knowledge systems. Painful though this is, I must offer in what follows some rather remarkable illustrations of this crisis.

In what does this 'crisis' consist? Perhaps, in the lack of vigilance concerning alienating and alienated modes of production of 'theory'. Perhaps, also, in the precarious and treacherous social and political space theoretical labourers occupy: a space which projects, on the one hand, the appearance of relative autonomy from polity and economy in pursuing (even if ever changing) tasks and agendum of social action as a form of struggle and on the other hand of complicity with power. But regard to the yardstick which conceptualises repression as a Siamese twin of struggle and defines an activist as that being which the state regards worthy of suppression, much of our social engagement, in retrospect and prospect, appears, sooner or later, as complicitous; this even happened to, and with, Gandhiji but he was able to develop and sustain a dialogical relationship with his moral self as well as with the masses. Our inability to do so in the contemporary Indian situation adds to the 'crisis' of anguished rationality, which most of us have internalised through the experience of our European counterparts, especially post-modernists, without corresponding cognitive labour on our own predicament.

It is strange but true that in a subcontinent full of harrowing injustices we have not been able, generally even to raise the most critical question concerning power: how is it that the *power* of some people becomes the *fate* of innumerable others? This is the problem of power generally. But in the case of the state it assumes formidable proportions. This century has elaborated diverse codes about legitimation of power which enable its conversion into authority and,

therefore, also its character as destiny. We all know the theories of power, ideology and hegemony; and how these are constructed and deconstructed. But when we look at traditions of thought concerning legitimation we begin, in the present vein, to feel haunted by the feeling as to whether the sculpting of social theory does not also emerge as a form and force of destiny, raging all over again, but more poignantly the problematic of knowledge and power.

I wish to draw, particularly, attention to the nature of the modern state as a noological entity. Noology is distinct from ideology and describes ways in which the modern state, with all its carnal and bloody orders of desire which constitute the fantasy of *imperium*, provides and inspires the "very images of thought" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988: 376). The relation between the modern state and thought is profound and constitutive. We can perceive this linkage in the celebration of theologies of "development" or the possibilities of the emergence of the near-universalisation of earlier forms of McCarthyism, even in the land of Lenin. We also see it in theoretical accounts of authority, obligation and even the rule of law.

Deleuze and Guattari demonstrate how the state constitutes and consecrates the binary distinction between the "rebel" and the "consenting" subject. The former is individuated as an exile and consigned to "the state of nature", much in the same way in which earlier criteria of individuation enacted the exclusionary realms in terms of contrasts between civilised and barbarian; christians and heathens; master and slave; capitalist and worker, coloniser and colonised; men and women. The rebel subject thus constitutes herself both in theory and power as a victim, in the real sense in which Lyotard describes a victim as a being who is "not able to prove that one has been done a wrong... the 'perfect crime' does not consist in killing the victim or witnesses... but rather in obtaining the silence of witnesses, the deafness of judges, and the inconsistency (insanity) of testimony. You neutralize the addresser, the addressee, and the sense of testimony; then everything is as if there were no referent...." (1988:8).

In contrast, a 'consenting' subject is indulged in the order of civil society, freedom, rights and welfare. The 'consenting' subject is, of course, a permanently arrested rebel subject. So monumentally enduring is the state form, and the images of thought it inspires, that when 'rebel' subjects accomplish their project, they must do so by all over again re-enacting the categories of 'rebel' and 'consenting' subjects.

If thought and theory often embodies and lives the life of the state, it must at least, somewhat in terms of transformative praxis, conceptualise notions of the victimage of power nestling within theories of legitimation and show up (even under the benign spectacles of Mohandas Gandhi) ways in which the permanently arrested 'rebel' subject is not altogether powerless to inflict legitimation deficit through the 'everyday forms of resistance' which James Scott has celebrated in his *Weapons of the Weak* (1985). Barring stirrings in the subaltern studies and notable effort by Veena Das, we have a long way to go in archiving, fashioning and appropriating narratives of victimage and resistance as providing even minor-looking pathways of escape from complicitous relation of social theory with noological Indian state.

II

Let us look, cursorily, even if controversially, at codes of censorship we have built around productive practices generating social theory in India. Our penchant for 'safe' and 'sanitised' theorisation practices have produced a discourse which is almost bloodless. In contrast, life in independent India has been marked by varieties of violence. These lie marginalised in theory, even as they characterise the core of a "wounded" and wounding civilisation called India. Barring notable efforts (Veena Das & Ashish Nandy, 1985, 177; Veena Das (ed.), 1990), the pervasiveness of collective political violence in India since 1950 (as I discovered for myself: see Baxi, 1988, 72) is matched only by the slenderness of theoretical reflections.

Neither the trajectory nor topologies, neither the costs nor impacts, of collective political violence inform theoretical

consciousness; nor does the cruel diversity of (what I have called) the 'modes of repression'. Massive archives of collective political violence have been made available through the immortal labours of Professor A.R Desai; and some movement towards semiotic redescription of violence has begun with pioneering, but sadly neglected, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency* (1983) by Ranajit Guha and the subaltern studies movement he inspired. But, overall, social theory was not moved to theoretical reflection on violence and repression, even as these began early on to point to the growing militarisation of state power, abundantly embodied in the prolonged narration of 'insurgency' in the North-East and the 'handling' of the Naxalite movements.

Endemic violence by the state and people interests us even much less. We do not even have an archive of suffering which goes under the rubric "atrocities" against the untouchables and the indigenous peoples, let alone a sustained discourse on the nature and magnitude of caste violence this subsumes. Eleven years after Kamala was sold thrice in a week from state premises in Shivpuri in Madhya Pradesh for a price (as the Bombay High Court was to poignantly note), half the price of a buffalo in Punjab, social theory has not been moved to examine fully the structure of trafficking in women and children in the open market; its causes, its history and the messages it encodes for the past and the future of Indian society lie safely beyond our ken. Gender-based violence — whether it be custodial or marital rape, dowry murders or amniocentesis — await the labours of an Indian Foucault. It is pointless to multiply examples of arenas of benign neglect by social theory concerning violence in civil society. If as Walter Benjamin said: "There is no document of civilization which at the same time is not a document of barbarism" (1973: 258), we have yet to begin deciphering this 'Other'of civilisation and culture which permeates social life outside theory.

We did not realise, nor do we even today, that the administration of philosophical, theoretical, scientific silence concerning violence is itself also an act of violence and injustice. As Jacques Derrida reminds us:

> If light is the element of violence, one must combat light with certain other light, in order to avoid the worst violence, the violence of the night which precedes or suppresses discourse... the philosopher must speak and write within this war of light, a war in which he knows himself to be engaged; a war which he knows is inescapable, except by denying discourse, that is by risking the worst violence (1978: 115).

An intellectual community which ignores the centrality of violence in the contemporary Indian experience invites precisely this "violence of night" which suppresses *all* discourse.

III

While social engagement has, dramatically after the slight radicalisation of the middle classes and learned professions in the wake of the Emergency experience, demonstrated the effective uses of adjudicatory power of the state for ameliorative social action and struggle, social theory largely bypasses any theoretical consciousness of the role of law in contemporary Indian society. This becomes striking when we recall that the forerunners and founders of modern social theory — Marx, Weber, Durkheim among them — assigned a significant role to the understanding of law as a culture and as an apparatus of social control. Social theory elaboration in India is almost possessed of a magical power: the power to erase juridical and judicial discourse (e.g. See Baxi, 1991, for an analysis of T.N. Madan and Ashish Nandy's construction of secularism wholly devoid of reference to constitution and adjudicatory processes). One does not have to privilege legal discourse in order to cognise it for whatever it is worth; but judgment on what it is worth must surely be preceded by a multifaceted awareness of changing conceptions of law and justice in India since Independence. Such awareness cannot be cultivated by pilfered platitudes and borrowed wisdom about the limits of effective legal action (Baxi, 1985). The growing illegalisation of the Indian state and society has been significantly described and redescribed in some bodies

of social theory. But mainstream social theory remains innocent of any sustained reflection on the political economy of the law in a post-Gramsci era and of the growing "illegality of rights" in a post-Foucault era. Verbal thunderbolts concerning the 'lumpenization' and 'criminalization' of the state achieve credibility for progressive 'critique' specially when frequently and felicitously delivered. But these do not advance by one centimetre the cognitive mapping of abuse of power in state and society or emplotting the paths of resistance to and struggle against such abuse. Seven years after the Bhopal catastrophe, erudite discourse in social theory has yet to learn to grasp the full import of planned catastrophe creation as a state formative practice in a "developing" society or the historicity of struggle by Bhopal victims as a precursor of praxis to which the current structural adjustment programme so compellingly summons us.

In such a zodiac, it is but natural that one of the menacingly growing forms of abuse of power, subjectively encountered by the practitioners of social theory, has not excited any scientific attention. I refer here to the phenomenon known simply as "corruption". The challenges posed by pervasive corruption to even a rudimentary understanding of the nature of state, society and struggle features nowhere in our curricula, research or theory-building enterprises. "Corruption" is just one word "but a multitude of baffling realities lie concealed and congealed within it. Indeed, if 'corruption' helps us to decipher independent India's political economy, it foretells its, rather, dismal future as well" (Baxi, 1989: 1). Moral crusades against corruption, have, from Total Revolution in the seventies to Bofors in the mid-eighties (regardless of merits at law of accusation) disorganised and reorganised practices of politics, with the weight of consequences which later history will undoubtedly pause to record. The nature of India's free press, and the fortunes of India's leading journalists, have been made and unmade by the anti-corruption crusades because "corruption is the hard-core pornography of power; and has all its voyeuristic attractions" (Ibid., 4). The emergence of a bribal culture in state and society and the ritual nature of moral crusades

against it (Reisman: 1973, 15-33, 95-118) has yet to be cognised by theoretical discourse of social sciences. The four decades since Independence have also witnessed a steady, and alarming, rise of the *folklore* of corruption, nourished periodically by the *expose* of corruption in the life of society and state. The heavy incidence of corruption falls unevenly on the impoverished multitudes of Indian humanity; it appears to them as an enrichment of the repertoire of exploitation. Despite all this, social theory in India has yet to address itself to the magnitude and complexity of this phenomenon, let alone develop a rigorous theoretical understanding of corruption as a state formative practice and process, as a vehicle of privatisation of state resources, recasting modern Indian democratic state in the image of the latter day avatar of the Company Bahadur mercantilist state.

IV

The problematisation of our modes of production of learning and knowledge should be facilitated by a confrontation with the politics of memory and memory of politics. Political discourse and praxis, when read from the standpoint of hermeneutics of memory, bring home the truth of Milan Kundera's aphorism in *The Joke:* the struggle of men (and women) is the struggle of memory over forgetfulness. Contrary to the public adage, public memory is not short but rather made short by processes of power and domination. Indeed, power may be redescribed as processes by which public memory is ordained, and oblivion organised, by imposition of hegemonic temporalities. By the same token, struggle as counter-power must achieve prescriptive reversal of such ordained temporalities and of memories and oblivions. Emplotment of memory and forgetfulness are equally crucial to power as well as struggle against power.

The theme of politics of forgetfulness lies beyond the bounds of this paper. But, perhaps, it should be sufficient to raise interrogation concerning the state of social theory in India today: is it complicitous with power or subversive with struggle or both? An unsatisfactory formulation; and yet one which enables to raise some fairly acute questions.

Is social theory in India likely to revisit the partition of India in ways which would enable us to rework, retool, recraft our understanding of politics, state, society and culture in the subcontinent? Is this revisitation likely to be productive of a new understanding of power, legitimation, nation-state? Post-modernist political theory enables Lyotard to rethink through meditations on Anschwitz a whole gamut of critical issues in the theory of legitimation, beyond Weber and Marx. If we were (speaking at least for myself) not in the business of mimesis, the same point could have been made independently of reference to Lyotard; but he exists and some of us are under his cognitive, epistemic or at least quotational spell. Even otherwise, should we not ask: how long can we afford to turn our backs to the traumatic events at the foundation of the Indian nation-state consistent to claims to erudite comprehension (in theoretical terms) of contemporary India?

At different, but not lesser, levels it might be useful to ask ourselves: how is that social theory as yet remains unilluminated by the Total Revolution? How is it that the first decade of Shah Commission Report went unnoticed by the burgeoning class of political scientists and theorists? And why in this heyday of banner waving about "secularism" and "pseudo-secularism" do we manage to maintain university libraries devoid even of a full set of reports — since the sixties — of judicial commissions of enquiry on the so-called "communal riots"? And what happened to our theoretical consciousness concerning reservational equality for ten long years of existence of the Mandal Commission Report? I know the questions can be reformulated with greater precision and elegance. But even in their rawness they do invite attention to a series of absences which severely question some of our own traditions of pedagogy, research and scholarship.

V

To conclude this very rough sketch, it would appear that our espousal of transformative causes has not kept pace with the need to renovate our practices of theoretical labour. No one

would be happier than I if this hypothesis is proved abundantly false. But I have a feeling, at least for myself, that much of our social engagement does not inform our academic being. Even if there is a grain of truth in this perception, we must acknowledge the "germ of doubt gnawing at the heart of conviction". And this should goad us, perhaps to proceed beyond the merger of heroic activism with tearful accountability.

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4

CULTURE AND POLITICAL ANALYSIS IN INDIA

Sarah Joseph

The term political analysis as used here refers to the study of the structures of power and dominance in a society and to the production of reproduction, negotiation and challenge which contribute towards sustaining and modifying those structures. Defined in this way, political analysis need not be a concern of political scientists alone but may be undertaken within the framework of many academic disciplines.

It is noticeable that the concept of culture is being given considerable importance in contemporary political analysis. The politics of culture is being investigated from a number of different perspectives. Further, the cultural context of social and political processes is also being considered much more seriously than was previously the case, when devising political explanations. It is believed that the analysis of the cultural context can help us to understand the framework of meaning within which political processes take place. The actions and responses of people also may be understood, it is held, in terms of prevailing cultural codes and meanings and such an understanding can throw light on wider social processes.

The emphasis which is being placed on the interpretation of culture in contemporary political analysis marks a major

shift from the kind of studies which dominated in the post-war decades. The dominance of positivist/empiricist methodologies at the time made it difficult to study the cultural dimension of reality.[1] Cultural factors were considered subjective, 'internal', and therefore not accessible to scientific analysis. Thus, in many studies made within liberal individualist assumptions, the focus was on the legalistic study of institutions and the strategic interactions of individuals. Marxist theory has of course has always recognised the political importance of culture through its concept of ideology but here also, under the influence of positivism, reductionist notions of ideology and culture prevailed for many years. It was only with the work of Lukacs and Gramsci — and the translation of their work into different languages in the post-war years — that the concept of culture acquired importance in Marxist analysis.

Although the new sensitivity in political analysis to issues of culture is generally to be welcomed, not all attempts to incorporate culture have been unproblematical. In this study I will identify and analyse two major ways in which the concept of culture is being introduced into contemporary political analysis in India to highlight the kind of questions that have been addressed as also some of the limitations of those different modes of analysis. By doing so it is hoped to also indicate some possible directions for a more adequate form of political analysis.

In one influential contemporary mode of analysis culture is conceptualised as the unique expression in the realm of belief systems, ideas and aesthetic expressions, of a community, the source of its continuing identity, the framework within which it can develop with authenticity. Such an organic totalising conception of culture may be found in a dominant mode of cultural anthropology but it was also adopted by many nationalist movements for whom the assertion of indigenous culture against the colonial was an important political strategy. They projected the national identity as the political expression of a pre-existing cultural community. Thus ironically enough, there was often considerable area of agreement between the Western anthropolo-

gists' conceptualisation of the culture of 'Other' communities and nationalist self perceptions. In India, the concept of a pre-existing cultural community originally articulated in the nineteenth century, has continued into the post-Independence period and has influenced a mode of political analysis. Studies made within this orientation have generally worked with a notion of culture as providing a set of shared meanings and symbols which can be used to interpret attitudes and actions. Further, a strong notion of what characterises indigenous practices and institutions has been put forward to defend a conception of political identity and evolution with cultural parameters.[2] Such a notion of culture has influenced a wide range of studies.

A different way in which culture has been appropriated for political analysis in India today is found in studies which focus on culture as a site of political struggles. Here the politics of culture itself is being interrogated from a number of different perspectives. The emphasis is not only on revealing how culture may intersect with structures of power and sustain them but also on studying the political struggles which may take place in the sphere of culture. Such studies have drawn attention to the ways in which culture has helped to reproduce structures as also to the ways in which individuals may negotiate such structures through their actions, the constraints as well as the spaces.[3] The emergence of new social movements like the feminist movement and other movements of the marginalised has clearly given considerable impetus to this form of political analysis since they have been concerned with deconstructing dominant conceptualisations which help to sustain hierarchies of power.

The theoretical and political inspiration for radical studies within this genre has come from thinkers like Gramsci and Foucault. Writing within the Marxian tradition, Gramsci linked the study of culture to the notion of ideology. In his reinterpretation of the Marxist theory of ideology, ideology is seen as the world view and thinking of a class or group, it encompasses more or less the whole sphere of culture.[4] Further, it is linked to the history, experience and interests

of particular classes and groups, embodying their perspective on the world. This gives rise to the notion of dominant and subaltern cultures coexisting within a society and to a focus on the struggle between groups and classes which may take place also in the sphere of culture. The earlier Marxist notion of ideology as representing distorted thought, and the notion of false consciousness, are not given importance in this interpretation of ideology.

Another insight which Gramsci contributed to the study of culture is regarding the way in which culture is embodied in language and everyday practices. Language, he wrote, contains elements of a conception of the world and of culture. It also includes traces of previous meanings and understandings of reality. "When referring to these past conceptualizations language use becomes metaphorical. Language thus serves both as a living thing and a museum of fossils of life and civilisation".[5]

With Foucault and other post-structuralist thinkers, further dimensions of the interaction between culture and power were opened up for analysis. Nothing like a complete discussion of these insights would be possible within the scope of this discussion and I would merely mention a few directions which cultural studies have taken within this orientation. For instance, Foucault's emphasis on understanding the micro-processes of power embodied in taken-for-granted conceptualisations and everyday practices and the way in which these constitute subjectivity has provided an important insight for many studies of cultural practices. The influence of post-structuralist thinkers like Foucault, Derrida and Lacan has also been towards studying culture in action, towards studying how subjective and collective meanings help to construct identities, how power is discursively constructed and how politics therefore is about contestation over meanings. Since it is held by such thinkers that reality can only be known through its representations, no authoritative accounts of reality are possible. And any attempt to provide such an account itself becomes a mode of power. The struggle over meanings and interpretations becomes a primary arena of political struggle.

Within the broad orientation provided by such theories different emphases have been given in different studies.[6] One tendency has been to conceptualise culture as consisting of a series of literary and non-literary texts which have to be critically read to show up possible silences and distortions. Interpretations of texts may also be used to throw light on wider social processes. For some, the purpose would be to provide a richer and more comprehensive understanding of social reality. Others, however, maintain that polyvocality must be accepted as an intrinsic aspect of social life. In either case, the notion of some kind of stable subjects for whom the reading is being made is retained, also a limited notion of criticality according to which texts may be evaluated.

A different emphasis within cultural studies can be found within those studies which focus on the functions of culture within a particular society, studying the cultural transactions, the trade-offs and exchanges which may take place. Thus terms like circulation, negotiation and exchange may be used to describe cultural transactions. The term 'symbolic capital' has also been used to refer to one aspect of cultural exchanges conceived on the model of political economy. Within this mode of analysis it is emphasised that one effect of power in society has been to ensure that traces of such cultural exchanges are effaced so that cultural texts appear to be autonomous, outside power, spontaneous.

Both the modes of cultural analysis described above, the study of culture as the expression of the identity and history of a community as well as studies which focus primarily on culture as a site of political struggles, are concerned in different ways with issues of power. In the first case, the concern is with the power of global forces which are trying to colonise indigenous cultures, homogenise them or retain them as sanctioned pockets of difference. In the second, issues of power within a society are addressed more directly, the emphasis being on studying how power and dominance are expressed and reproduced through culture. An analysis of each mode will help to bring out their contribution towards political analysis as well as their limitations.

II

A development within social science in India today is the emergence of what I will term a culturological approach to the study of Indian society and thought. This is an approach which does not merely give importance to culture when analysing society but which conceptualises society itself in terms of its culture. Identifying Indian society in terms of its culture it gives priority to the political project of trying to articulate an independent cultural and political identity for the society and of attempting to subvert imposed and alien categories by a critique which upholds as an alternative the wisdom embodied in our own indigenous culture and systems of knowledge. The indigenous/alien dichotomy is used as a critical tool to distinguish the authentic culture of the society and importance is given to the interpretation of cultural discourses, or texts, the attempt being to generate 'insiders' descriptions of social and political phenomena. Solutions to social problems, it is argued, should be sought from within the cultural resources of the society and even critiques should base themselves on internal modes of resistance.

This is only a shorthand description of an approach which has acquired some visibility of late. It may bring to mind the work of the Jaipur group encompassing philosophers like Daya Krishna, social scientists like V.R. Mehta, and many others, also the work of sociologists like A.K. Saran, social analysts like Ashis Nandy and a nationalist school of literary criticism reflected in the work of people like C.D. Narasimaiah.[7] Echoes of these themes may also be found from time to time in the works of other thinkers who may not otherwise be associated with this mode of analysis.

A tendency in some, although not all, culturological studies is to associate Indian culture with something which existed in its purest form in the past. Therefore to revive and protect the distinctiveness of the culture becomes a guiding principle of inquiry, overriding in importance more traditional concerns of political analysis. One of the criteria by which contemporary developments may be judged then is according to whether or not they promote or hinder such a goal.

The links between such an approach and the Indological tradition are of course evident. In fact, some of its practitioners may be found among sociologists and anthropologists who are heirs to the Indological tradition as it developed in Indian sociology and whose writings may be found in journals like *Contributions to Indian Sociology*.[8] It should be noted however that the range of interest of what has been termed here a culturological approach is wider, penetrating into different social sciences and influencing social scientists both on the Right and the Left of the political spectrum, though it represents a tendency which draws some sustenance from the Indological tradition. This is not surprising perhaps since anthropology is the only social science for which culture has always been a central category of analysis. It has therefore offered a powerful model of culture for social science.

A brief digression into anthropology is in order here. As is well known, anthropology was a social science born of the encounter between Western and non-Western civilisations in the context of the colonial expansion of the European powers. Western anthropologists were fascinated by the seemingly endless ways in which human societies could organise themselves and understand the world they inhabited. The 'Otherness' of these communities seemed to be self evident and to be embodied in a unique configuration of beliefs and practices. To this they gave the name culture.[9]

Certain assumptions were made in anthropological studies of the time and many of those assumptions still influence social science. One was regarding the self evident character of cultural boundaries and the capacity of different communities to maintain their distinctiveness over time. Cultural boundaries were assumed to coincide in general with spatial ones, particularly since many of the communities studied were geographically isolated. It was assumed that cultural communities formed a reasonably coherent whole, each with its notion of rationality and its own value hierarchy. Culture was viewed as a totalising frame of meaning, influencing ideas and actions.

This approach to culture influenced the methodology which was adopted. Basically it was an individualising one, stressing difference and uniqueness. Hence it raised such questions as 'How can we understand the Other?', or 'Can we speak across cultures?' Relativism was built into the method, a relativism of meanings and values in relation to the culture. Social scientists borrowed terms like 'forms of life' and 'language games' to describe culture and it was held that the structure of a culture reflects the structure and rules of language, that understanding one culture from the perspective of another was as problematical as translating from one language to another, and that evaluation should only be in terms of internal value systems.

The organic, totalising notion of cultures has of course come under challenge within anthropology itself and many new insights and approaches have been incorporated into the discipline. While this cannot be disputed, it can still be maintained that the organic notion of culture continues to influence a significant number of studies.[10] In India it also colours the work of those who emphasise the political importance of reviving and developing indigenous culture conceived as the expression of a cultural community. For instance, Daya Krishna, writing on the relationship between philosophy and social reality says that a society is known by its culture, its contribution in the fields of knowledge and the arts, rather than in terms of its economic and material success. He adds that to identify a society in terms of its culture is to study its past and not the immediate present, which is dominated by economics and politics.[11] Similar views have been expressed by other writers in this genre.

A type of cultural nationalism colours many studies and to defend the distinctiveness of the culture in the face of global forces is a guiding principle of a number of social scientists. Attempts are then made to define the distinguishing characteristics of the culture over time as well as to defend the political and cultural assertions of the cultural community. To define the distinctiveness of a culture is to try and establish boundaries, to provide criteria by which the indigenous may be distinguished from the alien. Some social

scientists have indeed denied that the culture can have absolute boundaries but they then proceed to cite the very openness of Indian culture as its distinguishing mark, associating dogmatism and closure with the infiltration of alien elements particularly through Muslim and British rule. As Ashis Nandy has put it:

> It is in the nature of traditional India to maintain a certain openness of cultural boundaries, a permeability which allows new influences to flow in and be integrated as a new set of age old traditions... and for some cultural elements to flow out.... These two processes of inflow and outflow determine, at a given point, Indian culture rather than a rigidly defined set of practices or products surviving from society's past.[12]

For Nandy, as for many others, it is the ability to integrate elements from 'outside' which is the hallmark of indigenous Indian culture.

An alternative strategy to distinguish the alien from the indigenous which has been used is to refer to a period of history before major interactions with the outside world took place. This 'pristine' phase of the development of the culture is then taken as the most clearly indigenous and it may also be used as a definition of what needs to be preserved in the contemporary world. Thus the open-ended Hinduism of the earlier times, or the philosophy of the *Upanishads*, or the peaceful coexistence of 'back to back' communities at that time, may be taken as examples of indigenous culture, as also as exemplars for the future.[13]

Since culture has been considered to include knowledge systems, the revival of indigenous sciences has become part of the project of reviving culture. Indigenous science is contrasted with Western science, or modern science, which is seen as an expression of cultural modernity. The attack on modernity in its different forms is, in fact, characteristic of many studies made in this mode. The journal *Alternatives* has published a number of articles on such themes.[14] One theme links modernity to violence and Dachau and Gulag are offered as examples of modernity carried to its logical

conclusion. Capitalist imperialism, it is said, brought modernity to India through the colonial State which tried to reorder Indian society and inflicted violence on its people and its culture. Such policies were also carried on by the post-colonial State which adopted a path of development and modernisation which brought violence into Indian society and in particular to the weak and vulnerable. The revival of indigenous knowledge systems could, it is held, help us to avoid such violence and follow a path more in keeping with the native genius. Based as they were on a world view which assumed a harmony between man and nature, indigenous forms of knowledge and the techniques evolved by people over the ages could promote a more sound pattern of development.

One can find in such criticisms of modernity echoes of the Romantic reaction against Enlightenment values and thought in the eighteenth century. In that debate a similar opposition was posed between positivistic science, false universalism, and a—contextual notion of truth, and a more contextualised, grounded notion of knowledge and culture. As R.B.J. Walker has pointed out, at that time culture came to be associated with critiques of Enlightenment values. Further, Romantic thought was also associated with a type of cultural nationalism, with the nation being identified with its culture and history.[15] This naturally led to a defence of plural cultures and ways of life. The similarities with the culturological approach in contemporary Indian social science are too close to be ignored.

The study of history has played an important part in culturological studies, particularly in those studies which define Indian culture in terms of its past. Nobody could deny the importance of history in understanding and for providing historically sensitive and contextualised interpretations. But how has history been understood in terms of this approach? One tendency has been to assume a continuity between past and present whereby history becomes the narrative of a pre-existing ethnic unit. This history may have been disturbed by invasions from without but it is assumed that the continuity of the culture has not been totally

disrupted and may now be revived. Balibar, discussing the history and ideology of nation formation in Europe refers to a similar process of legitimation by which the formation of the nation is presented as the fulfilment of a project stretching over centuries.[16] To present Indian history in this way has also been characteristic of a stream within nationalist historiography. Within the culturological approach nation formation is presented as a cultural project and it is assumed that there is a coincidence between cultural boundaries and the boundaries of the political unit. Such arguments can serve a legitimising function for a version of nationalism and through it the politics of today can be projected onto the past. Thus if the desired present is defined in exclusivist terms then the past also is defined by the exclusion of subcultures termed alien and denied a history in the society. Howsoever defined, the problems of a complex and fragmented present are not confronted in their own terms but are considered to result from the imposition of alien structures and forms of thought.

Another area of interest has been characterisation of the pre-modern civilisation of India which is considered most authentically Indian. For instance, the ordering of power in pre-modern India has been conceptualised by V.R. Mehta as a series of concentric 'oceanic' circles, a notion which is held to express the essential quality of the relatively decentralised and non-conflictual quality of Hindu society.[17] He holds that a similar ordering of power could also serve as a model for contemporary society. For another social scientist the past ordering of power is seen as a "circle of circles of caste and regional communities with the State sitting at the centre".[18] This is contrasted with the more centralised and rigid ordering of power introduced by the British and which is held responsible for the conflicts and divisions of contemporary Indian society. Most of these conceptualisations assume a certain functionality and therefore implicit justification of the institutions of the past, projecting the notion of a society held together by its culture and practices rather than by the State and power. For instance, with regard to the problem of communalism it has been held that

colonialism initiated the process of enumeration of religious communities thus giving them a sense of a defined boundary and political importance in terms of the new political institutions introduced by the British. Religious communities thus acquired identities and began functioning as pressure groups. This led logically to the demand for Western style secularism according to which the State was to be separated from society while at the same time following a policy of equal protection to all religious communities. Attributing the increase of communalism to such policies social scientists like Sudipta Kaviraj have looked back nostalgically to the past with its overlapping and 'fuzzy' identities and notions of tolerance and mutual coexistence within the overall cultural framework of the society.[19]

The notion of secularism has indeed been a favourite example for social scientists and politicians, of an alien category which has been imposed on Indian society with bad effects. Unfortunately the debate regarding secularism has tended to get bogged down in a discussion of the meaning of the term in the Western tradition as contrasted with the alternative, indigenous notion of tolerance which is said to have prevailed in the past. Indigenous concepts can better reflect Indian reality, it is argued, the nature of Indian religions and the patterns of coexistence which were evolved over time. The need then is:

> to save ethnic and religious tolerance from the hegemonic languages of secularism popularised by the Western intelligentsia and middle classes exposed to the global dominant languages of the nation-State in this part of the world.[20]

The contrast made is between secularism as a strategy of the State in a multi-religious society and tolerance as a response made within an overarching cultural framework, to plurality. But to what extent is the tolerance of pre-modern India an option for us today? On what terms could we attempt to recreate it? These are questions which have not really been addressed. Here again it could be said that to study the highly contentious problem of communalism in

terms of the indigenous/alien dichotomy diverts attention from discussion of the social context in which the notion of tolerance prevailed and the extent to which it could provide a viable option for contemporary society.

The way in which the concept of culture has been studied in culturological studies precludes the possibility of studying the phenomenon of ideology. Paradoxically, the ideological character of dominant forms of Western thought has been recognised. It has been often pointed out that although claiming universality and objectivity such thought in fact represents the experience and interests of particular societies and even of certain classes within those societies. Denunciations of Western science, or of the discourse of development, are, for instance, common. But the same notion of ideology is not used when studying Indian culture. Here the tendency is to valorise the indigenous while arguing that any criticism should only be in terms of internal value systems and internal modes of resistance. But the notion of 'internal' criticisms is a problematical one, even apart from the fact that it does not prevent its supporters from denouncing Western culture. A number of issues are raised here — how are internal value systems to be identified, how are conflicts between different 'internal' value systems to be resolved, how are different interpretations of 'internal' values to be assessed?

One way out of this impasse would be to argue that internal value systems are always the subject of considerable debate within a society and all that is needed therefore is to use and develop those critiques which express the viewpoint of the dissident, who may also be probably the oppressed in society. These issues were highlighted in the debates which took place regarding how to respond to sati deaths in contemporary India. One point of view strongly represented by Ashis Nandy was that sati should be described in terms which would take into account the history of the phenomenon and the set of cultural meanings and symbols which it invoked. It should not merely be described as suicide or murder.[21] Important as it may be to put forward contextualised interpretations of such phenomena, this cannot resolve the

problem of evaluation. While the invoking of subaltern viewpoints and forms of resistance are a valuable strategy of critique, evaluation would also require reading the silences and distortion of a culture.

To read a culture in terms of its silences and distortions is central to the problem of evaluation. It is the absence of such readings which has led to the valorisation of an institution like caste on the grounds that it is truly indigenous and unique and can play a useful role in contemporary society. Examples of such a view may be found in the work of Bhiku Parekh and Rajni Kothari, among others. In an article titled 'Caste and Politics: The Great Secular Upsurge' Kothari wrote:

> The moot point is that here is an indigenous institution playing a modern democratic role, something that social anthropologists should have noticed long back but given their class background they have been unable to.[22]

The issue of caste and its future in Indian society is surely considerably more complex than has been presented in such statements. A critical reading of the silences and strategies of the lower castes might generate a different assessment of the way in which caste operates in Indian society.[23] Whether such readings draw on internal or alien categories would seem to be of secondary importance.

A precondition for a critical reading of social institutions would be to understand them in relation to other related institutions and processes in society. But what is noticeable here is a tendency to understand caste as a 'cultural' category. Caste then becomes an element in the Hindu world view which influences people's self perception and identity, a valuable alternative to the individualism characteristic of Western society. It provides a sense of community to people which can protect them against isolation and need. The negative aspects of caste — inequality, exploitation and the like — recede into the background in this view, or it is considered that they can be undermined without at the same time subverting the institution as a whole.

Studies of Indian society and politics in terms of its culture have often been presented as radical and innovative. However, the overall effect may be to defend what has existed in the past and to limit the possibility of critical interrogation of our society and its traditions.

III

Contrasting with the culturological approach are studies which have adopted a more differentiated notion of culture and which aim at interrogating traditions and understanding the role which traditions may play in social life, particularly their implication in power and domination. Such studies claim to be political not only in terms of their focus of interest, which concerns the politics of culture, but also in terms of their possible counter-hegemonic role, as political interventions in the ongoing struggle to control meaning.

A vast range of such studies are now being undertaken and it would be an impossible task to try to categorise them in any exhaustive way. However, a brief and selective account of some of the kinds of analysis being undertaken can help to identify and try to locate some important themes and directions. This can serve as a basis for discussion of some of the questions raised by such studies and the nature of limits of the kind of political analysis they represent.

One type of study has focused on what sociologists have termed socialisation processes and what Marxists term reproduction. This would include the study of the practices of everyday life to understand how they transmit over generations belief systems, a hierarchy of values and a way of life. Political analysis would try to cut through the taken-for-granted quality of such processes and show how they may also serve to sustain domination and power, it may also study, what modes of resistance are possible.

Another group of studies has interrogated cultural traditions, conceptualising them as consisting of literary or non-literary texts. These texts are to be read to understand their silences and possible distortions, the way they may enact power. A critical reading would try to challenge their authority and disclose their function in society. Since the

constructed nature of all cultural narratives is assumed critical evaluation can only be through counterposing alternative accounts which may articulate submerged voices and try to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

While interrogating tradition and studying the constraints and limits which it might impose on individuals has been the focus of some studies, others have also looked at the 'spaces' which tradition may provide for individuals and groups to articulate their views and negotiate or modify structures. Others have focused on the analysis of cultural products such as films, books, music, and the like in terms of their conditions of production, internal structure, meaning, sign systems as well as their circulation and functions in society.

Another area of interest has been the study of political processes and disruptive events through cultural categories, that is, interpreting the conceptualisations and shared meanings available to participants and understanding their attitudes and actions in terms of this universe of meaning. To understand the 'native's point of view' has been used as a strategy to increase our understanding of such phenomena as riots and protests. It is hoped that this can help to challenge the authority of official narratives and help to show why particular strategies to deal with such problems have had only limited success.

A common assumption of such studies is that language is a social practice, that it plays a constitutive role in influencing our understanding of the world, that therefore traditional notions of objectivity and truth can no longer apply. There may be truths embodied in different cultural accounts but these truths are always incomplete. Cultural accounts should be seen as representations, and each representation can have no simple relationship with a reality 'out there'. Representations are thoroughly enmeshed in language, they form discourses whose referents are other discourses. Analysis then can only critically evaluate those discourses to bring out their constructed character, their limitations, perhaps to offer alternative accounts.

Inevitably such approaches rule out a notion of critical evaluation which would use experience, or reality as a point

of critical evaluation. Foucault would also argue that therefore they rule out the traditional notion of ideology, which counterposed a form of transparent thought to distorted thought. But although cultural narratives cannot be compared to reality it is accepted that they are implicated in power relations and enact them. To evaluate them from the perspective of alternative accounts then becomes a political statement intended to subvert power hierarchies and reduce the hegemonic influence of certain cultural narratives.

Culture in many of the studies is viewed not as a fixed coherent set of signs and meanings which can be recorded but as an arena of struggle and change with change being understood as 'discursive displacement', Gayatri Spivak has referred to critical reading as a way of understanding and promoting change. "Reading is an active transaction between past and future."[24] Struggle is viewed primarily as a contestation over meaning to be pursued by various modes which may include writing, debate, theatrical performance and the like.

Certain questions come to mind regarding this mode of cultural analysis. One concerns the kind of explanations they can offer. One kind of explanation is in terms of the participants' point of view, interpreting this point of view in terms of shared meanings, available sources of information, powerful contemporary texts. To approach history, or even contemporary events in this way may certainly lead to a richer understanding but it may be easier to understand subordination than resistance. Recognising this, many studies have also tried to understand events and processes in a historical and social context. But the context is often described in fairly traditional terms, that is, facts, figures, categories drawn from a variety of sources. Many of these facts and figures may have been compiled by empirical methods designed to capture reality 'objectively'. It has not always been possible to show how these 'objective' categories are translated into cultural codes and symbols. But the context cannot be treated merely as a form of external causality. That would require delineating a hierarchy of causal factors which not many would be willing to accept,

though sometimes the importance of certain material factors may be implicitly assumed. Thus the relation between text and context is often an uneasy one.

A criticism from a slightly different perspective, of the tendency to offer reductive explanations in terms of larger historical forces, has been put forward by Gyanendra Pandey in a recent article.[25] Pandey argues that by putting forward such explanations the immediacy of pain and anguish may be lost. Similar pleas for placing pain and anguish at the centre of discussion have also been made by other social scientists.[26] While this is an important reminder that we should not forget the marginalised and their experience while constructing narratives, and that our units of discourse must always be seen as provisional, it can raise other problems for the social scientist. If understood as defence of a plurality of narratives to represent different perspectives and experiences, it would probably have the effect of diluting the political edge of explanation.

Since this cultural mode of analysis claims to be political and to be a form of political intervention, it becomes relevant to ask what notion of criticality it embodies and what kind of politics it can generate. Criticality may be expressed through challenging the authority of narratives which claim to be objective, by showing up their constructed character, by reading the silences and distortions of texts, by offering alternative narratives. Further, analysis may try to reveal the hegemonic role of certain conceptualisations. In this way analysis may hope to play a counter-hegemonic role.

As was mentioned earlier, cultural critiques would fall into the broad category of ideology critique, though they do not accept traditional notions of ideology which counterpose ideology or distorted thought to transparent thought which reflects reality more accurately. However, while this may have brought some gains in terms of making accessible for analysis modes of domination which are embodied in language and practices, it has also ruled out one form of criticality which the earlier notion of ideology allowed through such concepts as distortion and false consciousness. Admittedly, distortion has always been a problematical concept but it

referred to thought which masked the contradictions of society because it was rooted in a society organised in such a way as to conceal its real structure. Ideological thought then was only a part of culture and it was distinguished not only by its role but also by its content. It also followed that ideological thought could be challenged as part of a process of transforming society and not merely as a way presenting alternative forms of thought. Unfortunately this aspect of ideology has been lost in contemporary approaches.[27] Therefore while cultural critiques may critically examine practices like sati, or communal forms of thought, they are restricted merely to studying their role and function in society, understanding them in their historical context, and in terms of prevailing meanings. It is more difficult, within such approaches to find a theoretical foothold from which to oppose them. The other implication of post-structuralist modes of thought for the study of culture concerns its assumption regarding the fluidity of the subjects of discourse. By problematising the subject, attention may be drawn to the power which is embodied in dominant conceptualisations and which may be internalised, but this puts into question the subject for whom emancipatory readings are being made. However, action for social transformation requires a certain assumption of the unity of the subject, of what it means to be human and this has been ruled out by post-structuralist thinkers like Derrida who emphasise the situatedness of language and notions of the self. Both projects may be required for a transformatory politics. While the problematising of subjectivities is important for subverting power, it may also be necessary to accept existing notions of the subject as a strategy for political action.

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5

SWARAJ AND JIEFANG
Freedom Discourse in India and China

Manoranjan Mohanty

I. Paradox of the World Process

The contemporary world process is characterised by a paradox. On the one hand, there is an apparent victory of the paradigm of capitalist modernisation in world scale. The collapse of most of the socialist regimes and crisis in centrally planned economies have given rise to this impression. On the other hand, it has been realised that all over the world the model of capitalist modernisation which has been in operation in one form or another has resulted in serious problems like environmental degradation, social tensions and alienation of communities. In other words, the basic orientation of the Western industrial revolution which aimed at promoting growth with the help of modern technology is at the root of the development process of not only the Western capitalist countries but also of the socialist and other Third World countries. And most of these countries as well as many Western societies have experienced acute problems of alienation and violence in modern times. Seen from the vantage point of the people of the third world, this paradox is vivid. In recent years, third world regimes and elites in general have been almost persuaded to adopt the paradigm of capitalist modernisation. They have accepted the path of "market friendly growth", emphasising "productivity and

efficiency" and "disciplining labour" and such other dimensions as are stipulated by the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Yet, these countries are faced with serious demands of their people for basic human needs, political autonomy and cultural rights, fulfilment of which does not seem possible within the dominant world paradigm which underlines the SAP. In this critical moment people of the third world are reminded of the values and objectives of their freedom struggle.

The force of the global trend now compels all political and intellectual perspectives to fit themselves into its well-defined parameters. Political leaders of the third world seek economic assistance of the World Bank or of the Western powers to overcome their domestic crisis. Even the critics of the ruling parties, at best, question the "conditionality" of aid rather than the submergence of third world political economies into the paradigm of capitalist modernisation. Intellectual perspectives, especially in social sciences, facilitate this "integration" far more easily than in any other sphere. Economics of liberalisation, politics of privatisation, sociology of the individual and groups as consumers, and psychology of achievement and competition, to name only a few, emerge as dominant themes in the practice of knowledge. Management, Commerce and Business Studies rise to lead the social sciences. Educational policy is remade to become "relevant" to the new stage of modernisation. A cultural policy is formulated on the initiative of the state. Since social science in particular, and the spheres of education and culture in general, are highly dependent on the state in the third world and are, at the same time, closely linked with the world process, they are made to serve the global trend more directly than others. This is how knowledge and politics are related to each other and memories of freedom struggle are transcended by new preoccupations.

When we put this trend in historical perspective and see its character in the context of the values of the freedom struggle in countries like India and China, we can clearly see a great dysjunction. The contemporary preoccupation of the third world elites is fundamentally divorced from the primary

goals of the liberation movements which took place in these countries. These societies fought for freedom from foreign rule as a part of a larger vision of achieving freedom in every sphere of life. No doubt, there were significant debates over these values and the methods of realising them. But all of them were part of the freedom discourse, i.e., a mutual engagement about fighting domination and seeking liberation and fulfilment. The political movements and the intellectual currents took their respective stand on the issues of freedom struggle. Today when arenas of unfreedom are starkly facing us, political and intellectual preoccupations are delinked from the pursuit of freedom. The existence of class inequality, caste domination, ethnic alienation, gender exploitation and above all political authoritarianism at several levels should make the pursuit of freedom the central task of intellectual reflection. Self-determination and liberation from multiple forms of domination and exploitation are still and will continue to be the main demands of people.

While the elite discourse in the third world has distanced itself from the original values like "Swaraj" in case of India and "Jiefang" (Liberation) in case of China, the movements of people seeking freedom in various spheres of society keep the freedom discourse alive.[1] The tribals fight for freedom to utilise the forest resources for their living. The dalits (scheduled castes) seek freedom from social oppression. The vast masses of the poor — the landless, small peasants and unorganised workers — are fighting for freedom from hunger and starvation. Economically backward regions and groups, oppressed or alienated nationalities are striving for self-determination. Even after decades of independence, third world countries have to accept conditions of dependence, thus the issue of defending national sovereignty once again becomes salient. It is these movements which maintain the link with the anti-colonial struggle.

The protagonists of capitalist modernisation assert that in their success lies the fulfilment of the aspirations of all sections of the society. But the historical experience points to the contrary. The centralised State suppressing all local aspirations, the need-multiplying and nature-destructive

development process that creates a competitive, consumerist society and the global hierarchy of developed and dependent nations are antithetical to the vision of Swaraj and Jiefang.[2] Thus, while the elite discourse is increasingly fitted into the global perspective on modernisation, social struggles at the grassroots level carry on the freedom discourse. As the State organs and the elite institutions get fully preoccupied with the discourse on "structural adjustment" and modernisation, the gap between them and the people's movements grows further and social struggles get intensified.

Freedom discourse becomes a testing ground for the measures which political elites take in their pursuit of modernisation. It constitutes a challenge to those measures. It demands that as post-colonial transformation enters a new era, memories of the freedom struggle are constantly recalled with fresh meaning put into them. The paradigm of capitalist modernisation will, however, have us believe that "Swaraj" and "Jiefang" were historically dated objectives which had been fulfilled and modernisation and growth are relevant values in the present-day world.

II. Swaraj and Jiefang

Swaraj and Jiefang, in one sense, are code words for the central values of the liberation struggle in colonial societies. Even though these terms are associated with Mahatma Gandhi and Chairman Mao respectively, it is important to take note of the values and goals of other leaders of these movements. Furthermore, the struggles that various sections of society launched have been now recalled with greater care than before. Besides Gandhi and Nehru, increasingly more attention than before is now paid to Patel, Azad and Subhas Bose in constructing the history of the Indian National Congress. The revival of the legacies of Bhagat Singh in the 1980s and B.R. Ambedkar in the early 1990s is part of the process of widening the perspective of freedom under the pressure of people's movement. The resurgence of local heroes in various parts of the country in recent years has enriched the understanding of our freedom struggle. That people were fighting against colonialism on various fronts

and that this struggle was linked with movements against landlords and kings, social oppression and economic hardships, has now become clearer. In the same way, in China, the memory of the anti-colonial struggle has been integrated into the campaign to unify China, to transform the system of gentry-feudalism, to promote democracy and science. It is important to remember that even before the Communist Party was born, Dr. Sun Yat-sen and his Guomindang (Kuomintang or KMT) were active in the Chinese revolutionary movement. The large number of intellectuals — Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao (the Marxists), and Hu Shi and Guo Moruo (liberal-democrats) and others — had visions of a new China in the wake of the May Fourth Movement of 1919. Chiang Kai-shek's KMT, despite the compromises it made, had its perspective focused on a nationalist resurgent China. Recent researches on Chinese revolution have brought to light the variety of local movements which took place in China which provide added meaning to the vision of Jiefang.[3]

The term Swaraj (literally meaning self-rule in most of the Sanskrit-related languages of India) had become popular in India during the last decade of the nineteenth century with Tilak's electrifying slogan: "Swaraj is my birth right and I shall have it". Another concept which accompanied it and which looks remote today was Swadeshi (indigenous). It was Gandhi who substantially contributed to the expanding discussion on Swaraj. His book *Hind Swaraj* originally written in Gujarati in the form of a dialogue between a reader and the editor in 1908 was proscribed by the Bombay Government and even slighted by Gokhale. From 1921 onwards, however, it was this booklet which was considered an epitome of Gandhi's philosophy. Gandhi reiterated its contents throughout his life.

Gandhi does not give a full definition of Swaraj in his discourse. He tells the reader: "It is as difficult for me to understand the true nature of Swaraj as it seems to you to be easy. I shall therefore, for the time being, content myself with endeavouring to show that what you call Swaraj is not truly Swaraj". The reader had meant by Swaraj the mere

ending of English rule in India while leaving unchallenged the values that the British had brought with them and imparted here. In his reply to the reader Gandhi had this to say: "In effect it means this: that we want English rule without the Englishman. You want the tiger's nature, but not the tiger; that is to say you will make India English. And when it becomes English, it will be called not Hindustan but Englishtan. This is not the Swaraj that I want".[4]

In *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi presents a critique of the industrial civilisation of the West which had destroyed nature, caused cultural alienation of peoples and created processes of domination and exploitation at various levels. Colonialism was the product of that civilisation. This perspective of Gandhi has tremendous contemporary significance today in view of the serious critique of the dominant process of techno-industrial development coming from the grassroots movements all over the world. Yet it is not the sentimentalism of a primitive mind opposed to machines that we find in Gandhi. His discussion of the railways and the professions of the doctors and the lawyers in *Hind Swaraj* points out mainly the hazards of the unfolding tide of techno-industrial modernisation.[5] The present-day discussions in medical sociology would confirm many insights of Gandhi. Converting a community into a litigant society, fighting over property rights with the propertied mainly defending their claims, was the outcome of this modernisation. Gandhi's notion of Swaraj is rooted in Indian civilisation — it is *Hind* in character. (*Hind* is the geo-cultural region of the Indian sub-continent.) Grounded in this civilisation Swaraj would entail the realisation of the potentialities of the people. His *Swa* or self referred to the individual, group, community, class, nation and finally humankind; this would come into its own in appropriate social and political conditions. In effect, it meant multi-dimensional liberation at every level. Human beings must be liberated from all kinds of bondages so that they can achieve their potentialities. Gandhi's later life and writings continued to reflect this line of thinking.

Gandhi's view could be justly criticised as being abstract, prone to compromises on many fronts and vulnerable to

manipulation by powerful interests. But in Gandhi's formulation there was a basic approach to human emancipation. Indeed, the historical evolution of India's freedom struggle did not fully correspond to Gandhi's ideas. Bhagat Singh and the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army and the revolutionary terrorists in Bengal constantly pointed out the limits of Gandhi's approach. The Communists sought to emphasise a programme of social transformation in the anti-colonial struggle. Nehru stood between Gandhi and his radical critics, playing the role of a progressive synthesiser in the Congress. Thus in March 1931 at the Karachi session of the Congress, the concept of Swaraj acquired a socio-economic content in the Resolution on Fundamental Rights and National Economic Programme. It declared: "... in order to end the exploitation of the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom of the starving millions". Civil liberties like freedom of press, assembly, speech, right to equality, free primary education and a policy of the State being neutral on religion were adopted. Trade union rights, right to a living wage and a programme of agrarian change were also part of this resolution. Though this programme was too little to satisfy the radicals, it alarmed the industrialists.[6] Thus the struggle for Swaraj had already become integrated with class struggle and in fact, with social struggle as a whole. In the process, the freedom discourse advanced steadily with different sections of the elites giving stress on different demands. Gandhi's programme on Harijan Welfare and Ambedkar's alternative mode of Dalit mobilisation added an important dimension to social transformation. Commitment to linguistic identity as a basis of Indian federalism was yet another issue. The whole range of questions relating to building a new India appeared in the political and intellectual scene.

When the transfer of power to Indians came in 1947, the freedom discourse had been deeply enmeshed in social struggles. The campaign for Swaraj went on. The Nehru era like most of the newly independent countries carried forward the freedom discourse to a new stage of nation-building and economic development. It maintained solid linkages with

the goals of the freedom struggle. But perhaps the nature of the social struggle was such that there were contradictory trends in those years as well. These laid the foundation for the subsequent crises which opened the channels for capitalist modernisation, thus relegating the freedom perspective to the background.[7]

The Chinese story is different in that the social struggle was fought far more sharply than in India and the direct military invasion of China by Japan put militant nationalism at the core of the freedom discourse. Even then in China, there has been a decline of the freedom discourse after a tortuous debate among China's ruling elites at various points of time which frequently caused social turbulence. Jiefang or liberation from colonial domination and from the socio-economic shackles which chained the masses, was the central value of the Chinese revolutionary movement in the first half of the twentieth century,[8] but at the end of the second half, the principal preoccupation of the Chinese elite is modernisation and economic growth.

The perspective of liberation in twentieth century China gradually evolved from an anti-Manchu, anti-foreign orientation at the start of the century to that of people's democratic revolution in the 1940s. In the Manifesto of Tong Meng Hui (United Brotherhood Society) in 1905, Dr. Sun Yat-sen had proclaimed a four point programme: Drive out the Tartars (Barbarians - meaning here Manchus); Restore China (to the Chinese); Establish the Republic (it said: "All people are equal and all enjoy political rights"); and Equalise land ownership.[9] After the establishment of the Republic in 1912, on several occasions Sun Yat-sen spoke of "revolutionary reconstruction" of China based on "Three People's Principles" (San Min Zhu Yi) which he finally spelt out in 1924. The three principles or governing ideas were nationalism (min Zu Zhu yi), democracy (min Zhu zhu yi) and people's livelihood (min sheng Zhu yi).[10] The final formulation carried the imprint of the May Fourth Movement and the Bolshevik Revolution. Slowly the ideology of republicanism and anti-colonialism acquired a social content. In the course of the May Fourth Movement, the debate on Chinese tradition,

the demand for promoting "science and democracy" and relevance of socialism contributed to a new stage of the freedom discourse in China.

The CPC and the KMT were both nationalist forces, but with divergent social outlook. The CPC wanted to pursue a programme of social revolution during the course of the nationalist struggle. The KMT did not favour disruption of China's social structure while fighting against foreign aggression. The CPC mobilised the peasant masses against imperialism. Its Long March of 1934-35 was a campaign for the liberation of the Chinese nation from Japanese imperialism and it also gave the call for the liberation of the Chinese masses from both imperialism and feudalism as systems of exploitation. Mao Zedong's theory of new democratic revolution united the broad masses of peasants, workers, petty bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie against the enemy. His strategy of people's war relied on the support of the peasant masses to fight the Japanese. Through trial and error, the CPC leadership had reached this understanding of ideology and strategy of their revolution. At the end of World War II when the efforts for a coalition government of the CPC and the KMT failed, a fresh civil war broke out. Now the KMT was perceived by the CPC and its followers as representing the pro-imperialist feudal and comprador forces. Thus the liberation movement had continued and finally the CPC achieved liberation of China in 1949.

Addressing the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in Beijing on 21 September 1949, Mao said: "We have closed our ranks and defeated both domestic and foreign oppressors through the People's War of Liberation and the great people's revolution and now we are proclaiming the founding of the People's Republic of China. Ours will no longer be a nation subject to insult and humiliation. We have stood up". He gave a call "to build a new China, independent, democratic, peaceful, unified, prosperous and strong".[11]

It is possible to argue that Mao captured the theme of the reformers who preceded him in trying to build "a strong country and rich nation" and Marxism was in the Chinese conditions only a rationalising ideological framework to

pursue that goal. But the relevant question for our purpose is whether or not there was a perspective of social liberation underlying this objective. The answer is a clear affirmative. Achievement of *Jiefang* or liberation in 1949 was not the end of the struggle for liberation. It only propelled a historical process of self-determination of nation, nationalities and deprived groups and individuals.

III. Decline of Freedom Discourse

This summary recapitulation of the freedom perspectives of the people's struggles in India and China is meant to provide a vantage point for characterising the preoccupations in India and China in the 1980's and 1990s. Put in this context, it is clear that the contemporary modernisation drive in the two countries has moved far away from the goals of Swaraj and Jiefang.

In the 1960s both India and China experienced a crisis in their initial development model. Earlier in the 1950s both had attempted "modernisation" in the context of their respective perspectives derived from their freedom struggle. Consolidation of national sovereignty, economic development and structural reforms in agriculture and industry achieved a degree of success. But by the mid-sixties problems of food scarcity, unemployment and social upheavals began to accumulate. Late 1960s and the seventies saw debates on the development path in both the countries. China's Cultural Revolution asserted its linkage with Jiefang, gave a radical programme of speedy transformation of society. The movement spearheaded by Jayaprakash Narayan in India in the mid-1970s revived the Swaraj perspective through Jayaprakash Narayan's concept of Total Revolution and asserted the relevance of Gandhi. The excesses of the Cultural Revolution paved the way for a sharp counter-perspective in China which crystallised at the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee in December 1978 with the victory of Deng Xiaoping. Thereafter, in China the 1980s saw a steady implementation of the modernisation perspective under the slogan of "reform and open door". In India the movement against the Emergency of 1975-1977 and the dominant

model which was led by a section of the ruling forces got divided, and the effect of the J.P. Movement got dissipated. Indira Gandhi came back to power in 1980. Hence in the 1980s the modernisation perspective slowly became the dominant policy framework in India as well. Practically all the major sections of the ruling forces adopted this perspective by the beginning of the 1990s. The challenges which arose from the grassroots movements in the 1980s in India were sufficiently subdued by the Indian State over the years. The movements, however, continued to throw their challenges to the contemporary model of capitalist modernisation in India, but the State leadership and the elites in general have decisively opted for this model. In China the students' movement, especially the Tiananmen episode in 1989 dramatically questioned the prevailing model pursued by Deng Xiaoping leadership which had combined economic liberalism with political authoritarianism. It was firmly suppressed by the regime and the broad framework, with minor adjustments, was continued.[12]

At the intellectual plane, the perspective of capitalist modernisation which was the target of criticism in the third world in the 1960s and the 1970s re-emerged with renewed vigour in the 1980s. In education and communication today most knowledge has the character of "derivative knowledge", i.e., knowledge derived from the dominant paradigm of capitalist modernisation. Even the body of knowledge associated with the global campaign for alternatives to the dominant paradigm, represents another form of derivative knowledge, because they are only dissidents within the capitalist framework. Still they have contributed to a continuing critique of the dominant paradigm. Apart from this permissible dissidence, the prospects of "participative knowledge" arises mainly from the people's democratic movements or *Janavadi Andolans* which are going on in the third world. The movements of peasants, tribals, Dalits and unorganised labour, the women's movement, the democratic rights movements and the movements for regional autonomy have questioned the dominant model and recalled the memory of the goals of the freedom struggle. The coming years will

see an intensified contradiction between the elite's pursuit of capitalist modernisation and the *Janavadi Andolan's* pursuit of freedom — a constantly expanding notion of multi-dimensional liberation. All actions, political and intellectual, will thus be tested in the freedom discourse.

References

1. See Manoranjan Mohanty (1989), "Changing Terms of Discourse", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXIV, No. 37 (16 September).
2. For a powerful critique of the dominant development paradigm see Rajni Kothari (1990), *Rethinking Development* (Delhi: Ajanta). I have discussed the significance of this critique as well as its limits in my review article on Kothari's works. Manoranjan Mohanty (1991), "On Democratic Humanism", *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol. 25, No. 1.
3. Several essays, especially the contributions by the Chinese scholars provide ample evidence of this in Manoranjan Mohanty (ed.) (1992), *Chinese Revolution: Comparative Perspectives on Transformation of Non-Western Societies* (Delhi: Ajanta).
4. M.K. Gandhi (1938), *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* (Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House), p.30.
5. Ibid. See. Ch. IX. Railways, Ch. XI, Lawyers, and Ch.XII, Doctors.
6. Different class forces were already active to orient the freedom discourse in their favour. The compromise worked out at the Karachi session in 1931 indicated that the Congress was "not on the road to socialism but towards the recognition of the need for an economic policy". Sarvepalli Gopal (1975), *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, 1889-1947* (Delhi: Oxford University Press), p. 152.
   As Sumit Sarkar points out, Ambalal Sarabhai circulated a note among FICCI members some months later sharply attacking parts of the resolution as threatening to bring about 'a government on Russian model'. "But there was in reality precious little of 'socialism' in the 20 points of the Karachi Resolution which combined general democratic demands ... with much of Gandhi's 11 points of 1930, plus fairly modest promises to labour...." Sumit Sarkar (1983), *Modern India*, (Delhi: Macmillan), p. 312. R.P. Dutt, however admits that it was "a concession to Left Nationalism", R.P. Dutt, *India Today* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House), p.376. Bipan Chandra and his colleagues stress the historic expansion of the meaning

of Swaraj in Karachi: "This was the first time that the Congress defined what Swaraj would mean for the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom of the starving millions", *India's Struggle for Independence* (1987), (Delhi: Penguin Books), p.284.

7. The Centenary of Nehru's birth in 1989 was an occasion to reflect on the linkage in the freedom discourse. But serious debates on Nehru legacy revealed the linkage had declined substantially in course of the policies pursued by Nehru's successors. Amal Ray, N. Bhaskara Rao and Vinod Vyasulu (eds.) (1991), *The Nehru Legacy: An Appraisal* (New Delhi: Oxford and IBH). See also Urvashi Dhamija (1989), *Jawaharlal Nehru's Concept of Nation-Building* (Ph.D. Thesis submitted to the University of Delhi).
8. The bondages were interlinked most vividly in colonial societies. A graphic statement appears in Lu Xun's "A Madman's Diary": " I know their way; they are not willing to kill anyone outright, nor they dare, for fear of the consequences. Instead they have banded together and set traps everywhere to force me to kill myself" (1960), *Selected Works* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press).
9. "The Manifesto of the Tung Meng Hui" in Ssu-Yu Teng and John K. Fairbank (eds.) (1967), *China's Response to the West* (New York: Atheneum), pp. 227-229.
10. Sun yat-sen, "Programme of Revolution", in Ibid, pp. 260-267.
11. Mao Zedong (1997), *Selected Works* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press), pp. 16-17.
12. Those who differed with Deng Xiaoping's path of development in China were criticised as "leftists" and removed from party leadership at the Fourteenth Congress of the Communist Party of China in October 1992 which proclaimed the concept of "socialist market economy" as the guiding perspective. This Congress further demonstrated the decline of freedom discourse in China.

6

RECONSTRUCTING THE METHODOLOGY OF EXPLOITATION
Class, Caste and Gender as Categories of Analysis in Post-Colonial Societies

Gail Omvedt

"Class" analysis is not in fashion in academic social science circles in the West these days. But its place has not been taken by such categories of the new social movements as "gender", "patriarchy", "race", "caste" or the like. Instead all categorisation, almost all methodology, is called into question as deconstructionism runs rampant and the new theorists of discourse prefer to talk about people talking about reality rather than reality itself. Everything is moving to a second, indeed a third level, and at some point the process becomes absurd enough to turn into itself and abolish all frames, leading to assertion of realities as pure faith. The inability to ground assertions in a methodology that admits the reality principle in a critical, testable way seems to be a disturbing intellectual parallel to the growth of religious fundamentalisms. Or perhaps deconstructionism reflects not so much the disillusionment with traditional social science methodologies, such as traditional Marxism, but also the increasing alienation of the intellectual from the process of social change, from the hope of making a difference.

Deconstructionism also has some impact in third world societies, for here as elsewhere the tumultuous and

unexpected forces of social change are calling into question the traditional categories used to understand society. But in countries like India neither progressive intellectuals nor political activists can afford the luxury of dealing with discourse rather than reality. Not deconstruction but reconstruction of the methodology of analysis (intellectual restructuring, perhaps) is called for by the situation. This is the purpose of examining briefly the processes by which the traditional categories of left social science (which formed the framework not simply of discourse but of materially significant planning in India) have come into question in post-independent India. The process seems to be similar to that in many third world countries.

"Class Methodology" of the Independent Indian State

Peter Waterman has commented on:

> two phenomena which puzzled me considerably in India. The first was the extent to which openly-avowed Marxists were to be found employed, in senior positions, in organizations which would not even grant them low ones, and which they would probably not even desire to enter, in other capitalist countries.... The second feature was the fact that a large part of political discourse takes place within a Marxist universe of discourse.[1]

Strikingly, with independence the elites controlling the new Indian state adopted a Marxian "class" vocabulary and methodology. "Liberation" was imaged as development, the process through which the various classes, castes and other sections of the multicultural Indian society would achieve abundance and equality. Industrialism was to be the key to abundance, and equality would be guaranteed by its control by the state defined as a "secular, socialist republic" which would assure the dispersion to all of the fruits of abundance and the gradual overcoming of traditional inequalities. Heavy industry, planning, the control by the state of the "commanding heights" of the economy with major core industries located in the public sector represented one side

of this; the other was the rationality and orientation to "modern science and technology" represented in the Nehruvian synthesis.

The Nehru model represented perhaps as much secularism, democracy and socialism as the high-caste Indian elite was capable of. By today it is under heavy attack, charged by the new enthusiasts of the market with being economically inefficient, by environmentalists with being ecologically destructive, by masses of the population with being statist and oppressive, by Dalits and OBCs with being brahmanic. It was also deeply anti-peasant, basing its industrial development on the extraction of surplus from agriculture. As Sukhomoy Chakravorty put it in his book on Indian Planning, "the planners' strategy boiled down to the traditional thesis... that during the early stages of industrialization it was necessary for agriculture to contribute to the building up of a modern industrial sector by providing cheap labour and also cheap food."[2]

Traditional Marxist "class methodology" (which is not necessarily the methodology of Marx's own historical materialism) legitimised this approach. The proletariat was identified as the most advanced class which would carry the society through bourgeois democracy to socialism, defeating the feudal social relations and ideologies embodied both in landlords and the peasantry. The "main enemies", i.e., the forces opposing development and liberation, were the international bourgeoisie (imperialism) on one hand and the local landlords (feudalism) on the other. The indigenous bourgeoisie, however, to the extent that it was "national" and independent, could be a democratic ally representing progressive and secular tendencies.

"Tribals", "harijans" and "women" were identified as "weaker sections", as major oppressed groups, but their essential backwardness made them into groups which needed help, which needed to be liberated, and not as forces for emancipation on their own. The peasantry occupied the most ambiguous place in this model. It was taken as an oppressed and exploited section, had thus a major force for democracy and revolution — but only when "led" by the

working class, and primarily as a fighter against "feudalism" (landlordism). When peasants began to fight against the state and market relations which were rendering them impoverished and dependent, or against developmental processes which victimised them, they no longer qualified to be even called a "peasantry"; rather they were a set of diverse classes—poor, middle and rich peasants "differentiated" into antagonistic forces by the processes of capitalist development. A movement for higher prices could be opposed as led by "rich peasants" ("capitalist farmers"; "kulaks"); while an anti-dam movement might be romanticised as in the interests of oppressed "tribals" but ultimately rejected as representing a backward vision.

What was not articulated in the discourse was as important as what was left out. The special needs of "harijans," "adivasis", "scheduled castes", etc. could be recognised, but words such as "brahman" or "bania" or "shudra" were not to be uttered. Neither caste nor gender categories found a place in the discourse. The state was not theorised; neither were the characteristics of such "class-like" categories as the intellectuals or bureaucrats theorised. The result was that the brahmanic male intelligentsia was by and large assimilated into the "proletariat" as its salary-earning "employed" section, while the bases of its power in state and intellectual resources went largely unnoticed. The "organised sector" was treated as an undifferentiated whole. The bania merchants and industrialists, the shudra peasantry as property-holders could be at times allied with, but always had to be subordinated since "private property" was the greatest source of exploitation, and a potentially dangerous obstacle to "development".

Challenges to this perspective began to arise with the new social movements of the 1970s and 1980s.

"Will the Caste War turn into a Class War?"

The anti-caste movement is the oldest of India's new social movements, with as vigorous a nineteenth century history, perhaps, as the national movement itself. From Phule to

Ambedkar and Periyar, dalit and shudra intellectuals contested the interpretations of Indian history and society offered both by western scholars and by upper-caste Indian intellectuals*. Phule pictured the Indian community as irrevocably divided between the *shudra-atishudra* peasantry and the bureaucratically and religiously-based brahmans or *bhats*.[3] Ambedkar spoke of "peasants" and "workers" almost as much as of "untouchables and caste Hindus", thus accepting the class categorisations beginning to be popularised by young socialist intellectuals and organisers; but he insisted on a combined "class-caste" analysis by calling for a fight against "brahmanism" and "capitalism".[4] Periyar stretched caste into a category of ethnicity by drawing on Phule's non-Aryan theory to identify the lower castes (non-Brahmans and dalits) with Dravidians. These analyses represented varying alternatives to the standard categories of Marxist "class analysis" which were beginning to underlie radical participation in the national movement.

As the Maharashtrian and Tamil non-Brahman movements dissolved into the dalit movement and Dravidian movements in the 1930s and then were co-opted and absorbed in various ways by the Congress-Gandhian synthesis, the immediate theoretical challenge posed by the anti-caste movement faded. It revived with vigour in the 1970s when Dalit Panthers marched in Bombay and Pune, against the background of Kilavenmani and a growing wave of "atrocities" against dalits. "We don't want a little place in Brahman ally," their manifesto proclaimed, "We want the rule of the whole country." And left intellectuals asked the hopeful question: "Will the Green Revolution turn into a red revolution?" By the end of the 1970s they could only hope that the "caste war will turn into a class war." But it has not, of course, or at least not yet. It has been the Mandal Commission and not the call to arms of anti-landlord revolts which has been bringing

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* Omvedt conceptualises 'new' social movements as those which raise to the forefront of concern, issues which have been hitherto marginalised or submerged in traditional social movements — issues such as gender, caste and ecology (Editor).

down governments. The category of "caste" is re-emerging on the political scene, and it has not yet been comfortably absorbed.

The Panther Manifesto was cast in the language of Naxalite semi-feudalism, basically a traditional Marxist "discourse". But dalit poetry spoke in much rawer tones and called for an expanded language of exploitation and liberation:

> Don't expect revolution
> from those living corpses,
> comrade....
> Take the fantasy out of
> your daydreams.
> What will happen
> from simply waving the red flag
> over the many colours of reality?[5]

By the late 1980s much of Ambedkar and Phule's earlier, partially forgotten analysis was being recovered; and the movement was contesting the depiction of Indian history being put forward by Hindu revivalists as well as the conceptions of Marxists such as S.A. Dange or semi-socialists such as Nehru. It was speaking of "revolution and counter-revolution in ancient India" but not in terms of the growth of slave society out of primitive communism; rather in terms of Buddhism and Brahmanism. It was depicting the ruling class not simply as "bourgeois" or "bourgeois-landlord" but as brahman; and beginning to proclaim dalits as the true "proletariat", the true vanguard. It was questioning the role of the upper-caste intelligentsia as "leaders" of movements, "representatives" of the poor, guardians of state power and development; it was calling for new forms of "caste-class" alliance; and it was questioning the depiction of the majority of Indian masses as "Hindu".

The theoretical challenge posed by the dalit and anti-caste movement was not simply concerned with *replacing* "class" by "caste"; it sought a revised methodology of exploitation, a combined "class-caste" analysis. This was presented quite forcefully by some early spokesmen such as V.T. Rajshekhar and Sharad Patil. Rajshekhar called for an

alliance of dalits and OBCs (other backward castes) against "Brahmanism", arguing that since dalits were the true proletariat they had the responsibility to make a correct analysis.[6] Sharad Patil, protesting that the "unilinear" traditional Marxist class methodology could not comprehend Indian society, called for a methodology of "Marxism-Phule-Ambedkarism" which would integrate class and caste in an indigenous form of historical materialism. Patil also was one of the first to call for a strong alliance of the anti-caste movement and the new farmers' movement. Conceptualising as an alliance of dalits with the shudra peasantry, he argued that:

> The new political economy will steer the impending struggle of the restive peasant castes/classes clear of caste war with the SC/ST and towards lasting unity with the latter masses which alone is the guarantee of the destruction of this age-old order and will pave the way for the Indian socialist revolution.[7]

The problem of this new combined approach to a "caste-class" analysis is that it remained primarily *additive*, simply adding on "caste" to traditional class categories. In the process it took for granted much of the traditional class analysis—whether of workers and capitalists, or agricultural labourers and rich farmers, peasants and landlords; it ignored the role of the state, or at best, mapped on to the traditional class categories the existence of "brahmans, banias, thakurs" as exploiters and shudras and dalits (or *baki sab*) as the exploited. The fate of those activist-intellectuals who tried to present a combined approach varied. Rajshekhar began with the language of Maoism and the view of dalits as the true revolutionaries, but his journal *Dalit Voice* began to take on a racially-based condemnation of all upper castes as alien. The more openly Communist politics of Sharad Patil could not go beyond the formation of a small "Satyashodhak Communist Party" with a base in a couple of taluks of Maharashtra nor could his effort to give an alternative historical materialist analysis transcend a rather mechanical application of jati and varna categories to

Indian history and current political dilemmas. Nevertheless, the theoretical and practical challenge represented by the anti-caste movement to accepted modes of analysis and categories has remained pertinent.

"Redefining Exploitation"

The women's movement in the late 1970s began to take a step beyond offering male challenges to accepted methods of analysis as new "autonomous feminist" groups sprang up in Bombay, Delhi, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Kanpur, Pune, Nagpur and elsewhere. Against the background of often militant unrest of rural women and a new stirring among urban working and middle class women, the new groups began to not only act independently of political controls and demand that "patriarchy" be taken into account as a category of analysis; they also began a process of "redefining exploitation" itself in the terms of Chhaya Datar (a feminist attacked by CPI(M) spokesmen as being part of an Amsterdam-centred "international feminist conspiracy"). Feminists were asserting that women were a revolutionary force; they were challenging current models of the revolutionary process and the revolutionary vanguard party and they were insisting on the right to formulate their own theories and explanations. In the words of the opening editorial of *Manushi*,

> Today we no longer say—give us more jobs, more rights, consider us your 'equals.' But rather—let us examine the whole question, all the questions. Let us take nothing for granted. Let us not only redefine ourselves, our role, our image—but also the kind of society we want to live in.[8]

The explication of the role of violence (mainly conceived of as male violence) in social processes and the need for changing human relations as part of a process of broader social change was foregrounded by the movement. But in many ways the most contentious issue for traditional Marxists was the analysis of domestic labour, i.e., the unpaid labour of women in the home. This was a category which Indian feminists following European colleagues regarded as "subsistence production", — a form of labour seen as being

at the basis of all forms of social production. In doing so they explicitly challenged the Marxist notion of class being based on the extraction of surplus labour by the propertied classes. Women were insisting, above all, that the contradiction "capital versus labour" was not to be subsumed in the category of "capital versus wage labour"; they argued in other words that *non-wage labour* was crucial to the process of exploitation.

This theme began to have an impact both on general consciousness among women activists and on Marxist analysis itself. Marxist activists of the left parties such as Usha Menon[9] strongly resisted the notion that "housework" contributed "value", but by the time of the 1985 Nairobi international women's conference, women activists attending from India began to repeat with fair enthusiasm the theme that "the value of housework should be included in the gross national product." Clearly, the question of the value of women's labour and with it a call for revision of traditional class categories was becoming widespread. By the end of the 1980s various sections of the women's movement were taking up demands that reflected this consciousness of the material bases of women's oppression—whether it was demands to revise census procedures so that "women's work" could be counted properly, or campaigns of the Shetkari Sanghatana women's front to put land in the name of the women as part of a recompense for the work women were doing in the home *and* on the land.

"We don't want Alms but the Reward for Our Labour"

If non-paid domestic labour was to be included as a crucial form of exploited labour under capitalism then what of other possible forms of non-wage labour — in particular that of peasant labour that was "paid" in the form of prices for farm products? Traditional Marxism had non-interrogated peasant production; peasant production was "petty commodity production"; it was a backward form of production, performed by those who could at best be classed as "petty bourgeois" due to their ownership of land and engagement in exchange transactions.

This perspective was challenged by the "farmers'

movement" whose first organisations arose in 1972-73 alongside the dalit movement and the women's movement. Upper-caste intellectuals refused to admit it, but it was not only "rich farmers" but poor labouring peasant men and women who blockaded roads and died in police firings to demand, in the language of the Maharashtrian organisation, "not alms but the reward for our labour". The movement and its articulation of demands took analysis of historical materialism one step ahead by calling for a redefinition not simply of "exploitation" but also of "class". Sharad Joshi, its Maharashtrian leader and ideologue, claimed a theory of exploitation and capital accumulation that did not employ the concept of class and focused on violence (and thus control of state power) rather than private property as crucial to the process. Peasants subordinated to a capitalist regime did indeed pose a dilemma for traditional class theory. If "class" was to be defined in terms of private property, it could not explain all of exploitation (since property-owning peasants were exploited via the market mechanism and state controls). On the other hand, if "class" was to be defined in terms of exploitation (so that the exploited classes were those whose surplus labour was extracted from them while exploiting classes were the appropriators of surplus) then it was in danger of becoming so broad a category as to be redundant.

Was peasant family labour (usually classified in terms of "petty commodity production") exploited? This question became an important political issue during the 1989-90 V.P. Singh regime when a Standing Advisory Committee on Agriculture under Sharad Joshi's chairmanship prepared a draft "national agricultural policy" that called for the valuation of both "domestic labour" (peasant family labour) and "hired labour" at the rate of a demanded Rs 25 per day minimum wage. Resistance to this revealed that the extreme low rates (with peasant male family labour valued at the pay of an "attached labourer" or bonded labour, and peasant female family labour only a fraction of this) at which peasant family labour and hired labour were normally valued in calculating "costs of production" was an essential aspect of holding crop

prices low.

Alternative Development

The farmers' movement also questioned the developmental model based on Nehruvian class methodology, arguing that the extraction of surplus from the peasantry had resulted in an overcentralised, unbalanced and inefficient industry in the words of the Gujarat leader Bipin Desai:

> The inner core is different...our struggle is not for issues like electricity tariff or land legislation. We have a wider vision. The whole of the rural economy should be changed. It should not be a field for exploitation as it has been since British rule, a generating centre for the national economy. The surplus should remain in the villages and from this the appropriate growth of village-based industries and development should be made rather than exploiting the villages to create a surplus for urban-based industries which only create unemployment and poverty (interview, 1988).

However, it was the environmental movements — of tribal and caste Hindu peasants, agricultural labourers and fish workers opposing big dams, missile defence sites, mining projects and calling for an end to drought and deforestation — which most strongly began to call for an "alternative development" or "people's development" by the end of the 1980s. In the words of B.D. Sharma, a Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes who had resigned from his position in 1991 to join the Narmada Bachao Andolan:

> So far people's movements against displacement were sporadic and more or less isolated. Moreover, displacement itself was accepted as inevitable and the affected people would just beg for some relief. In the Narmada struggle people from all parts of the country facing the backlash of development have come together and are raising perhaps for the first time the question of Constitutional rights. And this issue has not been raised

> only at the conceptual level for the sake of an argument or debate; instead it is backed up by people's own understanding and their resolve. That is not all. As the real nature of issues has become clearer, questions are being raised about the concept of development itself.[10]

Organisations like the Jan Vikas Andolan began to tie up the processes of ecological destruction with the deprivation of local communities from their traditional rights over the land and to call for decentralised "community control" — symbolised in the slogan of the Narmada Bachao Andolan, *hamara gaon* (our village), *hamara raj* (our government). To this, the teams of radicalised engineers and people's organisations such as Mukti Sangarsh of southern Maharashtra began to stress on "equal water rights" as a crucial part of the right of all the poor of the village community to resources. They further argued that only through a biomass-based production system could India as a whole escape from dependence on externally-provided fossil-fuel resources and achieve any independent development at all.[11] Now the link was being made between the rights ("entitlements") of peasants and specifically marginalised sections such as dalits and adivasis to the resources (land, forest, water and other) which surrounded their communities, with a more equalitarian, sustainable and viable form of development. In Marxist terms a new kind of emphasis was given to the connection between the "forces of production" and "conditions of production", and a model of development was being put forward which challenged the industrial overcentralisation underlying both liberal capitalism and a statist regime.

Reconceptualising

In the last twenty years nearly every aspect of the "class methodology" underlying the Nehru model has been challenged, from calls to integrate such categories as "caste" or "patriarchy", to efforts to question or redefine the nature of "class" itself, to a re-interpretation of more basic concepts of historical materialism concerning the forces and conditions of production. In many ways this debate strikes deeper than

earlier debates among western Marxists concerning "class", "base and superstructure" or the state. One reason is that of different socio-economic structures: western industrial societies have primarily seen a class debate focused around the role of the white collar workers (a "new working class", "petty bourgeoisie" or whatever).

The peculiarity of third world societies, however, lies both in terms of issues of community and identity and in a very different economic and thus "class" structure and the massive weight of agriculture and the peasantry in the economy. In the 1980s, according to World Bank statistics, agriculture represented about 30% of gross domestic product of low-income countries while employing up to 70% of the workforce. Increasing displacement and urban migration by the end of the 1990s had reduced these figures largely by turning peasant refugees into informal sector workers in city slums, but the stark fact drawn from these figures remains: the centrality of agriculture in the economy and the impoverishment of its workforce. The other side of this was the overweightage of the tertiary sector (services, with a heavy base in government employment): in low-income countries this represented about 30-32% of GDP but only 15% of the employment in the 1980s.[12] In such societies analyzing the role of the state, of the public-sector based "intelligentsia" and of the peasantry, in the context of sharp ethnic-cultural divisions interacting with these different sectors, very obviously requires a method of analysis of capital accumulation and exploitation transcending the limitations of mechanical Marxist "class analysis".

In India it has been the new social movements—of women, dalits and other low castes, and peasants fighting market-state exploitation as well as environmental degradation and displacement — which have most sharply brought this issue forward. The "reconstruction" of a methodology of analysing exploitation and achieving a liberatory development which they call for requires not only a new consideration of such categories as "caste", "gender", "patriarchy" and "ethnicity" or "community" but also a more adequate understanding of class and economic exploitation

itself. We might say of the new social movements in general what Chhaya Datar has said of feminism, that they are "contributing to revolutionize Marxism and thus aspires to be another Copernican revolution, which will change...change the entire theoretical perspective about human relationships and also about the relationship of human beings with the universe, with nature."[13]

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9. Usha Menon, in *Social Scientist*. Strikingly also, when a Marathi rendition of *Das Kapital* was brought out by a young nonparty intellectual-activist, Suhas Paranjpye, party leaders speaking at its inauguration ceremony praised the book but called for the removal of his appendix dealing with the issue of domestic labour.
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7

RELIGION, SOCIETY AND STATE IN INDIA
Theory Versus Reality*

K. Raghavendra Rao

The lack of congruence between reality and theory, at least as negotiated by a representative crop of sociologists and social anthropologists, both Indian and foreign, was brought home to me in the course of a survey I had made of theoretical literature on the interrelationship between the categories of religion, society and state.[1] The most important single reason for this gap was found to be our excessive and uncritical reliance on Western social theory for the theorisation on our life and thought. However, in the last two decades or so, the ultimate source of modern social science theory in India, viz., Western social sciences, seems to have run into a catastrophic crisis, variously designated as post-structuralism, post-modernism, post-capitalism, post-

* This is a slightly recast version of the paper presented at the Seminar on "Theoretical and Methodological Problems in the Study of State and Society in the Third World". The revision has been mostly undertaken to dispel two misunderstandings — that it is biased towards Hindu communalism/fundamentalism and that it is too state-centred. I am grateful to all the participants for the interest they took in my presentation but I should like to mention the comments of Prof. Ravinder Kumar, Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty, Dr. Sarah Joseph and Dr. Hargopal as the most helpful.

industrialism and so on, which has pushed the role of self-consciousness in the construction of social epistemology to the point of turning theory against itself.[2] It is now becoming increasingly clear that the relationship between theory and the reality it theorises, is highly problematic and contains unresolved and perhaps unresolvable riddles, which may be summarised as a theory-reality gap. This gap is more visible in the case of social sciences which, ever since their birth in nineteenth century Europe, have been trying desperately to catch up with the natural/physical sciences in search of pure or total objectivity. Ironically it is now becoming equally visible in the domain of natural/physical sciences which have served as a model for social sciences as well. Moreover, it is clear that this gap is not a temporary misfortune, whether in social or non-social sciences, but as permanent as the human condition itself. The permanence of the gap has generated chronic epistemological instability and uncertainty in the whole range of human discourses, leading to an entrapment of the categories of theory as well as reality in a non-negotiable provisionality. But wrestling with such abstract and foundationalist issues cannot really help social scientists in solving contingent problems. They need to work on the basis of an operational congruence between theory and reality, even if we grant the notorious gap. Therefore, the point is not that the gap exists, but that the gap should not be so wide as to shake one's confidence in theory as well as reality, as was the case with the survey mentioned earlier. The task before us is not to eliminate the gap which is an impossibility, but to narrow it by exploiting to the maximum the potentialities available in existing social science methods and methodologies. This paper is a modest effort in that direction, focusing as it does on the interaction between religion, society and state at the most comprehensive level of theory and reality. The point of reference for the discussion is Indian social science.

I

The most comprehensive and intractable category of reality and theory seeking to represent that reality is undoubtedly

religion. The English term, religion, is encompassing, referring as it does to a wide range of ideological and institutional phenomena. It is used to cover such near-polar phenomena as Hinduism with its apparent amorphousness and Christianity or Islam which are relatively over-structured. The solution, however, is not to abandon the general category of religion but to recognise the plurality of forms and content concealed by it, and to operationalise the distinctions while dealing with specific issues. While avoiding conceptual confusions, we should also take into serious account historical patterns of evolution of structures and their interactions. In trying to retain the general category without losing the sense of distinctions conflated within it, it is helpful to invoke an analytical innovation recently suggested by a philosopher.[3] In this frame, a religious tradition[4] is conceptualised as a structure in which three components co-exist in different proportions, and consequently involve differing inter-relationships. These components are: (i) the metaphysical component, M, (ii) the ethical or code of conduct component, C and (iii) the ritual component, R. When discussing the political or socio-cultural or economic implications of a religious tradition, it is essential to keep in sight the specific mix of M, C and R in its make-up. One should also view religious traditions as changing historically but changing at different rates with different qualitative consequences.[5] Further, it is also important to note the fact that there is not so much a simple omnibus change as a complicated process in which M, C and R themselves may change at different rates. Before specifying the concrete situation, one must possess the necessary empirical-existential as well as historical knowledge.

Religious Traditions in India

Contemporary India is a veritable mosaic of religious forms of life - the Hindu, Islamic, Christian, Jain, Sikh, neo-Buddhist and tribal-animistic. Overshadowing the rest is, of course, Hinduism, professed by an overwhelming majority of the population. Hinduism seems to have been historically a highly flexible religion whose very amorphousness allowed

it to absorb challenges from other religious groups, mostly tribal groups but also groups generated by its own internal fissions, up until the massive incursion of religious groups which had a radically different structure — first Islam and later Christianity.[6] Two significant aspects of these historical penetrations deserve special attention. First, they both came, *not as simple religious movements but as religions professed politically as religions of the conquerors.* Thus, for the first time, Hinduism had to confront religions which were not only foreign but which were endowed with powers of political and military coercion. The second, and perhaps an even more important aspect in historical retrospect, was the structural dissimilarity between Hinduism and these other religions. However, a qualification needs to be made at this point, and it is that at least there were historically four internally generated religious orders which resembled Islam and Christianity in some significant respects, especially with regard to the institutional opportunity for individual conversion and membership based on individual choice. These were, in chronological order, Jainism, Buddhism, Lingayatism of twelfth century Karnataka, and Sikhism. Their relations with mainstream Hinduism is very interesting. Jainism has survived to this day as the religion of a small population, at least partly because of its willingness to lose its identity in some ways while preserving it in other ways. Buddhism fled from the land of its birth when it tried to assert its identity too strongly, thus casting some legitimate doubt on the claim of Hinduism to be very tolerant. Among the Lingayats or Veerashaivas, there seem to be two opposed positions in relation to Hinduism. One position is that they are part of Hinduism and hence should be regarded as protestant Hindus. The other is that they are not Hindus at all. This claim to separatism from Hinduism is a recent political gesture. But, in practice, they have been functioning virtually as an ambiguous part within the Hindu fold. In the past, the Sikhs had conflictual relationship with Muslims and developed symbiotic relationship with their Hindu neighbours. However, in the last few decades, they have been locked in a violent communal conflict with the Hindus.

In the past, Hinduism was able to handle other religious groups such as tribal groups or sects within itself trying to break away in two ways. Either it found them space within its own open and flexible structure, and incorporated them or merely acknowledged their existence without any strong relationship with them, whether positive or negative. The tribal groups, for instance, were incorporated in this way, and assigned the status of a *Jati* within the capacious bosom of mother Hinduism. Though there might have been cases of intolerance towards the incalcitrant groups to some small extent, Hinduism did not develop such tendencies of intolerance into an institutionalised persecution as Christianity or Islam did. Both Islam and Christianity posed an unprecedented challenge to it. Apart from other considerations such as their foreign nature and association with a conqueror, their very structure prevented the possibility of incorporation within traditional Hindu pluralism or their easy and equally traditional co-existence with it. Both Islam and Christianity possessed structures in which relatively greater rigidity prevailed in all the three components — M, C and R. No doubt they were more open than Hinduism in one sense but this openness related only to access to membership which was open to anyone and not tied to birth. But the new entrant had to accept all the three components. Their apparent universalist openness went along with a strong exclusiveness and community identity in the post-entry period. With Hinduism, the situation was the exact reverse. Here the emphasis on birth as the crucial criterion for membership did not mean that, once one was somehow in, through, for instance, group incorporation, one was encouraged to be less exclusive and as tolerant towards other groups as possible. While Hinduism permitted no conversion at the individual level and at the group level, it was occasionally prepared to countenance, not conversion but a slightly different process, incorporation. To put it in more theoretical terms, Hinduism allowed great scope for individual variations within a strong communal framework, while the other two generated a strong communal behaviour within an individualistic framework!

Modern Indian Predicament

By the time we come to modern India, we are faced with a complex religious map in which there are religions with incompatible ideological and institutional trajectories — Hinduism, on the one side, and Islam and Christianity, on the other. And we have modern non-religious institutions, though not fully insulated against religion — educational, economic, political and cultural — living precariously on the boundaries of the map. The traditional Hindu order prior to colonial modernisation was one in which institutional autonomy was combined with a normative-cultural hegemony, a hegemony not politically imposed but internalised and socialised through centuries of an environment of near-unbroken historical continuity. There was nothing like the Western Church-State conflict but *also nothing like theocracy*. Traditional Hinduism did not dominate or hegemonise society and the state through any overt institutional and coercive mechanisms but none the less maintained such dominance and control through countless, often invisible, everyday socio-cultural practices. There is no parallel to this arrangement in Western history, a history of conflicting dominations. As long as Hinduism was not required to deal with dissimilar, foreign religions, this proved to be a perfectly viable functional arrangement.

When the State became non-Hindu as under Islamic conquest, this situation could still be maintained at the significant level. This was possible because the Islamic State was limited in its inherently theocratic momentum. Firstly, the purely secular, material and political interests of the State dictated a non-theological policy as a matter of sheer expediency and pragmatism. Secondly, the very capability of a pre-modern state to penetrate and restructure society was severely limited in terms of technology and institutional resources. In consequence, Hindu society under a non-Hindu State, could succeed in preserving itself and its identity to a large extent. Hence, the autonomy of the society from the State was necessarily substantial under the pre-modern political State. Otherwise why did not the whole population convert to Islam? Not only because the Islamic

State was not interested in doing this but also because, even if it wanted to do this, it did not have capability to accomplish it. Thus the question of a perfect congruence between Islamic State and Islamic subjects was never on the serious historical agenda. The historical point that needs to be noted here is that religious structures are subject to the pressure of non-religious factors and circumstances in their functioning and in their historical development. The British colonial State was not allied to Christianity in the same way as the Hindu State to Hinduism or the Islamic State to Islam. The direct political impact of the colonial State was even less on Hindu society than the impact of Islam. But Christianity made a far profounder impact as a subtle ingredient in the British pattern of modernity which came to colonise the minds and hearts of modern Hindu elites through education and missionary propagation.

The partition and the establishment of Pakistan raises the issue of re-negotiation of both pre-colonial and colonial equation between the three categories of religion, society and state, in the new historical process of creating a modern Indian nation-state. Muslim identity ran into a set of political, economic and cultural problems in the colonial period with the loss of political hegemony suffered due to the emergence of British imperialism. In the early phase of colonial rule, the Muslims attracted the hostility of the new rulers, while some elements of Hindu society as well as Muslim society — in the former both feudal and urban middle class elements and in the latter feudal elements only — made peace with the colonial regime gaining as much they could for themselves, which was precious little. In this phase, in terms of overall communal interest, the Muslims suffered far more than the Hindus. However, as the colonial rule began to consolidate itself and as it began to adopt a policy of divide and rule, Hindu-Muslim relations entered a new stage. Encouraged by the British, the Muslim feudal elite and the small urban middle class turned their hostility away from the British to the Hindu community, especially in the political and economic fields. The pro-Muslim policies of the government were designed to achieve this.

With the emergence of modern nationalist consciousness, first among the Hindus, and within the Hindu-fold among the educated Brahmin middle class groups, the stage was set for the birth of the Indian National Congress in 1885. This *new Indian national consciousness* presupposed a new political identity that was capable of transcending the pre-colonial religious identities. It implied the possibility of a theoretical space in which the old religious identities would either dissolve or temporarily suspend and bracket off, to enable this new Indian national consciousness to function. Gandhi emphasised Hindu-Muslim unity as crucial to this process, and in his *Hind Swaraj* even went to the extent of legitimising Islamic penetration of India, while reserving his most bitter observations for British conquest of India. As it turned out, the nationalist hopes of building a single nation on the foundations of Hindu-Muslim unity was shattered with the emergence of Pakistan as a State based in principle on Islamic identity. India, however, continued to cling to this ideal within the framework of a liberal democratic system as enshrined in its Constitution. Thus, while *objectively*, the two new nation-states were created on the basis of religious identities, *subjectively* India continued its allegiance to a secularist and non-religious ideal. In glaring contrast to this, Pakistan went on to evolve an increasingly Islamic polity, not only in content but in form as well. While the turbulent constitution-making in Pakistan has always had to contend with the demand for Islamisation, the Indian constitution-making process has had a smooth sailing towards an essentially liberal, democratic and secularist destination. Even Hindu fundamentalism, such as it is, has offered no challenge to it excepting with regard to the Article on Jammu and Kashmir. While the Islamic fundamentalists in Pakistan have never reconciled themselves to liberal democracy and that nation has been lurching from one authoritarian/military rule to another with pathological democratic interludes, the Hindu fundamentalist groups from the Hindu Mahasabha to the BJP have accepted the essence of a liberal democratic ideal. In fact, the BJP claims to challenge, not secularism, but only its specific political

practice. As it registers electoral victories, the BJP is likely to shed its fundamentalist rhetoric and restructure itself on the lines of the Congress model. Now its animus is less against Muslim fundamentalism than against the Indian secularists whom it now condemns as pseudo-secularists. Paradoxically, as it sheds its fundamentalist rhetoric as well as policies, the BJP may be reverting to a more authentic Hinduism structurally predisposed towards anti-fundamentalism!

The capsule account of the political history of India sketched above raises the theoretical and practical question of how, in a country like India, with its specific conjunction of religious groups, plural traditions, the long and tortuous history of their interrelationship, the three categories of religion, society and state should be related? If they are not related as they ought to be, then how are they now related in reality? What are our political options?

II

To help us enable answer the questions raised, we need to look at the theoretical equations between the three categories as embedded in our historical articulations of such equations. We have access to five specific historical articulations of how the three categories ought to be interrelated. They are: (i) the Gandhian equation, (ii) the Nehruvian equation, (iii) the Ambedkar equation, (iv) the Constitutional equation, and (v) the Marxist equation.

In a very fundamental sense, the Gandhian equation recalls the traditional pre-Islamic patterns in which the State was a minimal but necessary category entrusted with the negative task of maintaining public order and peace and the positive task of enforcing the goals postulated by the Hindu religious and ethical scheme — the four goals of *Dharma, Artha, Kama* and *Moksha* — classically enshrined in Kautilaya's *Arthasastra*. This meant that, for Gandhi, religion provided the governing framework for the State. Similarly, Gandhi conceptualised society also as governed by the same moral framework. The Gandhian equation, therefore, assigns to religion, understood more as a system

of ethical injunctions than a system of metaphysical beliefs, a crucial role in the structure and functioning of society as well as the state. Further, Gandhi also presupposed that the social order was superior to the political order in so far as it constitutes a domain of less violence. Since Gandhi accepted the necessity for the state and hence the violence it inevitably embodied, he argued for a continuous moral subjection of a minimal state to the moral authority of the socio-religious order. It is in this specific sense that the Gandhian equation conceptualised the religious foundations of both society and state. Gandhi was well aware that this would lead to a notion of a state based on religion in a narrow sense. But since he also held that all religions in their geometrically ideal version represented merely different contingent paths to a set of common goals, he was against the imposition of narrowly Hindu goals on a non-Hindu population. This was not, with him, a merely pragmatic answer to a multi-religious situation. He believed genuinely in the classical Hindu tradition that every religion has a legitimate place under the sun. He thought that the best relationship between religious groups, given his equation, was to postulate a minimal state which would provide maximum scope for every group to seek its material and moral salvation according to the dictates of its own tradition. All religions were equal, not similar, and every individual should be content with the religion into which he was born. Conversion did not win his approval because, logically, if all religions were convertible, there was no point in conversion. However, if other religions, say, Islam or Christianity, regarded conversion as a necessary constituent element of their tradition, Gandhi was prepared to negotiate a situation in which conversion should be regulated by norms and rules of fair-play mutually agreed upon, and very reluctantly, if absolutely necessary, Gandhi would allow the state to intervene to enforce such rules. But he would prefer voluntary acceptance of such rules in the non-coercive sphere of social relationships. The Gandhian notion of morality conceptualised the individual person as a moral agent, not in the Kantian sense of generating his own moral rules, but in the sense of a performer of duties flowing from

rules prescribed by his or her community and cosmic context. The Gandhian individuality is structured by duties, norms and obligations, not rights. In so far as religion is primarily a matter of morality and only secondarily of metaphysics or rituals, the individual becomes a religious being because he is a moral being. Society and state through their different functionalities exist to provide the conditions for the possibility of a moral life for the individual and society. One might call this the classical Hindu notion of secularism in which religion is not negated but constantly negotiated as an existential category.

The Nehruvian model is an extrapolation from European history, and this need not be held against it. The equation embodied in this model assumes a disjuncture between religion and state. This equation can be traced to the historical conflict between the Church and the State, both claiming absolute sovereignty but eventually settling for an uneasy truce based on a division of functions and power. A major outcome of this was the theoretical ouster of religion from the domain of politics. It should be emphasised that this meant only the exclusion of religion as a narrowly sectarian institution but not religious culture in the broad sense. Anyone who has even a cursory acquaintance with the history of modernity in the West can see that Christian religious culture played a crucial role in the birth and growth of the Western project of modernisation. The process of disjunction was further accentuated by the doctrine of religious tolerance to contain the violent conflicts engendered by religious intolerance in European culture. These complex developments fused to create the Western pattern of secularism and the equation between the three categories. In principle, though not always in practice, religion was expected to keep its hands off the State just as the State was expected to keep its hands off religions. However, one should make a distinction between keeping hands off the state and keeping hands off politics. Modern European politics illustrates abundantly the significant part played by organised Christian groups in politics. In purely abstract theoretical terms, this equation recast society as civil society under the

auspices of the emerging, industrial, capitalist, market economy, as a terrain in which religious phenomena could be converted as political forces, and thus indirectly re-establish the connection between the three separated categories. In this equation, thus, religion became downgraded into a societal category in the name of secularism, and civil society itself became increasingly secularised in the sense of experiencing large-scale decline in religiosity in the bulk of the population. Religious life such as it was came to be accommodated to a civil society resting on the ideology of a market economy and a business/commercial civilisation. In light of this, Max Weber's celebrated thesis about the interdependence between the spirit of capitalism and Protestantism should be seen as historical re-negotiation of the relationship between religion and society. Besides being too abstract an application of this model, the Nehruvian equation fails to grasp even the full implications of the model. Not only does the Nehruvian secular equation have no roots either historical or existential in a predominantly Hindu and pre-modern reality, but it also fails to see that the European secularist equation does not banish religion from politics in the broad sense. This led Nehru to advocate an equation which was impossible to implement and therefore forced him to compromise systematically with groups he condemned as communal. The liberal democratic state under this misapplication of a misunderstood foreign model was perpetually besieged by an unreformed traditional society unable or unwilling to transform itself into a civil society. Instead of the liberal state successfully intervening to create a civil society, *it was precisely because it was liberal democratic state* it let itself be overpowered by society instead of overpowering it. The resultant reality was a secular state which permitted penetration by non-secular forces whether in the form of Hindu communalism, Muslim communalism or casteism. This critique of the Nehruvian equation, however, should not be overdone since it did contribute to the growth, however haltingly, of a secular culture in India.

The Ambedkar equation is a bewildering mixture of the Gandhian and Nehruvian equations. On the one hand,

Ambedkar is committed to liberal democracy and hence he is disposed to accept the Nehruvian equation. But two factors come in the way of his accepting it fully. The first is that he recognises religion as a crucial factor in human life as it provides a normative framework for it. Like Gandhi, he regards the component C as the essence of a religion. But unlike Gandhi, he did not ignore the component, M. In fact, his critique of Hinduism was that it did rest on a secure M. If this is true then he cannot consign religion to a private sphere and banish it wholly from the political domain. Secondly, Ambedkar also felt that, given the absence of European civil society or liberal society in India, liberal individualistic politics were not possible in Indian and hence politics based on the community, not the individual as the unit of political action, became inevitable. He reached the outwardly paradoxical position that community-oriented politics was necessary even to make functional liberal democracy itself in a society which was basically illiberal. But, unlike Gandhi, he did not regard religion as a static category but a historically changing and evolving category. Of course, Gandhi also thought religion had a changing component but he maintained strongly that there was a core part which was trans-historical. Ambedkar would argue that there was no such component — only components that changed at differential rates. But he, too held that there were basic values which were realised by a religion through a process of progressive evolution. These were the humanistic values of liberty, equality and fraternity, the ideological baggage of the French Revolution. The strength of Ambedkar's equation, like that of Gandhi's, derives from the fact that it is the result of serious engagement, both intellectual and practical with Indian reality. It is an indigenous product, no matter how much of the European element has penetrated it. His equation postulates a state that is called upon to grant society some autonomy but *also* to encroach on that autonomy in order to re-fashion the social order in the direction of an ideal society based on an ideal religion. The ideal religion implied is one which recalls the ideology of the French Revolution as well as the ideals of Buddhism which was

supposed to be a humanistic, rational and scientifically legitimate religion. Ambedkar's means in politics were a combination of direct extra-constitutional action and constitutional action. His importance lies in the fact that he faces more uncompromisingly than Nehru the problem of modernising India within the parameters stipulated by its history and reality.

The Indian Constitution reflects the three equations so far discussed in the sense that it attempts to reconcile the European liberal pattern with the Indian reality to some extent, though the adequacy of the extent may be questioned. In granting religious freedom under two conceptual heads — the liberal individualistic and the minority legitimacy rights — the Constitution takes into account the multi-religious aspect of Indian reality. While the chapter on Fundamental Rights enshrines the liberal democratic rights by making them enforceable, the chapter on Directive Principles of State Policy provide, although optionally, for an activist and interventionist state which can restructure social, economic and religious life. But in contrast to the European secularist ideal, the Indian constitutional version does not make a rigid separation between religion and state, but provides considerable room for interaction between the two. However, it also stipulates the proviso that the state can intervene in religious life on condition that it does so equally in the life of all religious groups. The principle is not just non-interference but non-interference or equal interference. But under the rubric of religious minority, a minority religion can be treated with special favour denied to the members of the majority religion. Thus the constitutional equation is a complicated one, full of potentialities for tension and conflicts. However, there seems to have been no serious complaint against this situation from any quarter, secularist as well as non-secularist. This means that the Indian political elite, cutting across party and ideological cleavages, seem to be content with the constitutional arrangement negotiated in the 1950 document.

Strictly speaking, in terms of theory, Marxism envisages an eventual historical disappearance of all the three categories

in the equation — religion, society and state — with the ultimate emergence of the ideal communist order based on a community of equal and equally free persons.[7] But before the communistic apocalypse, the Marxist theory would accept the liberal democratic equation of secularism, without surrendering its long-range historical goal of establishing a true democracy in which the three categories will just wither away functionless. However, in the short run, Marxism adopts the strategy of solving the question of religion through the secularist equation. Religion, society/civil society and state, by their very existence, give rise to problems which are solved or rather supposed to be solved through secularism. From a purely Marxist point of view, theoretically and practically both the problems to which secularism is offered as an answer are products of a bourgeois society and will vanish only with its abolition by a proletarian revolution followed by the establishment of communist order, after an interlude of proletarian dictatorship. Marx himself makes it clear that the dictatorship should be of the class, not party. In practice, of course, communists in India have made tactical compromises with bourgeois democracy by following in its footsteps both in professing a secular commitment and in violating it as a pragmatic price for participation in electoral democracy. Like the liberals, the communists have come to realise though belatedly, that Indian society is a communally conditioned one and that, even to change it, one must resort to some degree of communalism as a tactical manoeuvre. The communist hope seems to be that communalism would collapse under the weight of its internal contradictions, especially the contradictions between a rising individualistic consciousness and a historically surviving communal consciousness, translated into class consciousness and caste/community consciousness. The communists expect that there is an historical process which will transform caste politics eventually into class politics, leading to a climatic emergence of a classless society. Therefore, the Marxist equation is liberal democratic in so far as the means are concerned but communistic in so far as the goal is concerned.

III

The preceding historical and theoretical discussion shows how problematic the Indian equation between religion, society and state happens to be. One encounters a continuous and dynamic interplay between history, current reality and future hopes. The key question can be formulated thus: If a country is multi-religious and if one of the religions happens to be that of an overwhelming majority, what should be the right equation between religion, society and state? Secularism, both in the idealised European version and in the modified Indian version, was meant to answer this question. But a religion cannot be understood in isolation from the other human phenomena that surround it since religion inevitably sends lateral roots into society, economy and polity. But one should also take care to avoid a reductionist view. Therefore, one needs to negotiate the tricky terrain between reductionism and isolationism in coming to epistemological terms with religion. From the point of view of our equation, a major issue is to understand what really holds together different religious groups within the framework of a common society. In the European trajectory, the market and industrial capitalism seem to have played a critical role in the emergence of unified nation-state structure. More specifically, it was the emergence of a civil society as a domain of private conflictual interests, with its centrifugal momentum, that provided the space for different religious groups to articulate their specificities, while it was the more abstract nation-state that generated the countervailing centripetal tendency through its psycho-symbolic role. In India where a civil society does not seem to exist and is finding it hard to come into existence, who will do the job of containing the centrifugal momentum of our socio-religious pluralism? In the absence of the integrative presence of a developed capitalist market, this can be done only through a never-ending process of negotiated co-existence. In such a situation, tensions and conflicts are endemic, and therefore mechanisms to prevent their occurrence and prevent their escalation should be among the highest priorities in the agenda of our emerging civil society and "soft" state. It would

be unwise to ignore the resources of either in our efforts to live a life of common peace on the basis of mutually acknowledged legitimacy. In this arduous task, we need to resolve many tough questions, balancing our short-term interests with long-term ones. The toughest question will be: What should be the limits of minority veto and the majority sacrifice? Or if one prefers, what should be the limits of majority veto and minority sacrifice? Both the majority groups and minority groups in India have their strengths and weaknesses in precipitating a confrontation, but they should not forget that they also have resources in arriving at a resolution that can let them live in peace and honour.

The Hindu majority should realise that its fragmentation due to unequal and conflictual divisions within itself reduces its capacity for bargaining and confronting. Hinduism's structural looseness because of the more flexible relationship between M, C, and R and the structural tightness of minority groups, will continue to provide the latter with an advantage. The Hindu majority may find it necessary to transform themselves into a more coherent force to participate effectively in an orderly, competitive liberal political economy. This attempt to generate legitimate community power should be distinguished from "communalism" and "fundamentalism". This, however, would be a non-Hindu solution for the Hindus, and despite its momentary successes on such emotionally charged issues as Ramajanma Bhoomi the majority will find it a hard task to forge such a unity, as it might propel it into institutional and identity crises. The vulnerability of the majority should not blind the minorities to their own vulnerability. In short, both should work out negotiated co-existence, not on the basis of fear or vulnerability but on the basis of legitimate interests. In the absence of a common civic sense of belonging to a civil society and a strong sense of national identity, the second best solution seems to be to accept the common subjection to a common legal entity, the state. But even the state may find itself overloaded and run into a crisis of dysfunctionality. Therefore, one must also turn to the socio-cultural and economic domains in handling our centrifugal pluralism based on

ethnic, religious and regional diversities. A neglected domain seems to be the cultural domain which may prove to be crucial in the long-run, and there is an acute need for generating socio-cultural practices which can help us to handle violent and explosive issues such as those facing us in Kashmir, Punjab or Assam. No state, however powerful, can contain such volcanically disruptive situations by sheer display and deployment of physical power and violence. We need to create a federal system which can handle these issues more skilfully than the existing system. The false assumption that a strong centre and strong state cannot go together should go. Above all, we need to innovate in the realm of new politics rooted in the lives of the masses, in addition to but not displacing the traditional politics revolving round political parties and elections.[8]

If these are the issues that dog us in our daily lives and also in our macro-historical destinies, it is legitimate for social scientists to ask themselves: Have our social sciences enabled us to understand these issues by illuminating them? Sadly one must admit that they do not seem to be as yet anywhere near undertaking this complex task. For instance, we need to theorise more systematically and meaningfully on the category of religion in its entanglements with other two categories of society and state. Our fairly visible allegiance to the Western social sciences constitutes something of a block. The category of religion dropped from the Western social sciences in their heyday, but now the good old ghosts that were believed to have been exercised — religion, family, superstition and so on — have returned to harass the most sophisticated traditions of social epistemology. In India, these phenomena had never really given up their reality; we are in a better position to theorise on these phenomena. For instance, we need to work out a typology of religions in the country and trace meticulously their interactive implications. We need to theorise on a state which functions in the context of a population which, no matter what religion it professes and practises, is structurally implicated in a religious life. The family and caste are also crucial elements in our life, and we have no satisfactory

social science understanding of these phenomena. More often than not, their reality is twisted to accommodate Western theoretical models.[9] The very idea of secularism itself — a central notion in elucidating the relationship between religion, society and state, needs to be theoretically reopened and empirically re-examined. Indigenous reflections on these issues by indigenous actors like Gandhi, Nehru, Ambedkar and others, need to be energetically ransacked to yield insights and illuminations. In short, Indian social science theory has to come closer to Indian social reality. That way lies more meaningful social science and more fruitful social life.

References

1. *Religion, Society and State* (1985), ICSSR, New Delhi.
2. The literature on these themes is too vast to mention here, and most of it is centred on the problem of the universal and the possibility of a master narrative encompassing the whole of human history. The self-destructive nature of post-modernity can be seen best in the self-defeating deployment of the deconstructive mode of analysis.
3. The philosopher in question is Prof. K.J. Shah, a retired Professor of Philosophy, Karnatak University, with whom I have had the benefit of nearly three decades of friendly-hostile dialogue on tradition and modernity.
4. I prefer the term, tradition, to system, because the latter would involve unmanageable epistemological implications.
5. One of the central issues of contention between Prof. Shah and myself turns on the nature of "changeable" and the "unchangeable" components in history. Prof. Shah privileges the "unchangeable" as immune to all change, and thus virtually absolutising and de-historising it, whereas I would merely concede the relative unchangeability of the "unchangeable".
6. Of course, there was an earlier Christian incursion to the West Coast of India from the Middle East resulting in the Syrian Christian population of modern Kerala, but in the context of this paper far more relevant is the later incursion of Europeanised Christianity in the post-medieval period.
7. In this connection, see my essay on the religious problematic in Marx, forthcoming in the special number on Secularism, *Probings in Social Science*, Delhi.

8. This position should not be confused with the one held recently by Rajni Kothari. Basically I consider his position on grassroots politics to be Utopian and also a disguised support for the very establishment he attacks. One cannot tackle the questions of macro-politics by ignoring it and naively advocating micro-politics. This would be like the subaltern historiography's attempt to eliminate macro-history or at least refusing to relate to it. It is precisely in the tension between the micro and the macro that most history and most politics flourish.
9. Two good examples of this methodological reductionism are reinterpretation of caste and Gandhian politics by the American political scientists, the Rudolphs. While they are perceptive in empirical matters, they tend, in terms of theory and methodology, to cast both caste and Gandhi in the unconvincing role of agents of "modernization". Such examples can be multiplied. In this connection, see Malathi Subramanian, "Theoretical Models of the Indian Political Party System: 1960-1975", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Karnatak University, Dharwad, 1988. This is a pioneering study.

8

MARXISM AND THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

S.K. Chaube

The collapse of the Soviet Union has put some Marxists in a moral dilemma. To others an opportunity has been offered for introspection and review. It is not that Marxism has for the first time been challenged. The validity of the Marxist methods has traditionally been challenged in the social sciences along three main lines:

1. That Marx's class analysis with regard to the industrialised West has failed. The socialist revolution has not occurred there.[1] On the other hand, the workers in the West have been co-opted in the capitalist system. So much so that they became callous of the poor people — including the working people — of the colonies and former colonies.

2. That Marx has written about the industrialised countries and, therefore, his theories do not apply to the developing countries. In a way, this criticism conflicts with the earlier one. It also ignores the fact that, in 1882, Marx visualised the possibility of a socialist revolution in Russia.[2] And Marx did write a great deal about the colonies.

3. That Marx ignored the role of technology which lies at the root of capitalism's success and has enabled it to avoid and survive crises. The fact is that technology has a crucial place in Marx's view of history which considers industrial capitalism as a higher form of production than any other.[3]

Marx also noted the enormous labour displacing capacity of machinery. Marx's theory of reserve army of labour was built upon this acknowledgement.

Saner liberal opinion has, however, acknowledged the value of Marxism as a critique of capitalist society. It is also admitted that Marx never laid down the format of a socialist state. The end of the Soviet Union, therefore, does not falsify Marxism. On their part, the Marxists acknowledge that late twentieth century capitalism has grown in complexity to such an extent as to call for an elaboration and extension of the Marxist method. This method holds tremendous potential for the understanding of the post-colonial world marked by the processes of primitive accumulation. At the same time the position of the present paper is that social science may benefit through a meaningful dialogue between the Marxist and the liberal social scientists. The meaningfulness of the dialogue will depend on, first, the streamlining of respective positions, objectives and tools. It is necessary to state one's hypothesis as it will reveal one's bias, for there simply cannot be a social scientist without bias. The social scientists are of course free to use each other's tools but they are not allowed to misuse them, that is to say, distort the meaning of the terms and concepts of others. When Marx, for instance, brought the concept of 'relation of production' into the discipline of political economy, he did so after elaborate exercise and without distorting any concept of his predecessors.

The Ground Rules for a Dialogue

Stating one's hypothesis in a way amounts to declaiming one's world view. A social scientist is required to state his world view also to set the terms of reference for those to whom he seeks to convey the result of his own research. This, in detail, will call for the definition of the terms that he uses. In the social sciences the danger of a loose usage of terms is very great. Quite often different social scientists use the same term to mean different things, if social sciences are to be located in a place better than the tower of Babel, and if they aspire for the status of natural sciences, standardisation of

meaning is extremely important. One good step toward this goal is preparation of an inventory of terms used in the social sciences.

A related strategy is breaking the barriers of discipline within, of course, the limits of one's competence. Besides drawing comparative data from history, political scientists, economists, sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists can benefit from each other's tools and results. Thus, when a historian undertakes micro-level peasant studies, he may reduce his labour by going over studies in folk culture. Studies in tribal life by economists and political scientists may equally benefit from the storehouse of anthropology. The interaction between politics, economics and sociology is amply evident in the Marxian methodology which Marx himself called 'history'.

The Developing Countries and Social Sciences

For the developing countries the most important programme is change. At the most general level of perception, it is a change toward prosperity. But about the details of this scenario as well as the means of achievement views differ from country to country depending upon regimes and social configurations. The crucial issues are democracy, political freedom, social equity and justice. This is important given the fact that most of the developing countries have undergone instability and periodic turmoil. The Enlightenment spirit that had marked the national liberation movements has been rudely shaken if not shattered. Therefore perceptions of the third world have to be redefined and classified.

The host of American and, subsequently, European/ Australian social scientists that descended upon the newly liberated countries with their 'modernisation' and 'development' approaches showed signs of frustration in the sixties and started speaking of 'decay'. The Marxists entered the field with hesitation. They lacked resources and coordination. Their only hope rested in the fact that the 'modernist' tools had proved unequal to the task.

This led to a kind of intellectual confrontation between the Marxists and the non-Marxists. Some of the Marxists

refused to budge an inch from the received theoretical framework and persisted with the 'orthodox' categories forgetting that Marx himself had worked within the framework of nineteenth century political economy. Some others became excessively 'liberal'. In incorporating new ideas, they went on to distort some of Marxist ideas.

Among the non-Marxists the effect of the confrontation was similar. While some of them refused to budge, some went in for accommodation, which in some cases, led to good results. In others there are confusions galore arising out of either wilful misapplication or plain ignorance. Thus M.S.A. Rao writes:

> Marx and Aberle developed the concept of relative deprivation emphasizing the element of conflict. Marx and Engels recognized that dissatisfaction with the *status quo* was not determined by absolute conditions but by relative expectation.[5]

Almost every word in this statement is misleading. First, Karl Marx and D.F. Aberle differed from each other by a century. Second, Marx was a political economist and Aberle an anthropologist. Third, Marx never used the phrase 'relative deprivation'. Fourth, he did not even remotely suggest the concept as he did not attempt to delve into the human mind. His materialistic interpretation of history was concerned with the objective conditions of social life which he saw as grounded in exploitation of labour by the owners of the means of production through appropriation of surplus. In fact, Marx was not concerned, as far as his analytical theory goes, with relativistic concepts like poverty and justice.

The second example of distortion has an aura of authenticity as it carries a quotation mark: Peasant nations, Marx observed in the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, are formed "by simple addition of homologous magnitude." Peasants do not form a class, Marx argued, because their relations are "strictly local".[6]

The authors of this statement record Marx's view that small peasants have been favourable to authoritarian rule. The reason that India, as peasant nation, has not chosen

authoritarianism, according to the authors, is that the "Indian peasants have found in traditional social arrangements some of the means to represent and rule themselves"[7], caste being an archetypal institution of such kind.

By one stroke, therefore, two aims are served. One, Marx is proved wrong and inapplicable to India. Two, 'tradition' is mystified and class is replaced by caste. But Marx had said something different. He said:

> The small-holding peasants form a vast mass, the members of which live in similar conditions but without entering into manifold relations with one another. Their mode of production isolates them from one another instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse. The isolation is increased by France's bad means of communication and by the poverty of the peasants.... A small holding, a peasant and his family; alongside them another small holding, another peasant and another family. In this way, the French nation is formed by simple addition of homologous magnitude.... In so far as there is merely a local interconnection among these small-holding peasants, and the identity of their interest begets no community, no national bond and no political organisation among them, they do not form a class.[8]

Now, Marx of course, used these terms 'peasants' and 'small-holding peasants' interchangeably, but he nowhere defined the peasants according to the size of land-holding. In other words, 'peasant' is a descriptive term. It becomes politically significant only when it is differentiated and its segments/strata are placed in the relations of production.

By definition, therefore, peasants do not form a class. But the peasantry may contain classes. In fact, the overwhelming strength of the peasantry being constituted by the small-holding ones was a peculiar phenomenon in the nineteenth century Western Europe — a result of the Napoleonic reforms.[9] There is no 'peasant nation' in the Marxist vocabulary. The concept is redundant in India or any other developing country and is an unreliable foundation for any grand theory.

The Basic Concern of Marxism

While recommending a healthy multi-disciplinary approach to the problems of social life, a word of caution is relevant. Marx shared the nineteenth century's general philosophical concern for freedom.[10] This concern was woven into his basic theoretical framework, namely, materialist dialectic. (I am desisting from the use of the more commonplace but problematic term 'dialectical materialism'.) But, while "the standpoint of old materialism is 'civil' society, the standpoint of the new is human society, or socialized humanity". Hence, "the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it".[11]

Resulting from this intellectual commitment was Marx's probe into the working of nineteenth century capitalism. Marx regarded production relations as the base and culture and politics as the superstructure. He made case studies of European politics. He studied some precapitalist modes of production. He did not touch many, many things. Least of all did he claim to be the repository of entire human knowledge about society. To hold that Marxist political economy or social theory covers only a part of the social reality is, therefore, by no means to belittle him. Rather, to claim that Marxism has the answer for all problems of the human society is the worst disrespect that can be shown to Marx whose habit it was to doubt everything. It is, however, perfectly legitimate to adopt Marx's world view, to examine the world in his light, to explore the grey areas and even to re-examine his own postulates in the light of the new findings. Both interpolation and extrapolation are permissible provided that the original concepts and their meanings are maintained and logical consistency is not abandoned. Putting words into one's mouth and, then, finding fault with him or reaching a conclusion different from what one has arrived at is the worst form of intellectual dishonesty.

Marx's View of History

In one of his dramatic moments Marx wrote, but subsequently cancelled, the following line. "We know only a single science, the science of history."[12]

Marx's conception of history, which is based on the Hegelian dialectics, sees change, resulting from contradiction, as inherent in every situation. This philosophy was revolutionary in nature. "Until the 19th century the conception that had reigned supreme in the philosophy of nature and knowledge for two thousand years, the conception that had become the familiar furniture of the mind, rested on the superiority of the final; they rested upon change and origin as signs of defect and unreality."[13] It was not until the birth of the Darwinian theory of evolution that transformation was viewed as a valid form of evolution.

To Hegel goes the credit of observing the dialectical evolution of human history though its basis was 'reason'. The Hegelian social categories were the family, the civil society and the state. Marx substituted material interest for reason. Marx's chief aim of enquiry was the civil society rather than the state. History holds the crucial position in his theoretical framework and is defined as 'the succession of separate generations, each of which exploits the materials, the capital funds, the productive forces handed down to it by all the preceding generations', and thus, on one hand, continues the traditional activity in completely changed circumstances and, on the other, modifies the old circumstances with a completely changed activity.[14]

The sum of productive forces, capital funds and social forms of intercourse, which every individual and generation finds in existence as something given, is the real basis of what the philosophers have conceived as 'substance' and 'essence of man' and what they have defined and attacked.... These conditions of life, which different generations find in existence, decide also whether or not the convulsion will be strong enough to overthrow the basis of the entire existing system.... And if these material elements of a complete revolution are not present... as far as practical development is concerned, it is absolutely immaterial whether the idea of this revolution has been expressed a hundred times already, as the history of communism proves.[15]

A Theory of Change

For a meaningful dialogue between the Marxist and the liberal social scientists, I have demanded a declaration of one's world view because a social scientist has a tendency to see what he wants to see. The fundamental question for a social scientist is whether he is satisfied with the state of existing things and with slow and piecemeal reforms or whether he would like to see revolutionary overhauling of a system. Accordingly he would look for the factors that work for total stability, overall stability with slow change in parts, or revolutionary change.

Talcott Parsons, the patriarch of liberal social theory in the post-Second World War period, made a distinction between change *within* a system and change *of* a system.[16] His structural-functionalism is openly committed to change within the system as it occurs in parts and enables the system to survive on the whole. Marxists look for changes of the system of oppression. Marxists have devoted a major part of their effort toward evolving a theory of revolution. They have been able to make a few. However, they have not been able to predict all revolutions or, for that matter, counter-revolutions. The debate between 'spontaneity' and 'consciousness' since the days of Lenin is a witness to this.[17]

The liberal social scientists engaged in the study of the developing countries speak of incremental change — gradual and evolutionary — which they have called 'development'. Historical/revolutionary change is not studied because, as Lucian Pye rather dramatically put it:

> Have we been realistic in assuming that human knowledge might under any conceivable circumstance provide conceptual understanding of such an inherently uncertain and confused historical process as the revolutionary emergence to nationhood of all the remaining traditional societies? Have we not in our criticisms acted as though we believed it possible to provide theories and concepts which would make predictable a whole stage of human history?[18]

Parsons had declared that "a general theory of the process of change of social systems is not possible in the present state of knowledge".[19] In this situation, the liberal social scientists seek to explain much of historical change by what they call 'chance' — a concept orthodox Marxists do not approve of.

In his classic lectures on history, Carr has quoted Marx disapprovingly:

> World history would have a very mystical character if there were no room in it for change. This chance itself naturally becomes part of the general trend of development and is compensated by other forms of chance. But acceleration and retardation depend upon such 'accidentals' which include 'change'.[20]

A characteristic of the Marxist method may be discerned here — its broad sweep. Carr admits of autonomy of chance but would not attach historical significance to all chances/accidents as he agrees with Parsons that "science is a selective orientation to reality".[21] But he goes to the extent of asserting that history is also a system of 'casual' orientations. "Interpretation in history is bound up with value judgements, and causality is bound up with interpretations".[22] On the other hand, he admits that words like 'inevitable', 'inescapable' or even 'ineluctable' are rhetorical and avoidable.[23]

Now, the historians deal with past happenings and are on a firmer ground than the social scientists who deal with contemporary events and aim at prognosticating the future. All elements in a current conjuncture may not be known to a social scientist. They are revealed only with the passage of time. Human action at every conjuncture becomes successful if the significant elements in it are correctly identified. The capacity to identify such significant elements in a current conjuncture constitutes what we call greatness, or charisma. Questions like why, in spite of a great deal of situational commonality, China had a socialist revolution and India had none must be answered from this perspective.

Revolutions do not occur daily. But they do occur with great impact. Exclusion of revolution from the agenda of Third World research is a symptom of social scientific jaundice. By the same token, Marxists must study the forces that keep a system going if only with the ulterior motive of seeing it gone.

Class in Social Sciences

The concept of class has caused a great deal of confusion in social sciences. Before Marx, and after him 'class' has been used as a neutral, aggregative concept standing for an assemblage of similar objects. The natural scientist's schemes of classification are based on this meaning of class. A.J.P Taylor notes that the concept was cast in dichotomous terms during the French Revolution and was commonplace in the nineteenth century political literature.[24] Marx rendered the dichotomy a specificity by showing that (i) the existence of classes is only bound up with particular historical phases in the development of production; (ii) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat; and (iii) this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of classes and classless society.[25]

The Marxian concept of class, therefore, is a very specific one. In the liberal social sciences, on the other hand, three closely related terms are used without any correspondence with Marx's class. They are 'class', 'strata' and 'hierarchy'. While 'class' in the liberal theory is, strictly speaking, neutral statistical, as shown above, 'strata' are units or (statistical) classes ordered according to a common standard. 'Hierarchy', on the other hand, is an episcopal concept signifying a chain of command.[26] Even in liberal social sciences careless mixing up of these terms is abundant. Marxists have reason to be offended when this confusion is superimposed on the Marxian categories and innovations are sought to be brought in. When Rajni Kothari, for instance, considers caste as class in India, he really means that caste is a form of (statistical) aggregate.

A related set of confusion attaches to the terms 'elite' (used by Vilfred Pareto) and 'ruling classes' (used by Gaetano

Mosca). Both these terms were meant by their authors to be alternative to the Marxian concept of 'ruling class' and not its synonym or extension. Whereas Marx's 'ruling class' presumes its synonym a monolithic unity of economic and political power, both 'elite' and 'ruling classes' are pluralist notions rooted in functional groups/sectors. The use of the word 'elites' is, of course, unredeemable.

Caste and Class

Incidentally, Marx himself wrote about caste:

> ... the conversion of fractional work into the life-calling of one man corresponds to the tendency, shown by earlier societies, to make trades hereditary, either to petrify them into castes, or whenever definite historical conditions beget in the individual a tendency to vary in a manner incompatible with the nature of castes, to ossify them into guilds. Castes and guilds arise from the action of the same natural law, that regulates the differentiation of plants and animals into species and varieties, except that, when a certain degree of development has been reached, the hereditary of castes and the exclusiveness of guilds are ordained as a law of society.[27]

Marx's theory of caste finds reflection in the Gandhian anthropologist, Nirmal Kumar Bose's theory of Hindu method of tribal absorption':

> Hindu society, when absorbing a new tribe or while creating a new *jati* by differentiation of occupation, always guaranteed or tried to guarantee monopoly in a particular occupation to each caste within a given region. The last point is very important; for the same *jati* may be found practising slightly different trades if it finds the prescribed hereditary occupation no longer economically satisfactory. But the careful way in which correspondence is established between *jati* and occupation is proof of what the economic and social legislators of ancient India had in mind. They tried to build up a social organization on the basis of hereditary monopolistic guilds. That lay

> at the base of the caste system; and it is because capitalism has, in modern times, completely upset the old productive organization, that we are witnessing the fast decay of the entire social system of ancient India.[28]

Now, here is a social scientist, who has no ideological affinity to Karl Marx but whose economic interpretation of caste is not only based on Marx but also a consistent extension of this analysis. The important point is that neither Marx nor Bose regards caste as class. Both see it as an exclusive occupational grouping. Bose finds this grouping non-competitive in the traditional setting but becoming redundant under the impact of capitalism.

This is not a paper on caste. But the discussion on caste has a significance for the understanding of the developing societies, even though caste is a unique phenomenon in India. For, there are two aspects of the caste — the *varna* and the *jati*. The *varna* is actually a system of status-ranking and the *jati* is a form of ethnic aggregation. In the Indian caste system different ethnic groups unite, but do not merge, and, according to their differential access to resources, are ranked in status. The 'resources' in the Indian situation include not only wealth but also knowledge and ritual purity. This in-built value system has, however, been flexible. Hence, M.N. Srinivas's concept of 'dominant caste'.[29]

The germs of the concept of 'dominant caste' lay in H.H. Risley's formulation in 1890 that extension of voting right would benefit the agrarian classes who had more property than the 'upper castes'.[30] Combining Bose and Srinivas, therefore, one reaches the conclusion that, while capitalism destroys the functional specialisation of caste, possession of wealth actually alters the theoretical structure of the caste in terms of localised status. Risley adds to it the finding that electoral politics may change the power equation among the castes or, at least, bring new claimants to power up. In none of these cases is a relation of production established.

Frederick Barth sees caste as a special form of stratification in what he calls a 'poly-ethnic society'.[31] He set his theory in the context of J.S. Furnivall's model of 'plural society' in which different groups meet only at the market place and do

not integrate.[32] Barth's formulation is that, in a poly-ethnic society marked by differential control over resources by different ethnic groups, there is an in-built system of status-ranking in terms of some shared values. Now, a value system is a subjective phenomenon and is highly variable on the basis of objective reality. On the other hand, the status ranking between the Europeans, the Chinese and the Malays that Furnivall noted in the Netherlands Indies was very much a function of the colonial system. It is theoretically possible to locate the origin of the Indian caste system in some kind of colonialism. But the elaboration of the caste system owes itself to a complex social-historical reality all the constituents of which are yet beyond our grasp.

Marxism and the Ethnic Question

For the developing countries the ethnic question is undoubtedly one of the most sensitive issues though recent events have proved the developed countries also to be not immune to it. More important, the ethnic question is entangled with the 'national' question which, in turn, is inseparable from the question of statehood. The definitions are not precise and there is a great deal of overlapping. Until the First World War Europe could not disentangle the national question from the domain of the state, while the United States firmly refused to admit any disharmony between the two. The U.S.A. reduced the state to the level of a unit of the federation. The minorities were never allowed any cultural right; they were branded as 'ethnic groups'.

In the colonies, on the other hand, the state belonged to the alien rulers and the nation belonged to the native people. The masters, on their part, granted political rights to the minorities in the colonies, something which the minorities 'home' were never allowed.

After the First World War, Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations institutionalised the 'high contracting parties', that is, the states, as nations. The Soviet Union[33], which was denied membership of the League of Nations, experimented with the ideal of multinational state which, in turn, inspired some developing countries like India in the creation of their

own state structure. The disintegration of the Soviet Union has been the rudest shock to the developing countries.

Marxism and the National Question

The inability of Marxism to handle the national question has by now become famous. In spite of his great concern for the oppression of Ireland and partition of Poland, Marx saw them as human, and not 'national' problems in the context of the historical growth of capitalism. He was even appreciative of the historical role of colonialism in the destruction of the old, stagnant economic order in India.

Marx dealt with 'nation' at two levels: (i) philosophical, where he confronted Hegel and where the nation and the state became identical; and (ii) economic, where he noted the capitalist sweep destroying national particularities and seclusion. It was in Engels's writings that the national question is formulated in more political terms. "A sincere international collaboration of European nations is possible only if each of these nations is fully autonomous in its own house", wrote Engels in 1892.[34] During the First World War, socialist internationalism came to confront nationalism of the worst variety. Lenin opposed this form of nationalism but promised autonomy to all oppressed nationalities in the Tsarist empire, and, finally, worked out a multinational state on the principle of national equality. Equality, however, is a liberal democratic concept and cannot be quite grasped by the Marxist framework of political economy.

Lenin's contribution to the national question formed the backbone of the Marxist strategy in national liberation in the colonies and what the liberal political scientists call 'nation building' in the third world. The 'dual role' of the national bourgeoisie in the colonies remains an enigma, the developing countries' goal of self-reliant economic development being recently blurred by the vision of modernisation and liberalisation.

The Problem of 'Marginalisation'

Yet the two dilemmas may, at least partially, be resolved by the authentic developments in Marxism. In the recent

political literature in the Third World concern is expressed against 'marginalisation' at both the national and the international levels. At the national level, 'marginalisation' really means pauperisation of the increasing number of population. At the international level, it means the pauperisation of the developing countries by the developed ones through unequal exchange. How can these two phenomena be related to the Marxist categories?

Part VIII of *Capital* narrates the horrendous process of pauperisation and vagabondisation of the European small farmers. A part of the vagabond population was just extinguished; the remnants were absorbed by the process of industrialisation. Today's building of capitalism in the third world follows the same path with some specific variations. First, it is on a global scale. Second, it encompasses several times larger population in individual states. Third, its technology is labour-saving or labour-displacing. Fourth, its scope is limited by the economic superpowers. Therefore, the pauperised people have little chance of being absorbed.

The name of mariginalisation on the international plane is, paradoxically, 'globalisation'. It is an international hierarchy of markets and modes of production in which the most advanced technology and, therefore, the most profitable productions are controlled by the developed countries. The least developed countries are essentially buyers of their products and suppliers of their raw materials. The Marxists have long described the process as 'neo-colonialism', its difference with classical colonialism being the absence of political control of the developed countries at least in the direct form.

It is necessary, finally, to demystify the term 'marginalisation'. It springs from the essentially flat model of centre-periphery. Actual societies, national or international, are hierarchical in the sense that they are stratified and inter-linked through processes of exchange of service, commodities and, even, power. Perhaps it will be convenient to describe the structure as a pyramid having both a horizontal and a vertical dimension. Such a pyramid

is horizontally divided into segments and vertically into strata. Relation of segments as well as of strata in this pyramid will depend upon the terms and context of trade which are subject to empirical verification and not logical deduction.

Conclusion

How far can social sciences be value free? The concepts of all sciences are predicated upon the two fundamental methods: comparison and relation. In both these activities there is a value premise involved. In comparisons one has to decide upon the standard/scale. Two objects may be equal in volume but different in weight. The Russians have greater political freedom now than before 1991; only, some of them are dying of starvation, some others are begging.

On the question of relation, too, some natural science projects look for stability and harmony, others for discord and dynamics. In the social sciences the position is the same. The functionalists look for stability while the Marxists look for transformation. In the middle of the spectrum people can see overall stability in spite of 'dysfunction' and partial change/reform or a slow but inexorable contradiction in spite of short term/superficial calm. Jaundice sets in when anyone begins to think that things have reached the ideal stage in terms of harmony/stability or a revolutionary situation is always present in all societies.

A major difference between the natural sciences and the social sciences is that the knowledge in natural sciences is confined to a few while its result in terms of benefit or harm is long-term but the knowledge in social sciences is shared by a larger population while its impact is more immediately felt. Consequently, there is a fair amount of consensus in the natural sciences on the tools that are used. This consensus is yet to grow in the social sciences. Frequently, the same (like 'class', 'culture' and 'conflict') are used in different senses by different persons or even by the same person in different contexts. It is time, aided by the end of the Cold War, that serious efforts are made to gradually end this intellectual anarchy.

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9

THE STATE APPARATUS IN THE THIRD WORLD

The Theoretical and Methodological Dimensions

G. Haragopal & C. Chandrasekhar

The state — an embodiment of force — has undergone a change during the course of civilisational development. In the course of time it acquired more functions and new sources of legitimisation. In the West, by and large, its role and legitimacy was closely linked to the material advancement. It played a significant role in pushing the material forces to a higher level and the advancing material forces did influence the form and, to a considerable extent, the content of the state. The colonial expansion and its subsequent incarnation — imperialism — were a result of expansion of trade and new forms of extraction of surplus at the global level. The expansion of the economic activity in the West was largely based on the initiative and enterprise of individuals and groups. The state did play the role of a catalyst. It resulted in the expansion of the state and its spheres of domination. But in terms of power and domination there was not only reduction in non-market coercion but development of a civil society.

There was considerable conflict and confrontation between the state and civil society giving rise to the rule of law, written constitutions, civil rights and several checks and balances in the exercise of state power. It is in this

process that not only the new rising classes ensured a large measure of protection to their economic activity but other political and cultural freedoms. Thus the nation-state in the Western, particularly the capitalist, world has performed a specific historical role. The experience is different in the case of most of the third world societies.

In the third world societies the origins and subsequent change patterns of the state and society have been different. It is this specificity that led to the concepts of 'Oriental Despotism' and 'Asiatic Mode of Production.'[1] In fact, it was Kosambi who gave a creative interpretation to the ancient state and society in India by employing the Marxist methodology. He observed that in India it was not the classes that created the state but it is almost the state that created the classes.[2] This formulation helps us in understanding theoretical and methodological dimensions of the state and its apparatus.

The state in this part of the globe has been one of the principal extractors of surplus without any active participation in raising the productive forces. It was its prerogative to use physical force that gave the state edge and advantage over various other institutions. It employed this force wherever necessary in maintaining the order so as to see that there were no impediments and opposition to continuous surplus extraction. The apparatus that was designed and developed, therefore, was to carry these two primary functions, viz., the surplus extraction through revenue machinery and the maintenance of order through police force. It is these aspects of the state that are neglected in the social enquiry.

The study of the third world state is undertaken either by the Western scholars or the local scholars using the Western theoretical models and methodologies. The studies have not been able to capture the complex reality as the Western perspectives are superimposed on a reality which was different. The entire modern political theory is based on the structural functional equilibrium.[3] They view capitalist development as the only desirable path and believe that it is the final stage of development. It is this perspective that

characterises their theory and method. This approach reduced the state apparatus — bureaucracy — into a mere instrument and advocated for a separate focus. Thus it is not studied as an integral part of the power structure. In fact in the third world context the administrative apparatus is not only the concrete form of state power but occupies considerable political space. The study of the state without reference to the theory and practice of its apparatus would never provide a view of totality of the complex reality.

II

In the Western contributions related to the state apparatus two works need special attention. It was Woodrow Wilson who pleaded that study of administrative apparatus should be separated from the study of the political organs of power.[4] This left a theoretical tradition which was further buttressed by Taylorism which emphasised on the method and process without any regard to the political context. Nor did it examine the nature of capital and purpose of organisation.[5] The fact that Lenin welcomed Taylorism led to an argument that there are techno-managerial processes which cut across the political and ideological frontiers.

The contribution of Weber on bureaucracy is yet another important theoretical development as far as the state apparatus is concerned.[6] Weber was able to locate bureaucracy in the larger economic context. His observation that bureaucracy is a product of surplus indicates that only stable surplus can give rise to permanent personnel. For a society which is not sure of its minimum levels of production cannot have a regular and permanent personnel. Once the personnel are recruited on a regular basis, the concepts of 'merit' and 'neutrality' assume importance. This is an attempt to create a class of people who subserve any political group in power irrespective of its ideological thrust. This has become possible in the Western context where the capitalist path of development had acquired a degree of consensus.

The middle class, particularly the techno-managerial class which does not open the capital nor is engaged in the direct material production, is best suited for subserving the

needs of capital and also power maintenance. This is precisely the reason why merit is defined in apolitical and amoral terms. In order to further ensure the neutrality, Weber emphasised on impersonal approach in performing tasks of the bureaucratic organisation. In terms of legitimacy of power Weber extolled the virtues of bureaucracy as its locus is in the legal rational authority. The concept itself indicates that what is legal is also rational. He is right when he stated that the other forms of authority, viz., traditional and charismatic are non-rational, if not irrational. The question does not arise; whether the legal and rational concepts are necessarily positive and developmental. Max Weber also avoided the moral question. For capitalism can always be justified on legal and rational but not on moral grounds. However, the legal rational authority is definitely a better form of authority than the earlier feudal forms of authority which were both coercive and arbitrary. The Weberian paradigm has not only provided a theoretical base for major debates but has been one of the significant influences on the administrative systems of the West and also the third world.

There have been other theoretical developments like Human Relations Movements with an emphasis on informal organisation.[7] It was Chester Barnard who described 'authority' as fiction.[8] He defined organisation as basically a cooperative system based on contribution-satisfaction-equilibrium. He further maintained that authority lies with those who are accepting and not with those who are exercising it. The subsequent motivational concepts went on emphasising on non-material incentives as the prime stimulants of hard work and initiative of the functionaries in organisations.[9] In a way this was a search for the non-material base of human personality which can be tapped for capital accumulation. These approaches did not have much impact on the third world state apparatus partly because of their orientation to industrial organisation and under emphasis on the role of authority.

The one contribution which raised the discourse or organisation theory to a higher level of abstraction is the work of Herbert Simon on 'Administrative behaviour'.[10] He

attempted to go into the dynamics of human choice and the way the goals are set and achieved. Simon maintained that rationality of individuals and organisations depends not in making a choice of an end but relating the immediate end to the intermediate and ultimate ends. He pleaded for a long range vision and foresight. The discussion on ends and means, facts and values and rationality, however, concentrates more on the organisational process than the purpose. He devotes no attention to moral questions nor to the political. That Simon defines rationality as selection of appropriate means to achieve the set ends epitomises his philosophical position.

The Western administrative theory entered a phase of a crisis with the emergence of the third world. The Western advisers like Paul Appleby, Braibanti, and a host of others were not able to render suitable advice to these newly emerging political societies.[11] The advice that they rendered did not work. This gave rise to a new search both in the theoretical and operational domains. This attempt resurrected comparative method on the one hand and a specific focus on developmental issues on the other.[12] That development administration has been defined as the study of administrative systems of developing countries indicates not only the crisis of the administrative systems in the third world but also the inadequacy, if not irrelevance, of the existing Western organisation theories. In response to the crisis came the ecological paradigm developed by Fred W. Riggs.[13] Riggs laboured hard to provide an explanation for the existing crisis with a promise of an alternative model. At the outset Riggs maintained that the Western organisation theory lacked universal validity as it was ego-centric and ethnocentric. Therefore, the comparative and development approaches were supposed to check these biases and broaden the base of the theory by incorporating experiences of the third world societies. The Comparative Administration Group initiated some studies and debates which did generate literature on the subject and also a few insights into the administrative phenomenon.

The promise that the method and premises of organisation theory would be altered has not been realised in the overall exercise. The best example of this failure is the ecological model that Riggs himself developed. In the ecological model, to start with, Riggs divided the societies into industria and agraria. The Western societies are classified as industrial and the third world societies as agricultural. He built the logic that the industrial and agricultural social systems are distinct and the experience of one may not be directly relevant to the other. However, he categorised all the developing societies as prismatic societies. This categorisation of the societies is done on the parameter of structural functional differentiation. In a way the theory which was totally steeped in equilibrium concerns moved on to differentiation. This is recognition of motion in the third world system. This is in no way an alteration of the theoretical premise nor the method of enquiry.

Riggsian paradigm suffers on many counts. Firstly, the very assumption that all the societies are moving from a minimal structural functional differentiation to maximal differentiation is value laden. He christened the former as fused systems and the latter as defracted systems. All the societies which are in motion from the fused to defracted are christened as prismatic societies. This obviously suggests that the Western defracted model is the ideal that prismatic societies have to reach. This is based on the premise that the defracted societies are the only available advanced models. This only reinforces the ego-centric and ethno-centric biases which were considered as impediments to the development of universal theory. Secondly, the structural functional differentiation is considered as the sole criterion of development. This indicates that the model suffers from the same limitation that the earlier models suffered from. Thirdly, by arguing that the encounter between modernity and tradition engenders perversions like formalism, heterogeneity and overlapping is more a defence of the perversions than providing a constructive critique. Lastly, the model maintains that it is the systemic conditions that condition the behavioural mode of sub-systems like administrative sub-

system. This is the last straw on the camel's back as far as the positive role of administrative apparatus in the developmental process is concerned.

The administrative theory and its methodologies coming from the West do indicate their inherent bias to capitalist and industrial systems. This is admitted by the Western scholars when they state that they cannot handle the questions of development and transformation. The attempt to separate the apparatus from the state is one reason why their approaches proved totally inadequate in handling the complex tasks of development. For development in its fuller sense is neither maintenance of equilibrium nor differentiation. On the contrary development should include development of alternative visions and higher moral commitments where power has to be used for transformation and not preservation of inequitous and unjust societies of the third world.

III

The study of the administrative systems of the third world in general and India in particular, is governed by the Western theoretical and methodological determinants. It is the structural-functional approach with a predominant equilibrium orientation that determined nature of the studies. With the result the type of problems studied and the issues thrown up are more related to the administrative processes and not larger questions. This is borne out by the nature of the studies and the type of issues that they have thrown up.

There are studies which talk of the policy intervention and whom the policies affect. They point out that the groups which are to be covered by the policies are alienated from the policy process. They also hold that there is inadequate feedback mechanism and suggest monitoring and the use of cost-benefit analysis.[14] The one question which comes up in a significant way is the policy administration dichotomy and a notion that policies are good but not the implementation. Does this whole discussion not raise the question as to why the policies are alienated from the groups for whom they are intended? Does it also not raise the question whether implementation is a part of the policy-making process itself

or independent of it? Who should take care of the implementation? Does the implementing machinery have a built-in mechanism of improvising its inner procedures and overall performance? This only illustrates how half-baked are these studies on development.

As far as the organisations are concerned there is a widespread acceptance that the organisational capacity is limited and impaired.[15] The studies discuss organisational culture and highlight certain ailments.

The two ailments that they noticed are the centralising tendency in the decision making process[16] and widespread corruption.[17] Several studies on this aspect expressed their concern ranging from resentment to alarm. The studies have not been able to offer any valid or useful explanations nor solutions. At best they are able to present implications and consequences of corruption but not its causes. Similarly they raise the problem of failure of coordination without providing any alternative to the present organisational arrangements.[18] There are also studies which highlight behavioural model of the bureaucrats and call for reforms in the personnel systems and bureaucratic patterns.[19] One study points out that the administrative culture is such that means are confused with the ends and the techniques with the goals.[20] Based on these trends a few scholars raise the question: can administrative system promote development and create a responsive culture?

There are a set of scholars — Western and from the third world — who have been raising the questions about the relevance and usefulness of the Western concepts and paradigms.[21] There are also questions about the role of the international agencies. While several serious doubts are raised, no serious attempts have been made either to recast the theory or the methodology. The only sharp response has been with regard to the capacity of the state to bring about development.[22] There are gloomy predictions about the future place of the state in the society.[23] By raising curious questions about the state and its capacity, one significant response has been that the state should retreat and the space so created should be allowed to be occupied by the market forces.[24]

The entire research and discourse on the state apparatus in the third world has not gone into either deeper causal relations or presenting creative alternatives. Starting with the policy process, the discussion enters the domain of implementation. Then doubts about the administrative capacity are raised. There are several studies highlighting the maladies of the system. While they are in a way successful in diagnosing the symptoms, there are no attempts to locate the disease, with the result that they conclude that the administrative apparatus cannot promote development. The logic is further extended to the state and concluded that the capacity of the state itself is limited. The overall approach which never attempted to relate the administrative apparatus to the nature of the state very conveniently extends the logic of administrative failures to the incapacity of the state. From here the logic takes a turn and maintains that market is the only alternative to the state. One must note that the Western theories and methodologies have been quite successful in achieving their goal of building intellectual support to the market-oriented development. The failure of the development model need not lead only to market-based development, it can as well lead to a third alternative. But it should be stated that the scholarship in the third world did not build a creative alternative. This in turn indicates bankruptcy which was partly a result of the excessive dominance of the Western methods, concepts and theories.

IV

The experience of the Indian administrative system is not an exception to the overall trends of the third world. A study of the history of Indian administrative system indicates that it has had an amazing continuity. There have been changes in the political regimes, there were invasions, there was freedom movement, there were changes in the goals and perspectives of the state but the changes in the administrative system were incremental, if not marginal. The ancient administrative system was designed and developed to maintain the order and facilitate extraction of the surplus. The Kautilya model of administration was basically a model of force and extraction

of surplus. It was also based on deep suspicions as Kautilya held that no administrator can escape from being corrupt as a fish cannot escape from swallowing the water. The Kautilyan model was based on certain premises which were rooted in inequalities and unequal or graded treatment of human beings. This was supported by the caste hierarchy and religious legitimacy. This overall thrust not only continued but till today these two wings of the government — revenue and the police — wield enormous influence in rural India. That they continue to exercise arbitrary power without any regard to rule of law indicates the essential continuity of administrative culture.

It was on the Kautilyan model that the administrative system of India has been built. The reforms that Shershah introduced were for improving the revenue collection. The colonial power did not disturb the basic structure but improvised it to suit their own purpose. While Mughal feudalism wanted the revenue for plunder and pleasure, colonialism extracted the revenues and raw material for earning profits. The history of administrative changes is the history of strengthening the revenue and police machinery. The colonial masters introduced a legal and also an educational system for legitimising their loot, yet, all the attempts were aimed at adding to the then existing system rather than altering the system. That the system has been changing through adjustments but not replacements is quite obvious.

The arbitrary and undemocratic state power exercised through bureaucratic apparatus coupled with enormous economic backwardness and growing consciousness of the people gave rise to the anti-colonial freedom movements. In fact societies become very creative and throw up alternatives when they are in motion. The freedom movement did not throw up any viable alternative form of organisation except the Gandhian model which enjoyed no support of the Congress party itself. The entire freedom movement got reduced to mere transfer of power. Once power was transferred, they hardly had clarity about the new goals and much less about the administrative institutions.

The Constituent Assembly which sat for more than two years to give a blueprint for independent India did not seriously debate about the changes to be introduced in the administrative structure. It is striking to note that the Mughals introduced some changes and the British some other changes to make the administrative system to subserve their interests, but the representatives of the peoples of independent India redefined the goals of the polity but made no changes in the administrative structure. In the Constituent Assembly there were dissenting notes by a couple of sensitive members. Mahavir Tyagi who participated in the deliberations observed that "the country fought not against the British but the bureaucracy and we wanted to be free from it. Now the very same bureaucracy stands as it is". He emphasised that "Government should not be allowed to be run by persons who are mercenary, who come and offer their intellectual talent on hire. All these pedants who boast of their foreign accent suffer from a superiority complex". He concluded saying, "They are, generally speaking, a demoralised and denationalist lot".[25] This agony and anger had no impact on the approach of the Constituent Assembly. In fact the creation of the All India Services — an incarnation of Indian Civil Service — was done in less than ten minutes.[26]

After independence it is also striking to note that no political party bestowed sufficient attention on the question of administrative structures. An analysis of manifestoes of different political parties on the question of administrative structures indicates that the parties had included some discussion on administration but this was either extremely critical or descriptive. They had not offered alternative forms of organisation. It is puzzling to note how little the political parties differed in their ideological approaches to the system. This explains not only absence of creativity but a broad consensus on the existing system.[27]

The above discussion is a clear indication that bureaucratic apparatus is essentially a combination of colonial and precolonial legacies. The colonial legacies and their grip on the overall bureaucratic culture and functioning can be seen in the type of structures that they left behind. As

the structures were designed for maintenance of order and revenue collection, the culture that permeates the organisations is distrust and brutality. The distrust rooted in the Kautilyan model resulted in the rigid structure, and rigmarole of rules and regulations. The pre-colonial or feudal legacies persist in a significant measure in the organisational culture is also evident in the exercise of arbitrary powers and very egoistic and arrogant behaviour.

It is a highly power-centred bureaucracy. The power substitutes to everything including knowledge. The learning capacity of the bureaucracy, not to speak of unlearning, is literally low. It has no purpose other than exercising power, with the result that plundering of the resources continues to be a part of its culture. In a society where there is a constant complaint of scarce resources, the way bureaucracy plunders the resource makes one wonder whether the Indian state continues to be basically a plundering state.

The post-colonial developments created their own additions to the existing complexity. The persistence of pre-colonial and colonial modes made capitalist development there has not only been retarded but even perverted development. One of the outcomes has been the rise of a lumpen sector. Then development of underdevelopment led to an increasing dependency on the global economic powers for aid and technology. This did give rise to a sizeable comprador class in Indian society. There was another thrust which emphasised on socialist or egalitarian development. This was essentially a new strategy of legitimisation to contain the mass unrest. All these developments did throw up their own modes of behaviour which get reflected in the administrative culture.

The coexistence of these different models of behaviour was identified by one of our studies on Indian administrative culture. We identified four to five models.[28] These patterns are egoistic, pragmatic, sympathetic, lumpen and comprador. The egoistic bureaucrats are rooted in the pre-colonial legacies. The pragmatic are based in the capitalist development. The sympathetic are the products of popular movements. The lumpen and comprador are rooted in either

the distortions of capitalist development or the increasing integration of India with the global economy. The wide range of the administrative mode of behaviour is a result of coexistence of different historical times and stages of development.

It is this complex administrative apparatus which is expected to carry on the gigantic tasks of development with a constitutional mandate for creation of a just social order. Can such bureaucratic systems participate in transformative process is one question that deserves serious analysis. Assuming that it cannot perform a transformative role, can it perform a role in growth process? It is evident that it had failed on that count also. The way it managed the public enterprises, the economic controls, public distribution system, and modern technology, is a proof of its counter-productive role in the growth process. The causes for this crisis are far deeper. Let us look at the way it handled technology.

After giving up the question of structural changes, it was believed that technology could be a substitute for the structural changes. However, it has not been adequately appreciated that technology is not merely a machine, a thing or a commodity but a social relationship. A particular type of technology needs a specific pattern of relationship and a specific pattern of relationship produces a particular type of technology. They are so interrelated one cannot be separated from the other, with the result that the bureaucracies with pre-colonial and colonial structure of relationship are not suitable to handle the capitalist technology. The technology can always be imported but how does one import the organisational culture? It is this process that makes most of the technologies counter-productive. For instance, the computer instead of raising the overall levels of productivity and efficiency, in many instances got feudalised. Karma philosophy and computer cannot go together. The studies on administration failed to capture this historical complexity.

The failure of the administrative system is linked to the failure of a mixed economy. This led to the conclusion that growth can be delivered through the privatisation and market

mechanism. But what would be the solution to the questions of welfare and justice? Many studies do not realise that it is the failure on the welfare front that gives rise to restlessness and mass movements. The range of these movements include mild protest to violent outburst. There are signals coming from different sections particularly from the oppressed. As the pressure increases from the base, the relationship between the bureaucratic capacity and the popular demands assumes an inverse relationship. This further complicates the situation and makes people to look for solutions outside the system itself.

V

The general experience of the third world societies indicates the increasing dependency on the coercive organs like police, paramilitary and military. The increasing role of the coercive apparatus and marginalisation of the developmental wing suggests that the state is getting back to its primitive role. For it is gradually abandoning the new functions that it acquired during the course of civilisational development. The use of force without a development ideology in poverty ridden societies is bound to create legitimacy crisis. It creates a situation where different sections of the society would resort to aggressive protests and rebellious behaviour. The rebellious movements can destroy the existing structures but would not be able to offer an alternative. It is only the movements with human and future concerns that can throw up creative alternatives. It is this aspect that should determine the scope of the studies. The net outcome of this process is the need of the administrative science to get back into the domain of politics and political science. This has one important lesson to the disciplines of political science and administrative science that those engaged in the study of the state should move from their concern for equilibrium to the study of motion. This motion must be seen as a part of the historical process. While making this shift they should not only analyse the abstract state but its apparatus. The purpose of the enquiry should not only be the explaining of the causal relations but creation of a just order. In the sphere

of methodology it should move from positivism to the historical method. This is to understand the past to gain vision for the future.

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10

OF STATES AND CIVIL SOCIETIES

Neera Chandhoke

It is difficult to pinpoint a theoretical event in terms of an exact temporal occurrence, partly because the origins of that event are foreshadowed in the exhaustion with a particular focus, partly because the internal shifts in the debate presage a new moment, or a resurrection of an older one and partly because events that are recognised as central in theory have a history older than the theory which gives it recognition. The shift from an exclusive preoccupation with the state as an institutional ensemble which can be comprehended in isolation, to society of which it is the political organisation, has been one such theoretical event. The shift to civil society in Marxist theory has stemmed from both an alteration in perception *and* the recognition of the social processes which have pinpointed the limits of state centric theory — hence the privileging of the concept of civil society. The privileging of a concept within a theoretical tradition and the consequent rearrangement of conceptual hierarchies both reflects and follows events and guides them. The choice of a privileged concept is thus historically specific and strategic, that is an attempt to raise certain phenomena to the centre-stream of analysis and use this as a vantage point for the understanding of other phenomena. The point is that no concept can be understood of itself. It gains meaning within the hierarchy of concepts and in that hierarchy it dominates the matrix of concepts. The

rearrangement of concepts within a theoretical tradition is worthwhile, it seems to me, when the privileging of a concept which has till then been marginalised, adds to and expands the concept which has till then been the focus of analysis, in other words the replacement of one concept by another does not enlarge our understanding, it can actually serve to deflect it. Civil society is one such concept, it expands our notion of the state because it grounds the state in the practices and discourses of the public domain, and it delegitimises *that* understanding of the state which regards it as an autonomous ensemble of institutions operating according to some internal logic alone. In other words it gives us a perspective which treats the state as primarily a social relation and it explains much of the dimensions of the state which state centric theory has been unable to provide. The elaboration of those dimensions is the purpose of this paper.

I

The Marxian Theory of the State

Three theoretical moments can be discerned in the Marxist theory of the state. The first was given to us by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*, viz. the famous formulation of the state being the executive committee to manage the common affairs of the bourgeoisie. At that time it was an important historical intervention positioning itself against the Liberal concept of the state standing apart from society, and the Hegelian notion of the primacy of the state. The base-superstructure was a metaphor to subvert and expand existing notions of state-society relations, subsequent Marxist scholarship however, froze it into dogma, an interesting case of how a "metaphor" of a philosopher becomes a "model" of less discerning social scientists. In this model both state and society and the relation between them were treated as "given". The criticism of this formulation is well known, it suffered from economism and the specificity of the political was largely left unaddressed. Thus for a long time the criticism against Marxian political theory was that it had no theory of politics.

The second theoretical moment in the theory of the state was marked by the debates on the specificity of the state in the late 1960s and 1970, sparked off by Miliband's work in 1968 on *The State in Capitalist Society*, and by the seminal article by Hamza Alavi on *The State in Post-Colonial Societies: The Case of Pakistan and Bangla Desh* in 1971. The return of the state to political theory after the behavioural revolution which had dispensed with the state, signified the end of positivism and the return of political theory to the classical concerns of the discipline — power and coercion. State-centric theory positioned itself against the dominant strains of mainstream political science, but most importantly, it took a stand against official Marxist formulations on the state. In this second theoretical moment *the nature of the state and its relationship with society was interrogated.* The state emerged as a *distinct theoretical object in its own right* and state-centric theory as the dominant stream of political science.

The third theoretical moment arrives in the mid 1980's. A definitive shift was made from the *state* to *society as society itself began to be interrogated and defined on its own terrain and not primarily in relation to the state.* The shift was the outcome of the unfolding debate on the state itself, for instance the later works of Nicos Poulantzas move from the conceptualisation of the state as the factor of social cohesion to one where the state is an arena of class struggles. This was a recognition of the manner in which struggles in society penetrate and shape the state. The switch was equally a response to the increased attention paid to Gramci's works on civil society, and engagement with the Foucaldian notion of the dispersion of power and resistance. It was above all called for by the proliferation of social struggles — single issue, transclass, localised and defensive, that were erupting in all parts of the world, and which were challenging accepted notions of the state, of class politics and of revolution. The state has been consequently *bypassed* in the current preoccupation with what has been referred to as *civil* society. In much of the work informing post-Marxism the state disappears as a conceptual object, it is no longer the focus

of sustained political enquiry or of political struggles in the sense of occupying the state or transforming it. Attention has come to be concentrated on diverse sites of power, contestation of this power and the meaning systems of the actors without reference to the impact of these struggles on the structures of power or any allusion to the constraints on these actors. In the process the distinguishing characteristics of Marxian political analysis such as: the importance of the mode of production; class analysis, class struggle and revolution have been jettisoned in the concern with the autonomy of politics.

Thus the three theoretical moments of Marxist theory of the state are marked by a shift from the state as the representative of the dominant class, to the idea that the dominant class is not homogeneous and therefore the state has relative autonomy in managing the contradictions between the dominant classes and between the dominant and the dominated classes, to the comprehension that the state is penetrated by the contradictions in society and therefore its tasks in reproducing the conditions of capitalist accumulation and controlling the class struggle cannot be seen as unproblematic.

State Theory and the Post-Colonial World

When we look at the political theory of the post-colonial state we find an almost parallel trajectory with state theory in the West, in the second and the third moments. The first theoretical event that can be traced is the legitimisation of the state in the immediate aftermath of independence in intellectual and in political discourse. Apart from isolated voices that queried the very notion of the kind of centrality allotted to the state — I am thinking primarily of the Gandhians in India and voices such as Shivji in Tanzania — the presence of the state in practically all arenas of private and public life was accepted as logical and desirable. Whether in socialist or in capitalist societies the state was given a central role to play in the lives of individuals and collectivities. From the benefit of hind sight, the confidence in the state as the prime mover in social political and economic life was

phenomenal, very few doubts were expressed as to either the capacity of the state, the intentions of the state, the prearranged knowledge of the state in knowing what it meant to do, or the direction in which it meant to go. Social engineering was the main plank of the political agenda. Though the state was a rule bound entity in terms of constitutional limits upon action, the model of the activist state allotted to the state tremendous power to intervene, the confidence displayed in the state was phenomenal but perhaps understandable given the historical ambience of the times which is as follows.

Firstly, the global consensus was in favour of the interventionist state whether of the Keynesian demand management variety or the welfare state species or of the Soviet model of a command state. It was a consensus that precluded any discussion of the limits of state power which had accompanied the emergence of the modern state in Europe and which was the product of the democratic movements against absolutist states, or the desirability of postulating the need for an autonomous civil society. In the post-colonial world the need was felt more because the state was expected to reverse the colonial legacy, build nations, resist ethnic fragmentation and carry out industrialisation in a world where the hallmark of modernity and maturity was *this* particular mode of development.

Secondly, there was far less attention paid to the existence of strains and tensions within the nationalist movement than there is in contemporary political analysis. The dominant branch of the movement came to power and this fact alone gave that stream legitimacy and power, which sensitivity to the alternatives within the nationalist anti-colonial movement may not have done. The legitimacy of the nationalist movement bestowed legitimacy on the state.

Thirdly, in the living memory of the people the only form of governance they had known was that of the colonial state. The globalisation of the nation state as historically constituted in Europe, replaced the indigenous forms of states or notions of politics, it submerged local alignments of power under a specific mode of governance without the accompanying

corollary of limits on state power or the notions of rights that had mediated the formation of the European nation-state. Entire generations of the colonised people had grown up without any recollection of any other form of state, the colonial state had effectively erased alternative notions of the state from collective remembrance. The colonial state accordingly created a master narrative of centrality and control. It was the primary agent of not only the appropriation of surplus for the benefit of the colonial power, it created identities, modes of governance and modes of appropriation of the cultures and the lives of the colonised. As the main frame of political power, as the giver of identities and as the main economic agent it was central to the lives of people. The anti-colonial struggle was in a sense a struggle to recapture the forces of history, but more importantly, it was a struggle for the control of the state. When, the nationalist movements came to power they proceeded to construct states which were the mirror image of the colonial state. The essential core of the colonial state remained untouched as a political project. The master narrative on one form of state power, i.e., colonialism was met by another master narrative of post-colonialism.

Fourthly, the debate on the nature of the state was subordinated to the discourse on development. Three notions of development contoured this debate:

(a) that it was the imperative of the time, and the form of the state was subsidiary to that of development. In Tanzania for instance, this was presented most forcefully in President Nyerere's espousal of a one party system.

(b) development was considered as a value-free social process and a desirable end, that it could breed its own patterns of social oppression was not recognised or appreciated. Moreover development was something that could be imposed from above — think of the forced collectivisation in Tanzania, or the patterns of state intervention that marked the Nehruvian model.

(c) a pervasive belief that society needed to be guided in the channels of reform because it was unable to regulate itself, this belief underlay most of the assumptions that

gave to the state legitimacy in social engineering. Development itself was uncritically accepted in much of the mainstream thinking, the kind of doubts or alternatives now being put forward were not a feature of the dominant discussions in that period. A central role for the state was accepted by both Marxist and liberal scholars, capitalism and socialism were similarly statist in their orientation.

Development *empowered* the state in a way that other ideologies could not and in many cases development itself became an ideology. Debates on the desirable forms of political power, on limits, on the nature of accountability, were submerged in the discourse on development. This discourse was not only top down or elitist, it was one which banished the notion of power from the entire model. Narrowly conceived in an economistic fashion, development portrayed the state as an impersonal vehicle of social change. It not only evicted power relations from the state it excluded the power relations implicit in the model of development itself. The underlying assumption was that the state could develop its people and hence should be the repository of untrammelled power. Often fragile states trying to come to grips with the social situation were allotted roles that were out of proportion to their capacities. The developmentalist discourse gave rise to the developmentalist state, in other words, the overextended state. States were given a new criterion of evaluation, they were not to be judged on the principles of democracy or that of respect for human rights, but on whether they could deliver. In the process in very many countries political activity, trade unions, autonomy of local spaces, regional aspirations, accountability were put aside in favour of development.

State Theory: The Second Theoretical Moment

In a way the demise of the development model marked the demise of confidence in the state. The collapse of developmentalism as the dominant ideology as the failures of the model became apparent, led to the intensification of the coercive aspects of the state. One was no longer speaking

of a state whose nature was obscured by the imperative of development, one was no longer speaking of the state as a sole agency of external capital, one was face to face with a state that was waging war upon its own people. As the oppressive nature of the state unfolded in the decades following independence, the debates on the class nature of the state and the social basis of the state became the dominant strand of state centric theory. Though the insights derived from dependency theory were an important part of the theory, much more attention came to be levelled on the specific historical conjuncture, the nature of the state and the autonomy of the state in its own right. History became an important component of this theory — that the very same classes who had led the struggle against the colonial state had extended the forms of colonial elatism in time and space was recognised by most state theorists following Hamza Alavi's seminal contribution on the nature of the post-colonial state. Though doubts had been expressed earlier about the kind of independence that had come about, a sharp focus on the nature of the state itself was a characteristic of this debate (Alavi: 1971; Leys :1976; Von Freyhold: 1976; Lanzendorfer and Ziemann: 1977; Goulbourne: 1979; Saul:1979; Mohanty: 1982).

The focus on the state as a theoretical subject in its own right, was part of the general shift in political theory from the behaviouralism of the fifties and the early sixties, and a theoretical configuration where the state had disappeared as a locus of analysis and action. It is a relevant point that discussion on the state is value-laden, the expulsion of values from political enquiry was the expulsion of the state, the return of the state also heralded the return of values. In the post-colonial world concern about the state gained an edge because it stemmed from often brutal encounters of individuals and collectivities with unmediated state power. The state which had been the focal point of hopes and aspiration had failed to deliver even the most fundamental of its promises. The state as an agent of either social transformation, or economic reforms or political change was delegitimised to a large extent in subsequent Marxist theory.

As the debate on the state acquired sophistication and sharpness, compared to those formulations for instance, which had castigated the state as being a tool of the bourgeoisie or an instrument of neo-colonial domination, it was recognised that the state was neither of the two. Though it was impacted by them, it had become a power structure in itself performing neither the functions of capitalist accumulation as the classical theory of Marxism posited, nor was it purely functional for metropolitan capital except in "transparent" societies where the notion of "gatekeepers" was peculiarly applicable to the ruling classes. The state had emerged as an explicit power structure (Evans:1978) and a whole new vocabulary was coined for the post-colonial state:" relative autonomy"; "intermediate classes"; the "bureaucratic bourgeoisie"; the "political-administrative class", "state capitalism" to describe and explain the overwhelming power of the state and its functionaries.

The main themes that emerged from state centric theory were the following:

(a) The state in post-colonial social formations had a special status because it was placed in a historical situation characterised by a balance of class forces. The crucial text of Marx that provided the theoretical frame for this kind of work was the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, where Marx wrote of the formation of a caste which worked to reproduce its own interest. The colonial encounter had prevented the emergence of either a fully fashioned bourgeoisie or a proletariat, the dominant classes were split not between fragments of a capitalist class but between classes located in distinct modes of production such as landlords and the capitalist classes. The proletarian classes were likewise split between not only the industrial workers and peasants but between the organised and the unorganised working class which formed a substantial majority in most societies. Thus fluid class formations led to a balance of class forces where no single class or class ideology dominated or provided a rallying point. In this fluidity the state emerged as the single coherent social form and the

functionaries of the state acquired the capacity and the power to mould subsequent class formation.

(b) The statist tradition of the colonial state which overpowered social forces was taken as the starting point of the statist tradition of the post-colonial state. The state was relatively autonomous of the classes in civil society not only because they were not strong enough to impact civil society but because of the tradition of statism, furthur, its relative autonomy was enhanced because the various functions it performed gave it the power to mould future class formation. Many of the functions that the state had allowed the bourgeoisie to perform in England, such as development of the forces of production, or industrial development had been arrogated by the state in the post-colonial society. Classic Marxist theory was overturned on its head — far from the state being the instrument of the ruling classes following from development of bourgeois society prior to the state — it was the linchpin of class formation, the main economic actor on the scene and the mover of social relations. It was not bound by structural constraints located in civil society, indeed it created these structures and moulded them to suit its own interests.

(c) In this situation, it was the intermediate classes, classes who were not situated in the production process, but those who arose in the shadow of the state-bureaucrats, the military, the professionals, the intellectuals — all those who occupied crucial social positions in the state, who occupied the space between the state and civil society and in the emerging civil societies.

(d) The state in the absence of a strong and viable civil society was not only the formulator of class structures, it disseminated ideology, unifying symbols and cultural idioms(Saul 1979). It thus controlled civil society completely and absolutely. In the absence of a strong and coherent dominant class it was the state who was the mediator, the creator and the destroyer. Not being bound by any finished structure whose logic it has to reproduce, the state functioned for itself and for the benefit of its

state-based class. Access to the apparatus of the state was access to the privileges of power, and power flowed not from the objective position of the power holder in the production process, it flowed from the position of the practitioner in the state hierarchy. Political power was a valued commodity since it provided access to the benefits of the system — access to the dominant sections was via the state apparatus. The brutal and open conflict over access to state power was due to this fact — hence the political assassinations, the coups, the takeover of regimes through the use of force.

(e) This has important implications for civil society, the state swallows up civil society by denying it any autonomy or letting it function in a sustained manner by occupying all those nodal points in civil society where social contradictions could generate opposition. The state ultimately remains responsible to no one except itself. Indeed the stifling of an incipient civil society presented the state as the main social and political force with no alternative or rival political discourse. Far from the state being responsible to civil society or being bound to civil society by the terms of political discourse emanating from there, it was the state which created and changed these terms.

The debate on the state has been productive in terms of comprehension of structures of power specific to the post-colonial world but like all instances of over-production it has tended to run into crisis. The main problem is that in the obsession with the state, the over-reach of the state has been highlighted at the expense of other crucial factors — particularly civil society. While the domain of the state became crystallised that of civil society became blurred, the organic linkages between the state and civil society were displaced in the preoccupation with formal codified power. Civil society was defined on the terrain of the state, since it was the state which was the linchpin of class formation. This was particularly noticeable in the debate on relative autonomy, it became an everlasting and ahistorical characteristic of the state rather than a historical condition which could change with the development of indigenous capitalism and the

growth of social class struggle. Indeed relative autonomy far from being the mode which helped to explain the political configuration of state power became a matter of empirical verification and led to the strengthening of the statist tradition against the Marxist tradition of rooting the state in a societal context. Relative autonomy is not a fixed aspect of state power, it is contingent upon the balance of class forces and logically it changes with the shifts in the social forces.

The Transition from the Second to the Third Moment

The problem with state centric theory is that its focus on the state does not give us an insight into situations where the state itself is imperfectly formed or weak, the vulnerability of states in many parts of Sub Saharan Africa to social forces outside their control highlight this. The reality in many parts of the post-colonial world is that the state has been unable to sustain itself as a viable entity capable of ensuring reproduction of society or capable of ensuring legitimacy for itself. The opacity which is necessary for states to function as power institutions has given way to transparency as the state is seen as incapable of delivering. The nature of the state thus differs from society to society and depends upon the political configuration, the ideological instance and the social challenge. The most glaring instance of transparency is when the state cannot manage for its people the basic amenities of life and in turn subject to the regulation of international forces. Large fiscal deficits seriously proscribe the functioning of governments as they cut back from public services which had provided legitimacy, promises of material welfare have not been met leading to a reduction of popular consent. More seriously the new social movements have questioned the notions of the nation-state, the mode of development and social class formation. Yet the state with all its weaknesses continues to dominate the public agenda and political life. Why it continues to do so is a question which can be answered only by reference to civil society.

State Theory: The Third Moment

As enchantment with the metaphorical "Nehruvian" state gave way to disenchantment, the fact that the roots of this shift were to be found outside the state began to be taken seriously. Social events — global in reach and impact — overwhelmed this particular perspective. There is a tide in the affairs of men, women and their politics which overtakes and subverts national signifiers, such as boundaries, cultures and practices. This tide brings concepts and associated practices to the centre stage of debates about future political agendas across cultures and historical specificities. Something of the kind seems to have happened with the resurgence of civil society and its consequent centrality to most blueprints for future debates and practices — practices concentrating on "Bringing people back in". The political configuration which brought about this shift is of interest to political theory because it highlights the dangers of isolating structures and treating them as generators, definers and regulators of social life, as was the case with state-centric theory.

The sea change in perspectives and the "third moment" in the theory of the state comes with the assertion of civil society against the state[1] in the shape of social movements which in very many cases have caused the demise of ruling coalitions. The assertion of civil society as social movements, has been a visible feature of the post-colonial world as indeed of the Eastern European world which has brought back civil society in a major way to political theory. This assertion has taken forms which are less visible or dramatic but none the less effective, the refusal of farmers to grow crops in many parts of Asia and Africa which in the case of Tanzania particularly led to the celebrated thesis of Goran Hyden on the uncaptured peasantry; the resistance of communities to sited development projects in India, the movement within the concept of development from a statist to a participant perspective, the self-organisation of peasants all over the post-colonial world,[2] the notions of ecology, gender relations and civil liberties that argue for autonomisation of civil society but also make a case for protection by the state.

The eruption of local and single issue social movements, often concentrating not on the 'capture' of state power but with the objective of acquiring autonomy in local spaces has been accompanied by a fundamental switch in modes of cognition and research agendas. The Foucaultian notion that state power is far from being complete and that people in their everyday life function according to local power structures and micro social codes which in many instances challenge dominant codes *and* pose limits on these codes has become a prime concept in social enquiry.[3] A strong argument for the autonomisation of civil society is being made which is both normative and political but couched essentially in terms which *limit* the reach of the state. From the acceptance of the state we have arrived at a crucial historical moment where the limits on the state have become the focus of the debate. It is important to realise that this is not an agenda for the demolition of the state, it is still considered essential for the maintenance of national identity, protection of liberties and legal recourses. What is recognised is the need for inscribing the state with social responsibility, i.e., with the responsibility of accepting its own codes posited in constitution and the law.

Four factors can be seen as responsible for the shift from a perspective rooted in an exclusive preoccupation with the state to one where the relations between state and civil society become the focal point of analysis.

Firstly, the weakness and the incapacity of the state in most parts of the "Third World" in carrying out either social engineering or even management of crisis is increasingly recognised. The "overreach" of the state has at the same time made it fragile, it has become reflexive and ad hoc responding to the immediate demands of social forces based outside the state. It no longer seems to be in control or the prime mover, indeed in many parts of Africa it is considered to be the "lame Leviathan" (Callaghy: 1987), and in India it has been described as fragile (Kothari: 1991).

Secondly the militarisation of politics which has been the classic response of most of the post-colonial states to social

discontent, has highlighted the political bankruptcy of the state. It is of course true that in a sophisticated and a politically mature state the opacity of domination makes the use of open coercion appear legitimate, but the more the state takes refuge to military or para-military forces, the bases of state power appear brittle. Ultimately, whether the state is strong or weak depends upon the existence of intermediate institutions and processes which preclude the open use of force. The ability to ensure the compliance of the people without resort to open violence is the hallmark of a strong state both in terms of capacity and legitimacy and it is precisely this which is missing in the contemporary state.

Thirdly, contemporary developments in the international arena are witnessing what can be described as the "retreat of the state" at the time when one strain of political theory is trying to bring the state "back in". The package of political and economic conditionalities that comes with the World Bank — I M F aid or loans — have as their prime stipulation the rolling back of the state from the economic arena. The developmental models applied by most of the post-colonial states earlier gave to the state a predominant and sometimes the exclusive role as the owner of resources, the allocator of these resources and the largest employer and therefore the linchpin of class formation. The deification of the market now takes the state out of such allocated roles. The political conditionalities take decision making in terms of political processes away from the reach of the state. The autonomy of the state is increasingly in doubt.

Fourthly, a marked shift in the notion of development has likewise eroded the base of the state in crucial activities. Development has always been more of a concept rather than an actual happening. A concept that has empowered the state to expand its limits in significant ways. Now a shift in the concept, the insistence that it does not mean a "top-down" process but basically the normative desirability of people's participation, the use of resources for local purposes and control over decisions has led to a belief in the empowerment of the people rather than that of the state, an

empowerment that arises from the participation of the people in decisions.

There is a more fundamental switch in the perspectives of political theory in its current preoccupations and disengagement with the state and other macro structures. The switch is connected to a focus on the subaltern and the ways in which the people in their everyday lives subtly and perhaps not so subtly use resources at their disposal and in the process "nibble away" at macro power structures. Aligned to this is the Foucaultian perception with micro structures of power and its use as building blocks of "high discourses". It is true that academic obsession with the latter has been at the expense of the former: the Gramscian political project of building subaltern hegemony has been crucified in the preoccupation with delving into local and sited power structures and equally sited and therefore fragmented resistance. The point that needs to be made for the time is that the shift in social science to "bringing the people back in" has brought about a very fundamental change in perspectives and the object of enquiry.

In an equally and related schematic fashion one can welcome the return of civil society to theory for the following reasons.

Firstly, it grounds the state in the public discourse emanating in civil society and sees a crucial link between social class practices and codified power instead of the old circular debates on the relation between the economy and the state — the latter in many instances being considered synonymous with politics. The shift has expanded the notion of the state in the Gramscian mode, i.e., located it and grounded it in civil society.

Secondly, attention is brought to bear on a whole range of activities which have been treated as subsidiary to class or class struggle, such as everyday practices; commonsensical social orders which do not cohere to the macro power structures and movements that do not neatly fit into the acceptable categories of class.

Thirdly, the liberal concern with the limits on the state

and the protection of an arena of freedom has been given a new life and relevance. The relevant point is that all states are oppressive and in the charting out of a political project, the limits on the state have to be of serious attention. In fact the more legitimate a state is the more the need is to strengthen civil society. The lessons of Liberalism have been learnt in the demise of actual existing socialist societies and their neglect of civil society.

Fourthly, this perspective expands the notion of the state, the point is that if we look at the state in isolation from civil society *then* an entire range of questions are unasked and untheorised, viz., what is the origin and source of the power that is codified in the state, how is this power constructed as relations of domination and how is it contested, what are the limits on state power, how are the problems we associate with bad governance located in spaces outside the state, how do people react to, and defend themselves against the state? and so on. This has been a terrain of research limited to sociologists and anthropologists but it should occupy a substantial space for the political scientist if we accept the proposition that the state is the *codified power of the social formation and therefore it has to be seen in its relation with society*, then civil society is the setting, the grounding and the constituency of the state.

On the other hand, the danger is, if we swing the other way and locate events and happenings in civil society without looking at the state as the canonisation level; as the political organisation of civil society, the narrative is still incomplete and unfinished. The state continues to be important not only because it is the repository of final power; equipped for certain functions exclusive to the ensemble of institutions constituting the state and the vehicle of personal and class advancement, but precisely it is the domain at which codes and canons are invested with sanctity. Therefore its responses to the happenings in civil society and the way in which it moulds them are important, indeed crucial. *There can be no theory of the state without a theory of civil society, equally civil society cannot be theorised without reference to the state.* The point I sought to make in the beginning, viz.,

that the privileging of a concept should not lead to the marginalisation but the enhancement of other concepts, is encapsuled in the suggestion that a statist perspective needs to be tempered with an account of the dynamic influences of civil society in order to understand the state as a phenomenon specific to certain societies. In that case civil society becomes our organising principle in social enquiry.

II

Civil Society: A Preliminary Inquiry

Civil society has been an important part of political theory since at least the post-Greek era. The meaning ascribed to the concept has however been a shifting one, it has been associated with the demarcation of a secular state from ecclesiastical power; as the signifier of civilised societies, as opposed to the state of nature. In much of the work of John Locke for instance civil society is treated as synonymous with political society and both seen in opposition to the state of nature. Civil society to the early liberals was an undemarcated arena which was the terrain of individual rights guaranteed by the state and often against the state. It was Hegel and later Marx who gave to civil society historical specificity, they identified it with bourgeois society. Under capitalism, as the domain of production becomes emancipated from the directly political manifestations found in feudal set-ups, the state is liberated from the functions of appropriating surplus. It can emerge as the universal sphere, the sphere where equality is possible on an abstract level. Particularity, self-interested action and egoism remain in the domain of civil society as its structuring principle. Hegel and Marx welcomed the advent of civil society as progressive over what Marx terms as the democracy of unfreedom found in earlier societies. But both theorists were concerned about the oppressions in civil society. Hegel was of the opinion and the dread that particularity given free rein would result in the destruction of any kind of unity or what he termed ethical life. Marx was concerned that the autonomy of civil society gave to the dominant classes the power to organise the life

of individuals in a completely unfettered manner. What the dominant classes lose in terms of political power, they acquire in the power to mould society because their control over the social collectivity is complete. The nuances of the theorisation are out of place here but one point is in order, viz., that both the theorists interrogated the nature of civil society and found that it is a state of war, it needs an integral principle to organise it and remove the injustices, the insecurities and the contradictions. Hegel found the integral principle in the system of political mediations culminating in the state. Marx found it in the proletariat as the universal class which would transform the nature of the civil sphere and secure the possibilities that the political revolution had offered in a meaningful manner. Gramsci in the same tradition found this integral principle in the counter-hegemonic project.

If we follow the logic of this tradition which offers us an inquiry into the nature of civil society itself, then civil society is not the terrain where a democratic project to transform the state can be constructed without the transformation of this sphere itself. In other words, a social transformation has to be secured in civil society before a political revolution can be successful. And if we look at another factor which Hegel, Marx and Gramsci focus upon — that of the capitalist system itself which is not only another factor but the structuring principle of state and civil society — an economic transformation is needed prior to both a social and a political revolution. Civil society gains a distinct identity and historical specificity in the period of capitalism and the emancipation of the economy from political power because while the power of appropriating surplus labour is vested in the capitalist class, this class has no responsibility of either performance of public duties or even accountability for its acts. The notion of private property as a right over one's labour and over one's control over the means of production creates the idea of a free market. Correspondingly the domains of society and of the state are split and civil society is identified with the constitution of a society whose logic is that of the free market

consisting of the rational self-interested individual and the state is the universal sphere where ideas of equality and freedom prevail. This was a development whose consequences have been sensitively pointed out by Hegel and by Marx. In the formulations of Hegel and Marx, *the* theorists of civil society, civil society is a *constructed arena*, a set of social practices which reproduce the logic of the capitalist economy in its social interaction and politics, and where the state intervenes. In the formulation of Hegel the state has to intervene to prevent the destruction of civil society whose overriding principles are those of the capitalist economy — self-interested action and egoism. In the theory of Marx the state intervenes in civil society to facilitate the dynamics of the capitalist economy. *Thus civil society as the constructed arena is the site of social practices where the economy and the state meet to reproduce the logic of the social formation.* Thus to the pairing of civil society and the state is added another dimension, the underlying logic of the economy which pervades and structures the space itself.

What, it may be asked, are these social practices?The state intervenes to reproduce the logic of the accumulation process in very many ways but essentially in the sphere of the construction of individual identities. For the core processes of the production process to be worked out, i.e., the generalisation of the commodity, an atomised society is needed where the individual is torn from community linkages and thrown on to the market. Thus civil society in capitalist society is the arena for individuation. The individual in this civil society is characterised by two identities — as the rights bearing citizen and as the consumer. As the rights bearing juridically defined citizen he has both rights and obligations, as a participant in market exchanges he is the proprietor. Both identities are crucial for the new institutions that have been set up — the political forum as a space for representative government and the market. There is considerable debate as to which came first — the system of Liberal representative government or the system of capitalism. The point is that both possess an underlying logic which makes them

complementary, the logic is that of the individual as the possessor of rights and interacting on the basis of reason, free choice and self-interest. Indeed the pursuit of self-interest is rationalised and legitimised.

The Post-Colonial World and the Constitution of Civil Society

The case of the post-colonial world is instructive in studying how these institutions are consolidated with attendant consequences for identity. Colonialism had implanted the notion of the nation-state with its panoply of flags, symbols, armies, frontiers and the idea of a bounded territory where the writ of the state reigned supreme over other subordinate authorities. Its associated political practices such as an impersonal political power, representation and responsibility, were introduced in a limited way in the colonies particularly in the idea of the restricted franchise (I am not of course referring to primitive colonialisms such as that of Portugal or settler colonialism). The second institution implanted in the colony or rather *within which the colony was constituted*, was that of the market with the affiliated idea of the individual as the consumer and as the producer interacting on the principle of equal exchange. (Here again I must enter a caveat, viz., that the market was in no sense "free" in the colony.) The presence of these two institutions may have been limited and incomplete but they brought in their wake the entire train of affiliated ideas and practices which related not only to institutions but to the arrangement of society itself and the relation between society and the state.

The moment of independence is generally regarded as the end of one historical period and the beginning of another or at least a ruptural break. Yet the dominant political ethos that imprinted the minds of the elite was that of colonialism and attendant ideas. Entire generations had witnessed no other kind of political practices except that which was made familiar to them by the colonial intervention. If the collective memory activated by the nationalist movement was that of a culture which had a long existence prior to that of colonialism and which had to be reclaimed, the concrete arrangements

of economic, political and social life envisaged were that of colonialism which had disarranged and displaced alternative political arrangements at least in the living memory of those who were a part of the system, who were imbibed with its ethos and principles and who consequently set out to command society with this notion through social engineering. More importantly these ideas pertained not only to political arrangements but to social ones and about identities. In other words the task which was left incomplete by colonialism had to be extended and expanded to people who had been historically inserted into different systems of governance and societal norms. This related most of all to the public arena where the state and society interacted — civil society — but civil society had to be a *constructed* arena, requiring various projects.

The primary project is that of consolidating the nation state with its distinct culture and identity different from local arrangements of power. The process of the formation and consolidation of a modern nation state is contradictory — Janus-faced as Tom Nairn has pointed out — on the one hand it involves a process of social innovation so that history and tradition are reclaimed to provide a vehicle of unity to a society torn by the colonial intervention. The project in the Indian case has been underlaid by the compulsion of finding the relics of an "uncontested past" to unite people who have been disunited by colonialism. It is also impulsed by the need to associate the people who had formed the backbone of the national movement in a forward looking spirit of working here and now for the nation-state. A common political culture has had to be built up through the establishment of definite state forms, through administrative and legal structures and ideologies that would bind together ruptured communities, to give distinctions and cohesion to the nation state. It has to mobilise the people to work for an unknown future. The first task needs the resurrection of tradition, the retrieval of cultures and the glorification of the nationalist leadership and earlier heroes. The second requires modern institutions where the people sensitised to the fact of oppression during the national movement — as the

national movement opened many windows to the "self" in addition to the "other" — are now to associate on the basis of equality and freedom. The past and the present are brought together to create a nation state. For this purpose are needed historians, poets, literary figures, cultural entrepreneurs and gatekeepers and politicians, in addition are needed modernisation programmes. The new states are caught in a bind, the past is used but it is the future that is of immediate interest since impulsed by the need to industrialise and modernise, the past has to be forgotten particularly in regard to the new roles the people have to play. The identity of the inhabitant of the nation state has to be wider and "universal" than particular loyalties derived from caste or community linkages or local arrangements of power. The past has to be reclaimed to give to the people an identity but it has to be used as a *category against which the definition of the present will arrive.* The past political traditions have to be forgotten and relinquished even as society steps into the future which is unknown and unbounded.

Therefore practices have to extend the system of parliamentary democracy and the market. Both the imperatives of the anti-colonial struggle and that of capitalist modernisation demand this. The nationalist movement had unlocked many doors and sensitised people to oppression and domination, the leadership which came into power had to in one way deliver the promises made towards freedom and equality, justice and liberty through constitutions, legal codes and the rule of law. On the other hand the impulses towards capitalist modernisation had to be completed born as the new nations were in a period of industrialisation and state interventionism. Societies had to be mobilised on the basis of modernisation and progress — an ambivalent notion but essentially to the leadership a notion which meant the replication of the political evolution of the West — Europe but increasingly the United States.

However new institutions are by themselves not enough, they need new roles, and above all new identities. They require a public space where the individuals are in a position

to interact on the principles of rational self-interested action, where they meet as in Marx's words as "bearers" of commodities — economic products for economic products, services for a wage, votes for public services rendered and public participation for a feeling of community. In this public space individuals meet as citizens and as consumers. These are the dominant forms of identity in public interaction, and they require a recasting of inherited identities and images, of norms and values, of expectation and rewards. Institutions cannot be created in a vacuum, they need as concomitant conditions, the right attributes and attitudes. Modern institutions need modern values and attitudes, attitudes which have to be cultivated in the spirit of modernity — modernity almost in the sense of the French Revolution of 1789 where odes were written to reason, and where the future could be thought of as a malleable one and could overturn received history and traditional hegemonies. Modernity and the project of modernisation has been seen as the expression of individual and collective reason to bring about a grand collective project.

What did this project involve? The new institutions demanded inclusiveness as their dominant rationale and motif, to be included however the individual had to be emancipated of the idea of narrow enclosed spaces and to idea of rational public spaces. To enter this space the individual has to set aside her parochial identity and loyalty, that she be unhampered by prescription or restriction or any inherited notion of behaviour. To participate in the political forum and the market the individual has to be untainted by any idea of personal or caste loyalty. As voter, as an exerciser of rights, as writer of letters to the newspaper, as a buyer in the supermarket she follows the idea of self-interested and rational action. Public spaces demand impersonal anonymous transaction among faceless individuals. As a citizen the individual is a participant in the political forum, as a consumer she is a participant in the economic arena. The project is of building a national psyche in the mirror image of the way people related to each other and to the state in the liberal-democratic ideologies in the West at least in the

idealised versions. Both the citizen and the consumer are abstract concepts and presuppose an individualised society, where the member is unmarked by any tinge of class, community or gender. They are also universal constructs inasmuch as they do not reserve privileges on any ostensible ground, and these are available to all. They bestow anonymity and impersonality. Traditional codes of behaviour have to be dispensed with, traditional privileges renounced and traditional forms of rendering of allegiance, of the very notion of genuflection to be dispensed with. It requires a restructuring of identities and of social roles, a recasting of modes of understanding and action.

The construction of civil society as the public arena has another connotation, that of peaceable activity. Not only is violence as a mode of solving feuds, for instance, replaced by recourse to a judiciary, violence in the public arena is prohibited. The colonial state is a violent state and the anti-colonial struggles were violent, they involved the taking up of arms against the state seen as illegitimate. Even when the stated aims and strategies of the movement were non-violent, violence simmered beneath the surface and the margins of the national movement were of course marked by the use of explicit violence. Now that the people had a state of their own this violence was banished to the periphery of the public space — *outlawed* spaces — to be erased by the full coercion of the state. Civil society as peaceable civil and civilised interaction involves the laying down of arms. It involves the de-politicisation of a society in a certain mode of politics and the politicisation of this society in a different mode. Civil society is a *neutralised* arena, it is a zone of peace and the neutralisation of a stance where society confronts the state. The ballot box replaces the use of arms, society for the state becomes the refrain. The neutralisation of a society also means that anyone taking up arms against the state is political culprit, he/she is outside the pale of this society, opposition to the state outside the boundaries laid down is tantamount to war. Politics has to be understood as mediation, compromise and arbitration. Peaceable means of impacting the state had to be adopted and other means forsworn.

The individuation of society with its consequences for the identity of the individual has gained its most explicit form in the ideology of the market which has to be made into a pervading ideology. The market is the structuring feature of civil society. On a concrete level, the market as an economic entity signifies the balancing of demand and supply. On a philosophical level, the market is the allocator of resources and benefits on an impersonal basis of anonymous transactions among countless individuals. It creates the illusion that participants are placed in a position of equality as far as their transactions are concerned and that transactions are basically between individuals. It makes out a case for the dissolution of community or class linkages in favour of the free, uninhibited individual unbound by any prescription in any matter whether personal or social. The generalisation of the logic of the economic market and its creation into an ideology is the (distorted) representation of how things are or should be in capitalist society. It has become so because it not only presents a pattern of human interaction based on freedom or equality, but it speaks of the possibility of choices, of society and its arrangements as a giant shopping complex where the consumer can choose between products on sale thus reinforcing the creation of identities.

These above stated norms of individual and collective action are of course de-historical ideal types, but these are types which are considered desirable for a society whose models of governance are modern in the sense of impersonality and rationality. In cases where the special groups have to be protected — weaker sections of society, women and marginalised groups — the measures are as then, seen as transitional to be replaced by the modern individual in the idealised representation of the concept. However these ideal types also presuppose the state as an ideal type as the neutral arbiter, as the beneficial state. Liberal ideology has been faulted on precisely this ground, the state is not a system of just governance but a mode of domination imbricated in the reproduction of the inequalities of everyday

life. And it is here that the project of constructing a public space on the basis of equality of exchange runs into problems. For the spaces constructed are not only contested by inherited norms, they are impacted by the nature of those who are doing the construction.

The Problems of Civil Society

Two problems in creating a civil society in the mode desired, are highlighted in the following section — first, the political economy of the state and second, the cultural barriers to such anonymity. Both have been counter-productive for the construction of a civil society in quite the way envisaged, either a civil society in the Gramscian mode of support structures for the state or in the Liberal mode of a civil society which is self-conscious of itself, which consciously distances itself from the state in seeking to lay down the terms of political discourse.

The first reason is that in the West a civil society could come up on the basis of a dominant system of equivalent exchange of goods, the equalisation of economic goods even if it is labour for a wage leads to demands for the equalisation of political rights. The expansion of rights in the political arena was the result of many struggles by the working class, by women and by ethnic minorities. In that sense civil society was concomitant with commodification. Civil societies were expanded by multifarious struggles and movements. In India inasmuch as of the post-colonial world political rights were granted in a context where economic rights of equal exchange were not available and hence meaningless. It is hardly possible to constitute a political arena and the domination of the market principle in a society which is marked by layers of historical time, or as Bayart puts it, different time-space entities. The imposition of bourgeois democracy demands certain historical conditions, in particular the existence of wage labour. The implication is that the market has to be hegemonised through the destruction of small scale worlds and cultures, by throwing people onto the market without giving them the wherewithal to participate in the market. The alienation of people from

their modes of subsistence and production and the creation of these into commodities available to the individual only through the selling of labour power or even of the individual body has unleashed the most brutal of all violence. The tragedy of the human condition can be written in terms of the people being alienated from their modes of subsistence in economies where these are the only means for survival. The history of the Indian state as of other states can be narrated in terms of primitive accumulation as not the pre-history as in conventional Marxist analysis but as part of the present history of capitalism. Primitive accumulation and the establishment of the capitalist mode of production, Marx reminds us, is "the result of many revolutions, of the extinction of a whole series of older forms of production" (*Capital* 1, pp. 166-7). The construction of civil society is a violent process carried out by a violent state as people are forced out of their spatial settings and cultural lives and yet given the nature of the political economy of India cannot be granted access to the public spaces of the citizen and the consumer as bearer of rights, except in a marginal way. Underlying this peaceable public space is another space where the landless labourer and the urban migrant subsidise the formal economy and accumulation process. What political rights they can possess or exercise is questionable. Outside the inclusive public space is the strategy of exclusion and slavery.

The second level of violence is unleashed by a state against those who refuse to abide by the norms laid down in the public arena — the violence witnessed against the Naxal movement in the 1960's and in the present is indicative of a state which refuses to listen to the voice of those who interrogate its norms and values, or the logic of the construction of the nation state. The consolidation of the nation state and its associated rituals and practices does not tolerate any antithetical notions of how the public arena should be arranged. It is a domination through exclusion, that is, any other voice is just not heard but indeed dismissed and incarcerated, dubbed as anti-national and excluded from the public arena in terms of expression. Empirical work

on the numbers of political prisoners and the number of groups banned by the state is witness to this. Civil society as the political arena permits only those kind of politics which are within the parameters laid down. However, this creates contradictions of a different kind problematic for the state and for the processes in civil society. The price of excluding from the political arena those voices which venture a different kind of politics has been great as groups who have been marginalised opt out from this arena and adopt all the measures which are banned. When one thinks of how the Indian state has resorted to violence of the most open kind to deal with these antithetical political practices, one can marvel at the sheer shortsightedness of those who in the past refused to listen or to distinguish between the different kinds of politics. There is a saying in West Africa which the Indian state will do well to heed: when the state — the saying goes — does not listen to the whispers but heeds the wails political catastrophe follows. As social groups opt out of the public arena, as the state opts out of the codes set for it, the veil of opacity which guards the state against a confrontation with society is torn apart and civil society comes unstuck at the seams. The state is seen for what it is — coercive, revengeful, insecure and violent and it cedes its legitimacy. Then a state society confrontation seems likely and there is no civilised public space to come between the state and the individual and mediate the two. If civil society has to be the buffer of the state the state is logically expected to be opaque in its operations.

The third kind of violence is unleashed by the consequences of the homogenisation that the state and the production system carry out in the civil arena. Capitalism as an ideal type is supremely indifferent to the cultural specificities of those it oppresses, a proletarian is a proletarian, a capitalist a capitalist. Yet there are no proletarians or capitalists in the abstract, neither are those over whom capitalism throws its veil of acceptance and hegemony abstract persons. These are people armed with cultures with different but equally convincing kinds of rationality, with accepted practices and ways of life who are brought into the

public arena. There can be no transition from one kind of rationality to another, what takes place is articulation. The kind of practices which develop within the market and the political arena articulate these rationalities. For the feudal lord or the landowner who owns his workers body and soul there is little rationale to engage in equal exchange, he will oppress his workers for the purposes of capitalist accumulation on the basis of memory of reciprocal obligation and religious sanction or increasingly by the use of force. In the organised political field he will coerce his workers to exercise their vote on *his* preference. Equally for the religious leader clout over his followers will codify in the way he orders them to vote, in the way he orders them to stamp society in their distinct religious image, and when the demand comes for freedom of expression and the freedom and right to cast a vote coercion follows. Cultural or political homogenisation without any kind of economic equality can lead to an intensification of oppression and correspondingly an intensification of resistance mirroring those very practices which the public arena seeks to obliterate. Both dominant social practices and antithetical practices have adopted means outside the constructed arena, or subverted the norms of this arena — one has merely to think of vote buying, booth capturing, coercion in elections, the range of the "middlemen" who mediate between the consumer and the market, of barter and corruption, of social groups who regard the state as a source of spoils, to think of civil society as essentially a space which is operating more and more without the idea of desirable ground rules for social and political interaction and the subordination of the identity of the consumer and the citizen to every other form of identity. The reappropriation of civil society as the preserve of those who bend their traditional links to modern usages has led to an uncivil society, it is a comment on the myopia of those who have sought to engineer a political and legal revolution without a social and economic one. The public arena as we see it has not emerged as the domain for peaceful negotiation and discussion except in a superficial way as merely a surface layer for simmering uncivility. The main contradiction

is the way the public space is constructed, is moulded by the practices of these very elite who seek to socially engineer a whole society. The depredations of a capitalism which exploits without any corresponding benefits, the antics of a ruling class which appeal to everything but the abstract voter or consumer, have created a civil society which apart from its individualism and fragmentation is cleaved on caste and community lines, where individuals and groups have brought with them packaged deals and identities, where the only antidote to the totalising identities created are those of caste and community, when mandirs and masjids acquire a symbolic clout out of proportion to the issues involved. Where the vacuum has not been filled in with transformative ventures but where communalism becomes the grand ideology the task of creating a civil society has failed or rather *civil society has been appropriated by those who control the destiny of people in the most cold blooded ways.* Civil society has been subverted and made to serve the interests of the most venal of those who have commandeered the political and the economic arena.

III

Do I see any hope — yes I see a civil society being formed by those who insist that the state *heed* their voice — in ecology, in the gender question, in the class question, in the resistance to the siting of large scale projects which displace people, in those who speak out against the depredations of those who make mandirs and masjids their prominent political platform, in the voice of those who protest against the exploitation of the already marginalised, in the opinion of those whose nerves have not been numbed by the consumer capitalism fostered by the state, in those who have strong opinions and do not hesitate to express them in letters to the newspapers, in published work, in activism, in sheer oral communication with each other, in those who demand that the state deliver what it promised civil rights, dignity and value. These groups by no means have created a counter-discourse, they even look to the state for redressal of their grievances, they are dispersed, fragmented, even exclusive and conflictual, but

they have a common agenda that the state hear these voices and that it is these groups who will lay down the parameters of a public discourse where diversity is respected and lived with, where people can live with dignity and engage themselves with a state that is truly theirs. *This dispersed, fragmented civil society which seeks to negotiate both the state and society is still a beginning*, it requires an *integral principle and organisational theme* which would tie up these themes into a public discourse and which will be able to confront the state. Unless it is able to organise itself it will be continued to be dominated by the state in the setting of agendas, in the constitution of identity, in the playing of roles and above all in dividing the society into so many atomised groups unable to negotiate the state on their own. We have the peculiar situation then where the state weak, transparent, incompetent and inflated still continues to dominate the political scene because of the inability of these movements to transcend their narrow concerns.

What can be this integral principle? I think that the main ground rules which a society has to lay down for itself and for the state have to be based on the principles of freedom and equality. When one thinks of freedom and equality one thinks of the freedom to command one's body, of the freedom to command one's labour, of the freedom to command land and means of production. One thinks of an end to commodification and exploitation and the emergence of the self-regulating and creative individual and community. It is an agenda which is the *fundamental prerequisite* for a plural society based on equality, it is an agenda which goes by a name which has been banished from the contemporary political lexicon, the agenda is social transformation. Freedom in other words is about substantive socio-economic conditions of effective political participation. But we can no longer stop at that, we have to think of the autonomy of politics in sense that a freed economic and social space may not lead to appropriate forms of politics. We have to think of a consciously forged political discourse to control the state.

The second principle of this integral norm is that in a civil and political community, though plurality and diversity

have to be respected, there has to be agreement on ground rules which will bind civil society across cultures, rather a recognition on the need for such ground rules which will help us to reach an agreement on how they are to be conceived and interpreted. Respect for the diversity of cultures need not mean the absence of common principles which demand allegiance in order to construct a wider commonality. Can we afford the celebration of distinct, diverse histories without the remembrance of shared histories? The remembrance of shared spaces involves the recognition that differences are not given but they can be the historical sediments of discrimination and more importantly the perception of discrimination. It also involves the recognition that differences are hierarchically organised, to me, my relationship with say an ethnic community in the North East of India may be one of difference, to them it is a relationship of domination. It thirdly, involves the recognition that communities as historical constructs have inherent inequalities built into them, they carry the baggage of historical oppression and the seeds of new forms of oppression. Equality across diverse communities has to be matched by equality within communities. This cannot be left to communities themselves, it has to be the outcome of a public concern.

What is more important is that at a moment when the left has recognised the need to value diversities, the rightist forces are in the business of demolishing these diversities and constructing new ones through the construction of a homogenising and totalising discourse. When we are faced with the discourse of communalism and casteism surely a fragmented civil society will offer spaces for the hegemonisation of this discourse. A coming together across cultures is tactically and strategically important to meet the onslaught. Creation of self-enclosed spaces can be dangerous when we are besieged by the right. An alliance may start off as a defence against the right but it has to move on to a consideration of common concerns which challenge everyone to re-examine their commitment to accepted wisdom. We cannot do anything else given a totalising state and a

totalising right. An insistence on the privileging of the particular can leave us unarmed in the face of a counter-revolution which is based on populism and is armed with its own constructions of difference.

I am not making a case for single-minded political involvement in the sense which the Greeks meant it. Civil society is as Walzer describes it as a *setting of settings*, it allows us to do many things in association with others. We can be members of communities, nationalities and professional associations, of trade unions and of religious groups, we can teach and seminar, be a consumer and a producer but be conscious at all times of the need to relate to the wider setting, and to be conscious above all that if we do not chart out a political agenda then all other identities are in trouble. Without the master discourse of freedom and tolerance, equality and rights, everyone of these linkages is threatened. Sensitivity to this involves the democratisation of every arena of social life.

Only a democratic state can create a democratic civil society:only a democratic civil society can sustain a democratic state. The civility that makes democratic politics possible can only be learned in the associational networks; the roughly equal and widely dispersed capabilities that sustain the networks have to be fostered by the democratic state. Confronted with an overbearing state, citizens who are also members, will struggle to make room for autonomous associations and market relationships (and also for local governments and decentralised bureaucracies). But the state can never be what it appears to be in liberal theory, a mere framework for civil society. It is also the instrument of the struggle, used to give a particular shape to the common life. *Hence citizenship has a certain practical pre-eminence among all our actual and possible memberships.* That's not to say that we must be citizens all the time, finding in politics, as Rousseau urged, the greater part of our happiness. Most of us will be happier elsewhere, involved only sometimes in affairs of state. *But we must have a state open to our sometime involvement* (Walzer; 1992, pp. 104-5, emphasis mine).

For us, I suggest, the task of privileging our political identity is foremost today because we have to create a situation where the state is open to our "sometime" involvement, so that a responsive state becomes the norm and we can move on to doing other things.

These common principles among democratic forces need to be articulated through debate and discussion but they have to be based on a recognition of the value of charting out a political community through participation, publicity and on the recognition of the need to control agendas. Emphasis on separateness and diversity without an accompanying debate on how particular histories are to be negotiated, on how the common past and present of common values and meanings can be recovered, on how the manner in which our presents are organised hierarchically (see S.P. Mohanty on this) can be politics which is stripped of its ethical and normative dimensions as politics as large-scale transformative venture gets sidelined. The devaluation of common concerns can lead to the privatisation of values to the detriment of shared values, histories and meanings. It can lead to segmented private spaces instead of an imaginative public space where we can relate as concerned citizens. And if segmented private spaces become the norm then it is the state which will continue to be the reigning force in civil society and the stifling of a creative public discourse will become the casualty of non-action by the progressive forces in civil society.

Notes

1. For instance, Bayart in his conceptualization of civil society thinks of it as "society — in its relation with the state — in so far as it is in confrontation with the state or more precisely, as the process by which society seeks to 'breach' and counteract the simultaneous 'totalisation' unleashed by the state" (1986: p 111). In the very next sentence he qualifies this view with the proviso that civil society is an ambivalent and dynamic relation between the state and society. Chabal, likewise defines civil society "as a vast ensemble of constantly changing groups and individuals (who have) acquired some

consciousness of their externality and *opposition* to the state" (1986: p. 15 emphasis mine).

2. Prieswerk cites examples of the Cameroons where thousands of villagers have built water installations for themselves,collected money and organised a collective work programme; in Senegal cooperative programmes have been organised by the peasants; in Colombia land redistribution has been undertaken by the people themselves (1982). Similar examples are found in other parts of the post-colonial world with consequences for the legitimacy of the state, or its competence.
3. To Foucault, "the state for all the omnipotence of its apparatuses, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations, and further — [that] the state can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations"(1980: p.122).The state can "only hold and secure its footing where it is rooted in a whole series of multiple and indefinite power relations that supply the necessary basis for the negative forms of power" (ibid).

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11

IMPERIALISM, SOVIET COLLAPSE AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE POST-COLONIAL WORLD

Achin Vanaik

The collapse of the 'Socialist' system in the ex-USSR and the implosion within the former Soviet Union is an epochial event. It has transformed the whole nature of global politics and dramatically altered the basic parameters in which the various relationships between nations, states and classes have hitherto operated. This is so far the relations between north-south, east-west, west-west, east-east, south-south, within imperialisms, between imperialism and its victims, between exploiting and exploited classes, between fractions of the dominant classes, between states and classes. Even when restricting the scope of investigation to the post-colonial or 'third world' it is still necessary to start from first principles, from the establishment of a general theoretical framework of analysis.[1] So what is the appropriate framework?

Flawed Paradigms

One can start off by saying what it is not. It is not Realism nor World Systems Theory. Whatever their specific merits these are all deeply flawed paradigms. The way in which the Cold War ended and the People's Democracies in East Europe collapsed is itself the most striking evidence of this. Take Realism. Here is a paradigm which is strikingly anti-

sociological and anti-historical, where the 'primacy of politics' is eternal. The nature of the global order (inherently anarchic) is said to be the same over millennia. Its key actors are always states taken as roughly synonymous with the territories they rule over. It is acknowledged though, that in the modern era there has been a substantial proliferation of such actors as a result of the decline of older empires and the emergence of numerous nation-states in the Age of Nationalism. International politics is the time-honoured game of 'balance of power' through the search for alliances and counter-alliances. Global or continental order is the outcome of stable balances which is best served if there is one hegemon. In modern times this could only be the U.S.

The 'bi-polar conflict' of the Cold War was thus seen as a modern-day, somewhat more ideologically inflected remake of an otherwise ancient script. The specifically *capitalist* nature of that abstraction, 'the international system' was never seriously factored into the Realist paradigm. Realism, for all its recent genuflections towards 'political economy' has never taken economics that seriously although it is obviously recognised as an important input into the overall calculus of 'state power'. Even today 'International Relations experts' need not possess a sophisticated theoretical or solid empirical grasp of the global economy. Unsurprisingly, the capitalist-socialist dimensions of U.S.-Soviet and East-West bloc rivalry was treated as little more than an ideological overlay useful for rhetorical purposes but otherwise with little to contribute to either analysis of trends or to policy guidance. Little significance is attached to non-state actors like social movements and classes. The linkages between intra-state revolutions and inter-state relations, between international and domestic factors are explicitly untheorised.[2]

That International Relations must be about the internationalisation of domestic conflicts and about the domesticisation of international conflicts is something that Realists can hardly hope to cope with. Too many variables then enter the analysis and too heavy a burden of inter-disciplinary expertise in the social sciences is then imposed on International Relations experts and commentators. Realism

needs to be severely criticised not simply because it failed to anticipate the collapse of the USSR, the end of the Cold War or the manner in which the West achieved its 'victory', but because it *could not* have anticipated these developments or the manner of their unfolding given its methodological failings, for example its innate bias towards a military-security perception of the nature of the global order even in the post-1917 era.

Neo-Realism is somewhat better.[3] It has paid more attention to economics, to transnational economic/financial agents, structures and networks, though certainly not to other non-state actors. Neo-Realism's fundamental conclusion is that processes of globalisation (particularly but not solely at the economic level) have led to new levels of 'complex interdependence' which have seriously vitiated the usefulness of a strictly Realist paradigm. This new interdependence has to be *managed* in ways not accounted or allowed for in the older paradigm. Moreover, this 'complex-interdependence' has rendered older notions of the indispensability of a hegemon and of the dangers if it declines without replacement, something of an anachronism.

Neo-Realism then has a distinctly more benign view of the world and a distinctly more optimistic vision of the possibilities of collaboration and co-operation between states and among transnational economic/financial agents. This much is implied in the very term 'interdependence' that forms its leit motif. But if Neo-Realism is a step forward in its critique of Realism's excessive state-centrism, it is also something of a step backward in sweeping under the carpet such notions as hierarchies, structured inequalities and exploitation. Realism also obscures the latter two notions but as its preoccupation with 'asymmetries of power' and 'alliance structures' indicates, it does pay rather more serious attention to the issue of international hierarchies and thus to the aggressive and bullying practices among states. Where such was the behaviour of Western powers it was usually glossed as necessary solutions to the 'problem' of international order. This is understandable given the paradigm's origin and importance in the West and the

apologetic dimension inherent in it for 'big power' behaviour. Furthermore, Neo-Realism modifies but does abandon the Realist concept of the state as a 'national-territorial totality'.[4] It, therefore, shares Realism's blindness towards state-society conflicts and their extra and trans-state repercussions. Neo-Realism too, has lacked the capacity to adequately theorise precisely the sources of the changes that led to the post-1985 transformation of the global system.

World Systems theory (Wallerstein, et. al.) though claiming Marxist inspiration has not fared much better. Its great strength is its rejection of the developmentalist model (the West as ideal type) of modernisation theory. According to this theory this end-state is supposed to be achievable by the backward countries if they carry out judicious policy choices. The great weakness of World Systems Theory is its inability to recognise the *systemic* character of the rivalry between East and West, the U.S. and the former USSR. This *was* the partial and distorted actualisation of a socialism-capitalism conflict. Instead World Systems theory would have us operate primarily with the terms core, semi-periphery and periphery in a capitalist world system. This makes impossible any proper comprehension of the period since 1917, the mechanics of the Cold War era, or of the magnitude of the economic, political and ideological changes ushered in on the global stage by the developments since 1989.

The Primacy of Economics

Does a Marxist approach to 'International Relations' have more to offer? What constitutes a distinctively Marxist approach? How to adjudicate between the different Marxisms on display in this regard?

Common to all otherwise competing 'Marxist' paradigms is a methodological 'primacy of economics'. This is not to be understood in a crude determinist or reductionist sense. But it does mean that the point of departure for any analysis of the modern global system is its political economy. For specific and concrete studies as also for historical studies of pre-capitalist societies, the complex interweaving of economic and non-economic levels, the dominance of other dynamic

principles besides those found within the economy, can be considered perfectly legitimate. Few Marxists would insist on the 'primacy of economics' in order to understand or explain America's war on Vietnam or most of the U.S. interventions in the third world since 1945. Imperialism is precisely the concept that seeks to capture this methodological 'primacy of the economic'.

To ask how relevant is a Marxist approach today to any study of the post-colonial societies (and the extent to which they have been affected by the USSR's dissolution) is in large measure to ask how relevant is the notion of imperialism?[5] One of the most striking by-products of the collapse of self-confidence among the former rulers of the East and of the disillusionment with socialism of its intelligentsia is their wholesale abandonment of this term as a meaningful characterisation of the global economic order or of the West and Japan's ascendance within it. To acknowledge that advanced capitalism even in liberal-democratic garb exploits brutally, becomes much more difficult when one is bent upon emulating liberal-pluralist politics and the structures of capitalist prosperity in the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries.

This ideological rebound off the decayed backboards of bureaucratic 'socialism' has also hit the elites of most third world countries. These countries though not 'socialist' in any sense equivalent to the USSR and East Europe, did benefit from the political-economic space provided to them by the East-West bloc rivalry. The promised New World Order is an altogether more one-sided affair with most third world elites facing unprecedented pressure to adjust to the 'new realities'. Yet imperialism remains a crucial analytical tool to comprehend the 'new realities'.

The classical Marxist theory of imperialism was Lenin's. Though many of his specific propositions no longer hold and though conceptual waters have been muddied by inaccurate interpretations of the 'essentials' of his theory, key elements endure. Imperialism represented the "highest stage" of capitalism when capital accumulation had to be carried out not only through 'intensive' processes within the advanced

countries but also through 'extensive' ones requiring geographical expansion of trade and capital flows.[6] This was necessitated simply by the fact that concentration and centralisation of capital had already reached the advanced stage of monopoly/oligopoly and further competition and concomitant centralisation/concentration would have to play itself out on a global scale. It is this that constitutes the core idea of Lenin's theory rather than specific formulations about the 'export of capital' to the colonial world or 'inter-imperialist wars' for territory.[7]

All too often, Marxists have sought to locate the 'essential mechanism' or 'prime mover' behind imperialism, be it the 'tendency of the rate of profit' to fall or the difficulties in 'realising surplus value'.[8] To do this is to fail to perceive the *inherent flexibility* of imperialist capital accumulation. Capitalist accumulation takes place through intensive and extensive processes. The specific weights to be attached to these respective processes, the particular responses of states to accumulation imperatives, the manner in which capitalist competition (inter-imperialist and inter-firm rivalries) plays itself out, the changing patterns of domination, co-optation and co-operation between ruling class fractions or between bourgeoisies are all open-ended and dynamic issues. These are subject to evolution, decline, transformation. That there exist different phases in world capitalism in which different combinations emerge should not occasion fundamental revision of the spirit and core idea of Lenin's theory of imperialism.

Lenin was neither unfamiliar with nor opposed to such ideas as the claim that the capitalist accumulation process is highly flexible but nevertheless subject to periodical crises; that these processes and crises have determinate political, ideological and social effects which cannot however, be 'read off' the economic processes; or that these periodic crises are themselves the mechanisms by which capitalism prepares the objective basis for its continuation, i.e., the absence of any teleological 'final breakdown'. Though not a *logical* corollary of his theory of imperialism, Lenin, however, did believe that the 'highest stage' was in some real sense the

'last stage'. Imperialism was "parasitical" and "decaying" and "moribund" capitalism even if its breakdown was not assured. He clearly believed that capitalist relations of production in the imperialist era no longer had the capacity to advance the forces of production. Therefore, there could be little chance of escape from the severest international political consequences — growing authoritarianism, increasing instability in the bourgeois democracies — nor from economic consequences like growing impoverishment not only in the poorer parts of the world but in the advanced West itself.

It was this understanding (quite appropriate as an analysis of the historical conjuncture) that formed the backdrop for what Lukacs called Lenin's belief in the 'actuality of the revolution' by which was surely meant both its necessity and *immediacy*. A crucial *practical* programmatic perspective was embodied in this formula. The uneven but global effects of imperialism had stimulated the rise of linked but distinct perspectives for political struggle by communist organisations and revolutionaries of his own time whether in the Soviet Union, the advanced capitalist countries or in the colonial world of national-liberation struggles.

Correct though this perception was in Lenin's time, the 'imperialist epoch' has turned out to be more prolonged and complex in its manifestations and effects than earlier envisioned. Imperialism could and did organise itself differently at different times and has shown itself capable of responding effectively to global changes and renewing itself in new circumstances, e.g., coping with the end of colonialism. Who can sensibly deny this flexibility? Though the inter-war descent into fascism, the Great Depression and World War Two fully vindicated Lenin's short and medium-term anticipations, there has been a remarkable 'renewal' since then. For the first twenty years there was the 'long boom' with unprecedented levels of prosperity reached for most of the first world's citizens. Bourgeois democratic regimes have proved remarkably durable in the OECD countries despite the long downturn that began in the early seventies. Even a few NICs have emerged, not to mention the collapse of

Soviet and East bloc 'socialism' defeated in large part by the higher productivity of a capitalism well into the Third (electronics) Revolution in motive power. The full consequences for capitalism of the 'information revolution' are not clear.

Four Key Questions

What then is the current phase of imperialism? What lessons are to be drawn for the prospects of third world countries after 1989 and all that? It might help if we structure our presentation as a response to four key questions:

1) Is imperialism intrinsic to capitalist accumulation today or are we, as East European ex-socialists are now fond of saying, well into the post-imperialist era?
2) How in this phase is capitalist accumulation organised and what does this imply for the coming period?
3) Can imperialism or world capitalism industrialise/ modernise the third world?
4) Is 'national' or 'independent' development at all possible in the post-colonial world?

In the overall framework structured by the responses to the above questions, what are the implications for the post-colonial world of what has happened in the ex-USSR and Eastern Europe?

Imperialism is intrinsic to and inseparable from the accumulation processes of late capitalism. But the value of its contribution to the health of metropolitan capital, i.e., expanded reproduction of capital centred in the advanced countries fluctuates significantly despite this inseparability. It is here that the distinction between intensive and extensive patterns of accumulation becomes important. Whether as sources of raw materials, cheap labour or markets for the OECD's goods, services and capital, the third world over the last two decades has become *relatively* less important than intra-OECD trade and capital flows, for the global accumulation process.

This is not to say that exploitation of the third world does not exist or is unimportant. There is a net inflow of capital from the poorer to the advanced parts of the globe through

a variety of mechanisms (debt repayments, unequal exchange, repatriation of profits and dividends intra-firm transfer pricing) which by now have been well documented. This is of course, an overall balance-sheet conclusion which must allow for the possibility of substantial country-wise, region-wise and sector-wise variations and even specific reversals of the otherwise general trend. But it clearly indicates that imperialist exploitation of the third world has been an important stimulus and contributor to capitalist accumulation processes in the metropolitan countries. But this is still different from saying that it is its most vital foundation.

Intensive processes related to productivity advances/exploitation of the proletariat in the OECD, intra-OECD redistribution of surpluses, concentration and centralisation of capital within the OECD countries have been rather more important than extensive processes involving economic relations between metropolitan capital and its targets in the periphery/semiperiphery, or flows between the former second and first worlds. None of this rules out wars directed by imperialist states against post-colonial ones (e.g., the recent Gulf War against Iraq). But it reinforces the point about imperialist flexibility in political and economic behaviour vis-a-vis the third world, and the existence from the first world's point of view of a sizeable menu of options. We are, therefore, very much in the era of a New Imperialism. Talk of a post-imperialist era is motivated or self-deluding obscurantism. But this Neo-imperialism has the capacity to behave in more and less imperial ways. It can pursue a range of specific strategies. It can ignore or woo. It can persuade and co-opt as well as threaten and coerce its targets. Indeed, its ability to exercise ideological hegemony has for some time at least been *qualitatively* advanced by the collapse of the Soviet Union and its deformed socialist project. The response to the second question revolves around two issues — the meaning of economic *globalisation* and the actual and potential power of the *forces* behind this globalisation; the current and future role of the United States, its 'relative decline', and the seriousness or otherwise of inter-imperialist rivalry.

Concentration and centralisation have reached the point where transnational economic and financial agents along with states are the key actors in the global political economy. These transnational agents are still centred in terms of ownership and direction in one imperialist country or the other and are not therefore genuinely multinational. But they have substantially escaped the control of their 'home' state. Many of the strongest of these now constitute or are well on the way to constituting a truly transnational segment of capital with interests and ambitions which can no longer be adequately represented by the 'home' state. The latter is subjected to the diverse pressures of various domestic ruling class factions as well as to classes and popular pressures from below. It is this globalisation that has rendered classical, Keynesian macromanagement of the 'national economy' relatively ineffectual and paved the way for the temporary ideological ascendance of a variety of neo-liberal economic doctrines.

This 'internationalist' segment of capital has a major interest in global stability and a minimisation of the kind of inter-imperialist rivalry that might lead to competing protectionist blocs.[9] It exercises influence both within and outside governments and through multilateral institutions like the IMF, WB, EBRD and MTO/GATT though these bodies must also, given their internal administrative structure, pay due attention to the interests of their major governmental underwriters. But the difference between the general economic orientation of these multilateral institutions and that of the major OECD governments is noticeable and significant. At the very least the former are structures comparatively more concerned with alleviating rather than exacerbating inter-imperialist rivalries.

The fact that by far the biggest block of this transnational capital is American-centred suggests that theories about America's relative 'economic decline' need to be significantly qualified. Geographic America's economic or relative decline is *not* the same thing as Corporate America's economic or relative decline. This is a point that has been stressed by a dissident minority current within Western academia where

the mainstream view is one of serious relative American decline (in spite of the USSR's recent collapse) and the 'disturbing' implications for global stability of this weakening of the American hegemon.[10] The dissidents have an argument that needs to be taken seriously.

Economic globalisation of the type we are witnessing is an *historically new* phenomenon. It does render older assumptions about the cyclical Rise and Fall of Great Powers somewhat weaker. The notion of a 'national' or territorially demarcated zone of distinctive economic power backed by state power cannot bear as much explanatory weight as in the past. Newer and more significant nuances and qualifications have to be introduced. Corporate USA was the early starter in economic and political-military globalisation. Though Japan has made major inroads as far as financial/credit structures are concerned, America-centred transnationalism still easily prevails (in some areas it has extended its advantage) over British, French, Japanese and German-centred transnationalism in production, communications leisure and non-financial service sectors.

Nor is the USA lagging behind in R & D where it still outspends all its rivals put together. Add to this its overwhelming military might and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the USA is still the preponderant hegemon especially now that its principal military rival, the USSR is no more, and Russia is likely to be deeply absorbed with its vast internal problems for a decade or more to come. The one proviso, of course, is that America can do much less than it once could with this preponderance even if it can still do a great deal that other states cannot.

It remains the only viable candidate for the job of global policeman and it is extremely doubtful if Germany or Japan for all their accelerated militarisation could ever realistically expect to challenge or replace it in this regard. But interventions, for example, in Eastern Europe or the ex-USSR to prevent or resolve irredentist and 'nationality' conflicts and wars seem well beyond the capacity of any U.S.-led force. In Western Europe we may well be entering a post-Clausewitzian era where major wars are inconceivable,

where inter-state (intra-state if a real political Union is established) militarism is irrelevant and where the USA's military power offers it little leverage vis-vis West Europe, or purchase to rectify the productivity imbalances that have occasioned a relative shift away in economic power from geographical America and Corporate America even if the seriousness and scale of this shift has been exaggerated.

What then about the likelihood of growing inter-imperialist rivalry? This categorisation is the legacy of an earlier phase of imperialism. Its original purpose was to pose a contrasting Leninist alternative to the Kautskyian and German Social Democratic vision of 'ultra imperialism'. This term meant an effective long-run, near-permanent collaboration of imperialist states behind an imperial hegemon. Since the rapaciousness of inter-imperialist conflict was avoidable there was all the more reason for the workers' movement to pursue a gradualist path of social-democratic reformism. Unfortunately for Kautsky both World Wars and the inter-war period decisively undermined his thesis.

It was in the period after World War II that a semi-Kautskyian perspective, could once again be plausibly resurrected to explain the 'long peace' in the heartlands of imperialism itself. Since most Marxists attributed, in greater or lesser measure, this peace to imperialism's collective necessity to confront another systemic rival and its alliance bloc, the dissolution of the USSR and its hold over Eastern Europe would seem now to leave open the way for a revival of inter-imperialist rivalries, albeit in newer forms.

This qualifier, 'in newer forms' is itself illuminating. Implicitly, the left recognises that times have changed. Few Marxists would suggest that the events and processes of the 1919-39 period will be repeated, or that there will be actual inter-imperialist military wars. But why this should be so has not been adequately theorised nor indeed the durability of bourgeois democracy in the OECD countries, even though the persistence of bourgeois democracy in the coming period is taken largely for granted. Any 'resurgence' of inter-imperialist tensions will clearly be an altogether more etiolated affair than such tensions in the past. In so far as

these tensions are emphasised they are thought to be largely confined to the realm of economics and are expected to lead to the formation of three rival protectionist or semi-protectionist blocs — a European bloc centred on German strength, an East Asian Pacific Rim constellation centred on Japan and a North American continental bloc masterminded by the US.

Indubitably, there are tendencies towards such debilitating protectionism. But the existence of counter-tendencies must also be noted. The issue is thus more open-ended than usually assumed. The effects of globalisation and the rise of a more 'internationalist' segment of capital must be taken into proper account. There is then, an alternative scenario which can be further explored. This is not one of an inexorable descent into competing imperialist economic blocs but of a developing two-tier global arrangement which is partially fractured sideways by inter-imperialist tensions and rivalries. This is not some kind of reformulated Kautskyian-cum-Leninist or 'ultra-imperialist'-cum-'inter-imperialist' perspective. Both the Kautskyian and the Leninist formulations assumed a strong correspondence between distinct imperialisms and their respective 'home' states. This is precisely the relationship that has become more problematic.

As long as the USSR and the Soviet bloc survived it was possible to give significant weight to the 'nationalist' segment of the bourgeoisie in some of the third world countries like India, which could use the space provided to play one off the other and thereby enhance its own 'nationalist' character. The dissolution of the Soviet bloc means above all the elimination of this space and the grave weakening of the 'nationalist' segment of the ruling classes in the third world. At any rate, global economic processes had already weakened such segments encouraging their transformation into and alignment with what Poulantzas has called the 'internal bourgeoisie'.[11] This is to be distinguished from what has been called the 'nationalist' bourgeoisie and the 'compradorist' or 'neo-colonial' bourgeoisie. For Poulantzas the 'internal bourgeoisie' had its own internal industrial base but its

expanded reproduction was increasingly tied to the reproduction processes of foreign capital.

Whatever one's misgivings about the appropriateness of Poulantzas's precise formulation, his was an important attempt at grasping what was new about the imperialism of late capitalism as it affected the third world. The core-periphery or prosperity-poverty dualism is a growing polarisation not just between but through and across countries. The "two-thirds society" (one-third prospering, one-third coping, one-third abandoned) of a single nation, e.g., Britain or the US becomes more and more the characterisation of the global system as a whole except that the proportions are reversed with one-third increasingly incorporated into the world market and two-thirds expelled from its 'benefits' and abandoned. The evolving pattern of the relationship between metropolitan bourgeois fractions and third world bourgeois fractions will increasingly range from direct subordination to varying degrees of partnership and 'collaboration'. Notions of neo-colonialism or semi-colonialism simply do no justice to the real complexity of these emergent forms. This complex evolution could well be the fate of the elites of the former second world as well, provided that their transition to capitalism is effectively completed — a by no means certain prospect.

Actually existing socialisms as they consolidated themselves in the post-colonial era had really only three things to offer the post-colonial world:

1) It was an alternative developmental model. Since 'actual socialisms' had forsaken the classical legacy of Marxism to endorse in its place one-party, anti-democratic monolithism it had nothing valuable to offer on the plane of political democracy with which a classical socialist conception of social and economic democracy was indissolubly linked. The idea of socialism as a superior alternative at all levels to even the most advanced capitalist democracies was replaced by the idea of socialism as a more productive and more welfarist-oriented model for more rapid economic development.

2) It provided a check of sorts to specific instances of imperialist politico-military expansion in the third world. Such an American expansionism was to a significant extent restrained more successfully in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, less so in Latin America.

3) Its existence enlarged the space in which third world elites could feel and act with greater self-importance and independence than otherwise. This was embodied in the emergence of a non-aligned bloc and of the non-aligned movement about which more will be said later.

As the era of national liberation struggles in the third world effectively drew to a close by the mid-seventies it was the 'developmental' promise of the socialist bloc dominated by the USSR and China but particularly the former, as the second industrial power, that became this bloc's prime asset in the battle with the OECD countries for the allegiance and sympathy of the third world.

It is this 'primacy of the economic' in the USSR's own vision of being a systemic alternative to liberal-democratic, advanced capitalism that justifies the deep focus on the issue and prospects of economic development in the third world now that the USSR has collapsed and scrapped its own developmental model. Hence the importance of the answer to the third question. Can late capitalism (imperialism) industrialise/modernise the third world? The short answer is clearly no! At best a few countries for reasons that have as much to do with special geo-political conjunctures, and with the ironies of history as with sound economic policies, have achieved remarkable levels of sustained economic growth. These NICs, all located in East Asia, are close to incorporation in the OECD club as full members.

Barring Hong Kong, three points need to be noted about the miracle successes of the East Asian Tigers. All are geographically located in the region where after 1945 advanced capitalism led by the USA had to make a maximum political-military investment to 'contain' its two most formidable systemic rivals, the USSR and China. The American politico-military umbrella in the Far-East provided

a crucial support structure for the survival of *stable* authoritarian regimes which could count on such support in return for formal adherence to the USA's Cold War postures. The benefits in military-related and economic aid was not marginal. 'Productive' economic measures of a repressive (ensuring long working hours) or transformative (land reforms) kind could be undertaken by these authoritarian regimes with less fear of their internally turbulent consequences.

Since American interest here was primarily politico-military the key external economic relationships were forged with Japanese rather than American capital. Moreover, Japanese capital had to operate under this American umbrella without commensurate political backing from the Japanese state defeated in the war. This capital had to put a premium on what it had to offer in rational economic terms, i.e., it entered into relationships with the East Asian states and with capital in these states on terms which could not be preponderantly weighted in its own favour. In South Korea, the most important of the Asian Tigers, Japanese capital was not allowed to overshadow, curtail or subordinate the growth of domestic Chaebols. This disjunction between the politico-military relationships that mattered in the region (the US) and the economic power/capacities that mattered in the region (Japan) gave the East Asian Tigers a significant autonomous space to pursue state-directed strategies for growth.[12]

Lastly, this space was effectively utilised by the governments of Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea to pursue growth strategies which apart from their strong export-related outward orientation were the very antithesis of World Bank/IMF neo-liberal prescriptions on how best to industrialise/modernise. They were *not* examples of 'market friendly' *plus* 'minimal state' development strategies.

The exceptionalism of the East Asian performance is highlighted by the fact that there really are no other claimants to such miracle performances barring rather feeble efforts to portray post-coup Chile in the same light and strongly contested efforts to suggest that Thailand will soon join the ranks of these NICs. The Brazilian Miracle was short lived,

and Mexico is merely coming out of a deep trough. Ironically, the candidate with the strongest potential for becoming the next 'economic miracle' is India, the one country that has pursued easily the most autonomous and insulated pattern of economic growth in the third world. It is testimony to the power of ideological fashion that this past pattern is now increasingly seen as the unwanted result of a tragic policy error rather than the foundation which for all its flaws and recent redundance has allowed India, even in the eyes of neo-liberals, to develop that very potential to become the new economic giant.

China which followed a more autarchic path for decades than even India and whose past performance fully confirms Amartya Sen's points that mass welfare is primarily a function of policy and not of growth, is really the economic success story of the eighties. Again, all kudos have been given to liberalisation rather than to the context and economic framework in which liberalisation has taken place. The performance of co-operatives and municipally controlled enterprises rather than fully privately owned enterprises *per se* have been at the heart of its industrial success in the eighties. In agriculture long lease arrangements have been the institutional foundation of the enormous increase in output of foodstuffs other than grain which has suffered serious fall in overall production levels. The Chinese experience is more an example of how the benefits of private enterprise can be severed from private ownership than of how an unbridled capitalism can deliver the goods.[13] Needless to say, that is not the lesson being drawn by neo-liberals or by the international financial/economic institutions. This is not to deny that China's economic 'success' owes nothing to any developing socialist orientation. But it is to make the point that its 'success' is not a simple advertisement of the virtues of straightforward integration into an imperialist dominated world market, especially when the 'longer view' of post-1949 Chinese development is taken, as it should be. China's is not yet a capitalist economy and its *structural integration* into the world capitalist economy is far from complete or even close to crossing the critical point of no

return. Such a transition will likely have to await the kind of political transformations that have taken place in the ex-USSR and Eastern Europe. Given the Chinese government's anti-democratic and monolithic character such a successful overthrow of bureaucratic rule is only a matter of time, perhaps another twenty years at the outside.

But if the organisation of flows of goods, services, capital and technology/information (viz., the Dunkel Draft on trade in services and patent rights) is now both increasingly global *and* increasingly exclusive, then the idea that imperialism, give or take a few further exceptions, can modernise much, let alone most or all of the third world, is surely an unwarranted conclusion of any balanced historical analysis of the past and present of the global political economy. Such, at least would be the argument of this writer.

The most profound consequences of the collapse of the USSR on the post-colonial world are twofold. In the shorter run it has vitiated the very notion of a socialist alternative and opposition to capitalism. However, there are reasons for thinking that this effect is a temporary one. The very inability of late capitalism and the New Imperialism to resolve basic problems of mass poverty in the third world amidst ever more glaring contrasts between poverty and affluence; its inability to reconcile the imperatives of ever-expanding accumulation with the needs of ecological preservation ensures the survival and periodic growth of the search for an alternative to capitalism and imperialist arrangements of the world economy. That alternative must necessarily link itself to the socialist tradition and legacy in all its multiple hues, both Marxist and non-Marxist.

But it is the other consequence that is more difficult to counter. How are third world societies to industrialise in the face of actually existing imperialism? If most cannot successfully modernise because of imperialist domination of the global system, can they do so by escaping the hold of imperialism? And is such an escape possible or desirable given the processes of globalisation taking place? Such is the nature of the evolving global economy that for many sectors and even countries today the only thing worse than

being exploited is not to be exploited but abandoned. The ongoing bio-technology and micro-chip revolutions will only further accelerate the tendency towards a transnational dualism of the world economy.

The classical Marxist view about the prospects of Third World industrialisation was straightforward enough. *Full* industrialisation, i.e., achievement of advanced industrial status equivalent to that achieved by an advanced capitalist country for any backward country from the mid-twentieth century onwards was simply inconceivable. There could be substantially industrialised enclaves and even significant 'semi-industrialisation', but any new entrants to the competitive ranks of the major capitalist countries was effectively ruled out. The argument was based on the assumption that imperialism (itself identified with distinct 'national' capitals of the advanced countries) so dominated the global system that no space existed for autonomous capitalist development in the third world of a kind that could challenge the older imperialisms in the sections that were most important to them. Since these sections changed over time, e.g., from lower productivity smokestack industries to higher technology information/knowledge industries, a considerable degree of industrialisation could take place in the third world (manufacture and even machino-factures) but always of a kind that was at least one-phase behind the advanced countries in terms of technology.

In its extreme form, this Marxist view would seem to have been disproved. For special reasons no doubt, but even so the East Asian NIC experience, especially South Korea's performance, has been a very strong riposte to the claim that *no* country in the post-colonial world could hope to challenge the advanced imperialisms in sectors which mattered most and thereby graduate to the position of a mature and advanced capitalism. But otherwise, the classical Marxist view, for all its underestimation of capitalist productivity, has not fared badly at all. As a generalisation it still holds true and is almost certainly going to continue holding true in the first half of the twenty-first century even if the dividing line between 'advanced' and 'backward' can no longer be drawn simply between countries.

This classical view also contended that only a *qualitative break* with the capitalist world market could allow post-colonial countries to establish the preconditions for a substantial-industrialisation based on a relatively healthy internal dynamic. Since this classical view vigorously opposed any notion of socialism in one country and insisted that socialism's superior productivity could only be displayed on a global scale if capitalism in its heartland was transcended, it would be quite unfair to claim that classical Marxism believed that it was possible for a backward country in the epoch of imperialism to become an industrial economic power comparable to advanced capitalist countries provided it broke away from imperialism through a successful anti-capitalist revolution and embarked on a non-capitalist path of economic development.

The essential claim was more modest. First, such a non-capitalist path despite unwarranted distortions created by bureaucratic and economic commandism (which should not become extreme) could still better address some of the key problems of capitalist under-industrialisation like eradication of absolute poverty, minimum provision of employment, health care, education, leisure, cultural goods, mass transport etc. The crucial standard of comparison would not be between such post-capitalist backward societies and advanced capitalist ones but between the former and other backward societies dominated by the capitalist mode of production. Second, such anti-capitalist breakthroughs would constitute historical 'holding operations' which had the potential to inspire anti-capitalist breakthroughs elsewhere. The more democratic (and less bureaucratic) these post-revolutionary societies and the greater their welfarist successes the more likely they were to inspire anti-bureaucratic socialist advances in the second world and socialist revolutions in the first world. Third, the inherent weaknesses of late capitalism and the deep iniquities of imperialism would render even liberal-democratic, advanced capitalism a less attractive model for greater numbers both inside and outside these societies. Implicit in the third belief was an underestimation of late capitalism's productivity, an

underestimation of the durability of bourgeois democratic structures and therefore an underestimation of the attractions of this model to those living under bureaucratic 'socialism', even though there was no underestimation of the damages wrought by a Stalinist model of socialism.

When socialism as practised became in effect, an alternative model of economic development, it helped to dig its own grave. It has been defeated by its failure to meet its own standards. Unwilling to match the political freedoms of the West let alone go beyond it, 'socialist' regimes pegged their legitimacy to their ability to economically outperform advanced capitalism, where 'performance' was to be judged in terms no different from the latter's extravagant consumerism. Neither the masses nor the elites of the post-colonial world can be excessively faulted for rejecting that kind of socialism for its capitalist rival, rather than rejecting both. This then is the crux of the problem. It is the new despair about being able to construct a viable and superior alternative to capitalism that is the most damaging consequence of the Soviet collapse. Capitalism convinces not because of its positive virtues but because it seems the least bad option, especially in its liberal-democratic guise.

What then can be salvaged from the argument that a qualitative rupture and a non-capitalist path of development in a backward country is both possible and desirable? Actually, quite a lot. But it is clear that the very notion of 'development' will have to be shorn of an excessive productivism and infused with newer (and older classical) values emphasising above all, issues of self-determination and ecologically sustainable growth rather than imitation of average living standards in the OECD countries.

A minimum of welfare for everyone more than ever will require a political-economic break with the imperialism of this new phase and the pursuit of a non-capitalist path of development. Such a break will still, for a long time to come, take place within a 'national' framework, precisely because of the on-going globalisation processes taking place, the social base for such 'nationally' based revolutions, can less than ever count on the support of any 'nationalist' segment

of the ruling classes or on the sympathy of significant sections of the middle classes. But the objective conditions of so many of the people of the third world will be such that revolutionary struggles far from being a matter of the past can still be a part of the future, regardless of the collapse of the USSR and the Soviet socialist model. Indeed the collapse of that model is no bad thing. The difficulties that imperialism will have in making out that such third world struggles are 'strategic' dangers will partly counter-balance the freer hand they have to militarily or directly intervene now that the USSR has collapsed. This countervalence clearly counts for less in the Middle East but counts for more elsewhere in the third world.

Anti-capitalist struggles in the post-colonial world will not, therefore, come to an end or phase out. They will, on the contrary, periodically resurface. But such struggles will face other and newer problems. If relative insulation of a post-revolutionary society from the world market is still necessary to secure a minimal level of decent human existence for everybody there is still a heavy price to be paid for such insulation. That is surely, one lesson of the 'socialist experience' of the last 70 and more years. Earlier assumptions of the Left about the possibility of at least more rapid and substantial industrialisation/modernisation through such insulation combined with democratic forms of planning needs serious re-examination. It may not even be tenable given the now much stronger connection between international flows and technology upgradation. It is not an answer to point to the *lack* of *truly* democratic forms of planning in the 'socialist' experience to date. The fact is that the left has still to make of 'democratic planning' something more than just an attractive slogan. In seeking to do so, it may well discover that there is an unavoidable trade-off between the requirements of productivity and those of minimising the impact of imperialism's enormous economic power through a strategy of relative insulation.

It may well be that the only effective answer or way to 'hold out' against such pressure lies not in the realm of economics but in the realm of politics. If the 'primacy of

economics' lies at the heart of imperialist power (the Soviet experiment was defeated by imperialism's superior productivity as much as if not more than by anything else) the best riposte perhaps lies in the assertion of the 'primacy of politics'. The model of a socialist alternative has to be reworked to mean, above all, a superior and advanced form of self-determination including in the economy, rather than a more 'productive' form of economic organisation. Democratisation and newer forms of popular participation and control over the economy as well must now be emphasised as never before as lying at the heart of the socialist project. This is to recover, build upon and go beyond the classical Marxist tradition. Only *more* democratic, and *more* ecologically respectful though *less* economically prosperous post-revolutionary societies in the third world have a chance of coping with contemporary imperialism and indeed inspiring the strongest confrontations against it from within.

Clearly, the time-scale in which such struggles and their possible success are to be envisioned must now be extended well beyond the calendar that framed the expectations of an older generation of radicals. This extension is an involuntary tribute to late capitalism's flexibility and productivity. But late capitalism's contradictions are so basic and damaging that it is almost inconceivable that the search not just by a few but by much larger social forces directly victimised by global capitalism, for a more humane alternative can ever end. If this is the the wider backdrop to the next few decades there is room within it for reasonable speculation over a more limited period about the likely political impact on the post-colonial world of the collapse of the USSR and all that went with it.

Non-alignment and Third World Struggles

Its general diplomatic consequence has been to render the concept of non-alignment nugatory for most third world elites. Even before the end of the Cold War the concept of non-alignment and the existence of a non-aligned bloc or movement (NAM) had but limited value. It was a foreign policy option for ruling third world elites which were largely

free to interpret it almost as flexibly as they wished provided a few very simple ground rules were respected. Its main ideological value was that it reasserted the principle of maximum national independence which even ruling elites engaged in bartering away their political and economic independence to imperialism found useful to uphold. Its main practical value was formal and diplomatic. A venue was created where different third world elites could (a) manoeuvre for diplomatic support in intra-NAM disputes; (b) play-off the East bloc versus the West for aid and largesse in return for suitable diplomatic postures; (c) provide limited diplomatic support for movements/struggles against the interests of one or the other bloc. In its earlier phase the NAM could add meaningful pressure to the decolonisation process and co-ordinate formal resistance of a declaratory kind to apartheid and racism.

The underlying weaknesses of the Third World Non-aligned Movement is best captured by the realisation that there was no such thing as a 'Third World', no such thing as 'non-alignment' and no such thing as a 'movement' unless frequent conferences and resolution-passing constituted a 'movement' in any meaningful sense of the term.

The NAM will clearly find it very difficult to survive. Its earlier rationale was already extremely weak. Only a handful of countries led by India could even claim with any seriousness to being 'reasonably non-aligned' from either bloc. As long as bloc rivalry survived, the NAM had a 'negative' rationale for its existence. With the end of the colonial era, the NAM never had nor was able to develop a positive rationale. Either it will survive at a level of inconsequential ceremony or it will pass away largely unlamented.

There are other graver consequences for the third world of the Soviet Union's collapse than its effect on the NAM. The real division within third world societies was and is between those which having undergone indigenous anti-capitalist revolutions (Indochina, Mongolia, N.Korea, Cuba and Nicaragua) were pursuing a non-capitalist if bureaucratically deformed path of development and the rest which were pursuing capitalist development in varying degrees of

closeness with imperialism. The former did enjoy significant national and political support from the USSR. That era is over and the consequences have been quite dramatic. In Kampuchea, Heng Samrin's rejection of 'socialism' has been co-ordinated with the return of Prince Sihanouk and the establishment of a new coalition government with no pretensions to pursuing an anti-capitalist programme of development.

In Vietnam, the essential dynamic is one of combining growing marketisation with one-party monolithism *a la* China. This has been called, perhaps aptly, "market Stalinism". Such is the growing alienation of the ruling bureaucracy because of corruption and lack of democratisation that the Vietnamese Communist Party is systematically squandering away that legacy of popular loyalty that it forged during its decades long struggle for national liberation and social transformation. Much the same can be said for Cuba except that its economic situation is perhaps the most desperate of all. Cuba under Castro is the USA's principal target and the USA aided by a triumphalist West Europe is now tightening economic and political screws as much as it can. The earlier era when Cuba could look for some support from social democrats in or out of power in some Western European countries, is over. The Cuban economy never got out of its deep dependency on the USSR and cannot now avoid paying the price of effective abandonment by its ally. However, the Cuban Revolution is in peril for reasons which have even more to do with one-party monolithism and lack of internal democracy. The enormous social advances of the Castro regime in areas like health, education and elimination of grinding poverty, plus the self-pride instilled by a Revolution defiantly made in America's backyard are real assets which could still ensure the survival of non-capitalist Cuba *provided* the Castro leadership can accept a socialist political pluralism. It is the refusal of the Castro leadership to stop linking the fate of the Cuban Revolution to the fate of his party and his own leadership that most imperils the Cuban Revolution. Certainly there is a risk that political democratisation can lead to popular demand for capitalist restoration. But it is

a risk that *has* to be taken. Socialism can neither survive nor prosper as a forcible implant.

Ironically, it is the Nicaragua Sandinistas that stand a better chance of survival precisely because of their commitment to institutionalising political pluralism. But if the Sandinistas are to withstand the temptations of becoming Latin American equivalents of European-style Social Democracy they will have to encourage the formation of organs of mass participation and control quite alien to the structures of liberal democracy. They will also have to take the plunge regarding asset socialisation. As the authentic representatives of an indigenous revolutionary tradition and practice they have a better chance than most of building on this legacy. Whether they will be able to do so in circumstances of prolonged isolation remains to be seen. North Korea's future was presaged in central Europe and in the fate of former East Germany. Abandoned by the ex-USSR, ignored by a China anxious after Tienanmen to mend fences with Western and Japanese sources of capital, and confronted by a Southern half where the contrast in economic performances is hardly in its favour, Pyongyan has little room for manoeuvre. National unification would in the long-term further consolidate the Korean economy. With the South rather than the North showing greater signs of making a democratic breakthrough, the likelihood of reunification on capitalist lines seems very strong. Whereas, German unification was effectively annexation of the East by the West, here the North Korean leadership, if it does not procrastinate for too long, may broker better terms for itself in a new dispensation. North Korea then, is marking time but either structural transformation from below (as in neighbouring Mongolia) or 'structural assimilation' with the South appears to be its destiny. The chances of a 'democratic socialist' third way frankly must be judged remote.

Of all the regions in the third world it is in Latin America that radical movements are perhaps least damaged by the Soviet collapse. Apart from Cuba, the ex-USSR did not invest heavily in this area where the USA has long had a dominant

say. The precondition, therefore, for any long-term survival of a radical struggle was its indigenous strength and independence from the US quite regardless of the interests or pre-occupations of the USSR or China. Latin America, the continent most insulated from East-West rivalry, has been affected the least by the fall-out of the West's victory in the Cold War. But that does not mean it has not been affected at all. It is certainly the changed international context that has played a major role in pushing the FMLN in El Salvador to seek a negotiated solution to the end of a civil war which neither side seemed capable of winning in the short run.

Crucial landmarks in this changed international context for the FMLN were the fall of the Berlin Wall, the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas, the US invasion of Panama, the offensive against Cuba, as well as the collapse of the Soviet Union. The signing of the strategic accords bringing a fragile peace only means that the conflict between the US-backed El Salvador right and centre against the FMLN-led left has shifted from the military to the more directly social and political plane. For the FMLN there has been a definite downward revision of its programmatic perspectives connected to its re-evaluation of the feasibility and scope of the revolutionary project brought about by the collapse of the Soviet and Eastern model and the general worldwide shift to the right. Sections of the FMLN leadership are now more willing than in the past to enter a 'collaborative' socio-economic project of reconstruction with former enemies, in the guise of some consensual or national governmental scheme. If the ending of the civil war is a step forward because it corresponds to popular wishes, this collaboration would be a step backwards because it enables the right (which has a clear-cut project of capitalist expansion) to utilise the prestige and authority of the FMLN for its own purposes. Nevertheless, the balance of forces is still such that the chances of a conservative restabilisation are not high.

In general, radical movements in Latin America will continue to rise and fall on their own account. Though this is not the case everywhere it is significant that the political

perspectives of many a Latin American left group is now well in advance of Castroism. In Brazil the PT has a programme that must rank as among the most advanced ever to have been produced by the international socialist movement. The PT both affirms the absolute necessity of democratic pluralism of a kind which is deeper and more popular than the existing liberal model, and affirms the absolute necessity of an anti-capitalist socio-economic transformation.

This arresting vision is backed by a workers' movement which is among the strongest in the world. However, recent travails within, the PT have made it weaker than at any time since the presidential elections when its charismatic leader, Lula, lost narrowly to his conservative opponent, Collor. While, objective conditions continue to favour a growth of the left, the latter, especially PT must get its act together. The situation in the ex-USSR and Eastern Europe is largely an irrelevancy in this regard.

Elsewhere in Africa, Asia and the Middle-East, three areas will bear close watching — South Africa, Palestine and the Philippines. The first two have definitely been affected by the dissolution of the USSR. The South African Communist Party is perhaps the politically most coherent formation with the ANC. It is growing and its influence is considerable. The SACP has always had close ties to Moscow. While its role within South Africa has insulated it organisationally from the collapse of the USSR, its ideological orientation has been further deflected to the right. This is part of a general trend everywhere of social democratisation of mass communist parties of the orthodox type. The CPI and CPI (M) in India are the two other notable examples of this trend in the third world. The SACP may be closer than ever before to a share in governmental power in South Africa but it is also further away than ever before from offering any alternative to the imperialist project of a South African capitalism without formal apartheid. The White minority bourgeoisie would still keep control of major centres of social and economic power but with growing space for an emerging and collaborative black bourgeoisie.

In the Middle East, the American led war on Iraq supported by the USSR and the Eastern European countries was the

most dramatic expression of what the changed international relationship of forces would mean for this region.

The Palestinian Resistance is isolated as never before since its emergence as an independent force in 1964. All talk of an East-West or Russian-US sponsored 'enduring peace' is politesse for the perpetration of a massive fraud on the Palestinians which may or may not be acceded to by the PLO. The formula put forward for 'lasting peace' is simple — recognition of Israel and an end to Arab-Israeli confrontation in return for which Syria (which lost the Golan Heights) and perhaps Jordan will be adequately recompensed while the Palestinians can have substantial political autonomy on the West Bank but *not* independence. However, this is one proposal which cannot succeed, such is the strength of commitment of Palestinians to complete freedom. But it will not do to deny that here also the timetable for achieving their intermediate or final goal, the 'two Palestine solution', has been extended by the dramatic turn of events since 1985 and especially after the American victory in the Gulf War. While the US and the West has established medium-term strategic control over the oil-rich Arab countries, it has not ensured even short-term political stability in the region nor 'solved' the Palestine issue which lies at the very core of that problem of instability.

In the Philippines as in Brazil, it is largely the Philippines Communist Party's strategic and tactical abilities to adequately respond to changing internal developments that will determine its prospects for growth, not any fall-out from the collapse of the USSR. Here again the crucial question is the ideological-programmatic one. What convincing vision of an alternative does the PCP have to offer? How committed will it be to basic principles of democracy? Already there is a difference between the PCP and the legal mass organisations of which it is an important component. These mass organisations have a developed notion of democratic goals and practices that is not essentially instrumentalist. The PCP is still restrained by its Stalinist-Maoist past. Perhaps the healthiest evolution will be the emergence of the mass organisations rather than the PCP as the chief centres of opposition to quasi-democratic rule from Manila.

Elsewhere in the third world, revolutionary movements of a 'critical mass' do not exist. India remains a special case. It is the most important of the third world countries. It is virtually unique in having the best post-war record of sustained (barring the brief period of Emergency) liberal democracy. It has the other two mass communist parties of the orthodox type (besides the South African Communist party) which are either stable or growing. The peculiar conjuncture of backward capitalism (a huge number of absolutely impoverished) with an enduring if weak bourgeois democracy has helped to give rise to a peculiar left party, the CPM. The CPM is the only party that is both Stalinist in its ideology and internal organisation and increasingly social democratic in its practice. Despite its Stalinism and despite the CPI's loss of moorings (it has rejected Stalinism but does not know how far to go along the road of social democratisation), the mainstream left in India has a chance to grow. If it fails to do so in the coming decade it will almost certainly decline. This would be the 'delayed' effect of the dissolution of the USSR.

But in the short term the Indian left, if it is bold enough, can seize the leadership in two crucial struggles — an aggressive defence of secularism and attack on communalism; an equally aggressive campaign against the country's new economic turn. The dramatic shift in economic policy and the rapid opening up to the world market dominated by imperialism is likely to polarise Indian society as never before. Whether the CPI and CPM can seize their opportunities remains to be seen.

The evolving Indian situation is, of course, in keeping with the general pattern of a global dualism fostered by imperialism in its latest phase. This imperialism virtually guarantees a role for the radical Left in the post-colonial world today and tomorrow. But this Left must not just be able to oppose, it must be able to confidently propose. Socialism is far from being the Common Sense of our times. And if the future for it is not as bleak as capitalism's acolytes make out, neither should socialism's protagonists encourage too facile an optimism about the future. Much hard work needs to do done.

References

1. The term 'Third World' or 'post-colonial world' is, of course, quite misleading in suggesting a homogeneity that does not exist. However, there seems little option but to use them as loose equivalents for 'backward' non-OECD and non-Soviet bloc countries. China is not here included as a 'Third World' country.
2. K. Waltz's 'three images' was one of the earliest efforts to justify this lack of interest in such theorisation.
3. R. Keohane (1984), *After Hegemony*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press) was the classic statement of the neo-Realist case.
4. See Fred Halliday's use of this felicitous definition and his fine critique of Realism in F. Halliday, "State and Society in International Relations: A Second Agenda" in *Millennium*, Vol. 16, No.2.
5. Conservative and liberal thinkers in the West categorically reject the notion of 'imperialism' and all that, they believe goes with it. The notion of imperialism is seen as involving inescapably an economic reductionism. To take one example of imperialism: US foreign policy behaviour since 1945; Marxists, they argue, must commit to the view that this behaviour be traced to 'underlying' or 'fundamental' economic compulsions. Such compulsions can only be protection and expansion of corporate USA's economic interests, or the US states' requirement of a dependent and a relatively, if not absolutely impoverished, third world.
   It is not difficult to show that anti-Communism has been the dominant factor (not economic compulsion) behind the US government's post-war geo-strategic thinking and actions. Also, corporate USA's economic involvement with most of the third world is not of a nature as to lend much succour to dependency theorists. Furthermore, the argument that the North 'exploits' the south economically is taken, when being most charitable to Marxists, as unproven. The Marxist notion of imperialism is therefore seen as theoretically misleading and worthless.
   Liberals differ from Conservatives in conceding that the US while not an imperialist power has been an 'imperial' one. But the compulsions to such behaviour are seen as unavoidable. They arise from the logic of 'power politics' in an anarchic international arena of competing nation-states. *Any* major, big or great power has to behave imperially. Where imperialism

suggests 'abuses' of power, imperial carries a more laudatory connotation of concern with the 'responsibilities' of power. Conservatives make a distinction between control, domination and influence, arguing that the US rarely controls, rarely dominates but certainly and frequently influences other states. Similarly, they distinguish between the 'perpetuation'. The latter phrase is supposed to describe an *intentional* relation between doer and sufferer, and cannot exist as an objective or 'abstract' systemic phenomenon.

These critics have been abetted by the fact that despite the existence of an accepted though often unclearly articulated core meaning, 'imperialism' has been defined and elaborated in ways, e.g., by dependency theorists which has only given ammunition to these critics. The concept of imperialism is more subtle and richer in the research agenda it inspires than it is given credit for. For example, in contrast to dependency theorists, other Marxists have argued for recognising the flexibility of the concept of imperialism and for recognising that in different phases of capitalist development in metropolitan countries there are variant effects on inter-state and inter-elite/inter-capitalist relations in the global system which are not captured by the rigid scheme imposed by dependency theorists. To anticipate, this writer has argued as much and is not alone in doing so.

The core idea that symbiotically links capitalism with imperialism is precise and irrefutable. Capitalism by the very nature of its accumulation process must, if it is to prosper, reach a stage where it has to expand its operations beyond the nation-state onto the global arena. It has a 'universalising dynamic' that is economically rooted and which is qualitatively different because of this from the 'universalising dynamic' of its principal opponent — socialism, both in the undistorted form of theory and in the more distorted form of actually existing Communism. The bureaucratised command or 'planned' economies could only exist as such *within* the framework of the nation-state. Socialism's 'universalising dynamic' is political and ideological in character, not economic.

Imperialism is the name given to this 'universalising dynamic' of advanced capitalism and can be expressed in a variety of formulations, e.g., Lenin's. It does not follow that all, or even most, major forms that this 'dynamic' takes in a given period must always and everywhere be ultimately reducible to some core economic cause or compulsion. It does *not* follow that

explanation of, for example, US foreign policy behaviour since 1945 must give primacy to economic compulsion. It is an ideological consensus of anti-Communism among elite decision-makers and decision-shapers that has primarily, though not consistently, motivated American actions on the ground since 1945.

But this is precisely the point. Why this enormous shaping power and pressure of anti-communism on imperialist behaviour? Because Communism was and remains the first and only *systemic* rival to capitalism and its associated political and ideological structures in the West. This rivalry is total because of a systemic incompatibility which rules out convergence of the two antagonists. Though there can be hiatus and regulation/moderation of the conflict, the rivalry is permanent and can only end with the final systemic victory of one over the other. The key sources of this incompatibility are the opposing principles on which there is to be collective organisation of economic life in the two systems.

It is also true that imperialism carries an undeniably pejorative connotation because the workings of an imperialist system are said to perpetuate 'structured inequalities'. These inequalities exist independently of the *intentions* of individual capitalists or state mangers. The 'unfairness' or 'injustice' come from the negative consequences of this operative structure of global economic and political relationships. If *most or much* of the 'third world' could reach the industrialisation levels of the OECD bloc, i.e., close the gap, then the concept of imperialism would undoubtedly lose much of its force and value though an evaluatively and emotionally neutral notion of imperialism could possibly survive.

Viewed in this way, the key poser is why has the gap [relative industrialisation levels] between the advanced capitalist world and the third world not only not closed or even narrowed, but increased? Exceptional performances, e.g., Asian Tigers as long as these do not spread to become a substantial minority among third world countries or cover at least a near majority of its population do not amount to an effective rebuttal. Much energy among Marxists and their critics has thus centred at on the 'riddle of development' for late industrialisers. Marxist users of the concept of imperialism do not have to argue the thesis that advanced capitalist countries or multinationals thrive as a result of the underdevelopment of the third world, i.e., that their prosperity *requires* the impoverishment of the third world. It is enough to argue that the gap cannot in the

main be closed given the nature and compulsions of the OECD dominated global system. Current OECD efforts to organise global trade and investment patterns (GATT/MTO) in their own favour, to do the same in respect of bio-technology and environment protection conventions make a mockery of the claim that there is no institutionalised or structural unfairness in the relations between richer and poorer countries. Conservatives and Liberals, if they reject the concept of imperialism, have a harder brief to handle. They have to argue (a) that the blame for the relative failure of third world countries must rest on the elites and peoples of these countries themselves and not on the nature of the global system itself or on the role of the metropolitan countries and capitalists in it; and (b) that the metropolitan countries will move towards closing the gap. Even if Marxists are not able to satisfy rigorously enough the intellectual requirements for decisively explaining why the gap cannot be closed, the *fact* that the gap overall has not significantly narrowed in over half-a-century, and shows little sign of so doing in the future, means that the onus of proof rests much more heavily on Conservatives and Liberals. The balance of historical plausibility on the issue of imperialist oppression rests with the Marxists so far.

The experience of the now disintegrating Second World also suggests that 'socialist' delinkage from the global capitalist economy did not enhance these 'Second World' countries' relative position on the industrialisation ladder vis-a-vis the OECD countries. What it certainly did do was to qualitatively enhance the socio-economic conditions of the lower strata vis-a-vis the upper strata in these societies. 'Socialist' regimes were able to carry out an egalitarian internal redistribution of resources which compares favourably with the economic record of OECD and third world countries in this respect. (See G. Arrighi, "The Rich and the Poor", *New Left Review*, no. 189 Sept.-Oct. 1991.)

6. 'Intensive' and 'extensive' can be used to distinguish strictly between 'domestic' from 'foreign' or more loosely (without damage) to distinguish accumulation within the advanced countries from those involving other countries.
7. 'Monopoly'. This is the last word in the "latest phase of capitalist development...." (p. 653).

"But capitalism only became capitalist imperialism at a definite and very high state of its development .... Economically, the main thing in this process is the displacement of capitalist free competition by capitalist monopoly" (p. 699).

"If it were necessary to give the briefest possible definition of imperialism we should have to say that imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism" (p. 700).

"As we have seen, the deepest economic foundation of imperialism is monopoly" (p. 708).

"We have seen that in its economic essence imperialism is monopoly capitalism" (p. 726).

With this as his core idea Lenin *deduced* the other "basic features" from an empirically rooted concrete analysis of the imperialism of his time.

"We must take special note of the four principal types of monopoly, or principal manifestations of monopoly capitalism, which are characteristic of the epoch we are examining" (p. 726). Thus in Lenin's analysis, monopoly "stimulated the seizure of the most important sources of raw material" ; it "sprung from the banks"; it "has grown out of colonial policy". Where Lenin can certainly be faulted is in his assumption that these would be the characteristics of the 'epoch' as a whole, i.e., in not realising or emphasising that within the same epoch (of imperialism) the "principal manifestations" of monopoly capital could be different in different periods or phases.

All references above are taken from Lenin (1975), *Selected Works*, Vol. I (Moscow: Progress Publishers).

8. Harry Magdoff twenty years ago, correctly pointed out the folly of such an approach, ironically in a seminar paper presented in India. It is worth quoting him in full : "A second obstacle to the development of a satisfactory modern theory of imperialism derives from the opposite tendency: the compression Lenin's theory (or a hodge-podge from Lenin, Luxembourg and Hobson) into a rigid model, not too different in form, even if different in content, from the kind bourgeois economists delight in. The purpose of such compression is to find the key to the necessity of imperialism, a magic secret formula, as for example: the drive to export capital, pressured by a capital surplus or the declining rate of profit; or the inability to realize surplus value within existing capitalist markets; or imperialist expansion as the way out of crisis. It is true enough that each of these factors have been involved, to a greater or lesser extent, in different situations and at different times. But the selection of any of them as the prime mover of the new imperialism, or of the old for that matter, results in a mechanical formula that proves incapable of encompassing or explaining the facts of history. It should not be necessary to point out, except for the all-too-frequent distortions both by academic critics and sympathetic

expounders, that Lenin himself never engages in such formula-construction games". Published as "Imperialism: A Historical Survey", *Monthly Review*, 24:1 May 1972.

9. For a recent, well argued presentation of the case for looking at 'international class' forces, for pressures minimising inter-imperialist rivalry, and against exaggerating American decline see S. Gill (1991), *American Hegemony and the Trilateral Commission* (Cambridge University Press). One need not go all the way with Gill's own neo-Gramscian framework of international hegemony through reconstitution of a 'global historical bloc'.
10. See S. Gill, op. cit.; Susan Strange has been among the most forceful and consistent exponents of this minority view. S. Strange (1986), *Casino Capitalism* (Oxford: Blackwell) and (1988) *State and Markets* (London: Pinter).
11. N. Poulantzaz (1975), *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (London: Verso).
12. The Japanese 'miracle' was the precondition for the other smaller 'miracles' in providing both a rapidly expanding market capable of absorbing East Asian exports and Japanese capital looking for outlets.
13. There have been serious negative consequences of liberalisation. Mortality rates have declined, inequality has worsened, health standards have deteriorated and gender-related discrimination in the provision of public and private goods has grown.

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