



Summerhill

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Horizon, Elsewhere and the Post-Colonial Habitation

TAPAS K ROY CHAUDHURY*

Horizon is the ocular certification of the conceptual and of frontiers, the farthest end of the lived experience, or even beyond the empiricized, where the post-colonial habitates a no-man's land for a private space. It is the disruption of the marginal borders, particularly of those who are estranged, fugitive, migrants, diasporic, asyllumed, and so much for a trope in the post-colonial discourse. It is an engagement with conceptual boundaries, erected by the urgency for homeliness of the colonial power, or for some privacy in the anonymous diasporic space, as well as the boundaries of meaning. The metaphorically fenced, therefore, posits a pent-land analogy, which is appropriated to nurture marginalized history to underpin, by the narratives of difference, how the *core* is or is to be different from the periphery. Perceiving the horizon beyond the boundaries, presumably, in *elsewhere* than the ambivalence and the hybridity, is one of the major post-colonial theoretical enterprises today. Edward Said has negotiated with boundaries in terms of 'the fetishization and relentless celebration of 'difference'. . . seen as an ominous trend. . . .' Horizon, hence, argues for an uneasy consciousness of individuals and communities, beyond 'not we' or 'not us', being transported into the domain of non-identitarianism. A good part of the post-colonial literature has no better issue to address than the litany of appropriated history, exiled space.

The boundary, in its post-coloniality, is a special metaphor, which is used to state 'the distance between cultures', 'the limits of reason'. Boundaries are viewed as constructs; modernity which is trumpeted as the self-realization of the West has produced 'others', in its imperial discourses, to legitimate its surrogate claims in its cultural encounter with the 'not we'. In colonial representation the boundary of signification has emerged with almost 'inviolable certainty, as it is necessary for the assertion of Europe's presence. Special thinking, consequently, continues to operate as metonymic of racial, political, cultural power within colonialism. Jacobus Coetzee in his *Dusklands* pictures the absurdity of an ambiguous existence of the one who habits beyond free spaces.

There he stands, inhabiting the prescribed place four paces away and three feet down, resignation is in the air, we are now going to live through gifts of tobacco and words of peace, direction to water and warnings against brigands, demonstrations of firearms, murmur of awe, and eventually a lifetime of the pad-pad-pad of straight line, the transformation of savage into enigmatic follower, and the obscure movement of the soul (weariness, relief, incuriosity, terror) that comes with this familiar transformation, we feel as a fated pattern and condition of life.

The trope of seeing is connected to the metaphor of space within which the colonial subject is separated, defined,

demarcated. The space that is sought to be privatized now is the return of the repressed who intends to write back the West in their performative cultural immediacies. Before divided horizons, the 'erstwhile' prior to the worldly alterity and the interminable reworking of power and politics that constitute the marginal's sense of being is the *elsewhere* that the pre-slave of Phyllis Wheatley, an 18th century African slave girl interwove in the lineament of *Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral* as an ambivalence of a mediated self:

Taws mercy brought me from my pagan land,
Taught my blighted soul to understand
That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too:
Once I redemption neither sought nor know.
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
'Their color is a diabolic die'.
Remember, *Christions, Negroes*, black as *Cain*.

It has presumably raised a serious question on how the races are interlinked with nations, the imprisoned space liberated into the textual space of the unmediated horizontality of existence. The *Black Atlantic* incidentally is reiterative; it did not exhaust in Wheatley, from Wheatley to Du Bois to Delany to Paul Gilroy, it has re-incarnated to lay its claim on its appropriated space. Du Bois in his *Dusk of Dawn* has engaged in an Atlantic

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peregrination, being conquered by his surrogation against the tidal waves of heroic nation-building activity in his *erstwhile* whose memory he has surrendered to ambivalence of his present. It is in fact a severe theoretical scrutiny by which the post-colonial intends to suture the *Black Atlantic* across its temporality. Delany, of course, has considerably redeemed himself from the paradox of the pre-existing and the existential to configure his marginality and its recovery of self. So, he could be so unequivocal as to say: We must 'make' an 'issue', 'create' an 'event', and 'establish' a 'national position' for Ourselves; and never may expect to be respected as men and women, until we have undertaken, some fearless, bold, and adventurous deeds of daring-contending against every odds-regard-less of any consequence.

The rhetoric of the creation of an event has persisted, and in its urgency it has engendered multiple linearity to be uttered. Chinua Achube, while crafting *Things Fall Apart*, has predicated a way to experience reality where the boundary, which was once interminable, is diminished. The idea has been centred on the anterior; the *egwugwu*, the ancestral spirit of the community, in human recreation, dissolves the frontiers between the human actors and the spirit *per se*. He wrote:

Okonkwo's wives and perhaps other women as well, might have noticed that the second *egwugwu* had the springly walk of Okonkwo. And they might also have noticed that Okonkwo was not among the titled men and elders who sat behind the row of *egwugwu*. But if they thought these things they kept them within themselves. The *egwugwu* with the springly walk was one of the dead fathers of the clan. He looked terrible with smoked raffia body, a huge wooden face painted white except for round hollow eyes and the charred teeth that were as big as a man's fingers. On his head two powerful horns.

Though Achube appears to have reinstalled a new boundary in an ethnographic irony the fact that 'The land of the living was not far removed from the domain of the ancestors' is an act of relocation in the history of the compulsive existence of their pre-history. This capacity to control representation is itself a fundamental horizontal practice; nevertheless, horizontality is installed as a cultural product of the text through the literary representation of the pre-colonial cultures. This vision of 'pre-colonial' is one form of horizontality achieved in the post-colonial discourse and the European ontology. But there is another way to breakdown the various boundaries of the natural world, between the foreground and the background, the animal and human, as suggested by Les Murray in her *Equanimity*:

From the otherworld of action and media, this interleaved continuing plane is hard to focus: we are looking into the light- It makes some smile some grimace. More natural to look at the birds about the street, their life that is greedy, pinched, courageous and prudential as any on these bricked tree-mingled miles of settlements, to watch the unceasing on-off grace that attends their every movement. The same grace moveless in the shapes of trees and complex in our selves and fellow walkers: we see it is indivisible and scarcely willed. That lights us from the incommensurable we sometimes glimpse, from being trapped in the point (bird minds and ours are so pointedly visual): a field all foreground, and equally all background like a painting of equality. O infinite detailed extent like God's attention. Where nothing is diminished by perspective.

The alliance that Murray intends to achieve between the equanimity of perception and the indigenous form of representation is controversial, but that it is with boundary she has been engaged is indeed quiet panegyric to horizontality. The centrality of the issue is what space to inhabit when the marginals invade the diasporic, exiled, estranged boundaries with the contrivance of the horizon. Interestingly, the writer in the borderlands negotiates the fragile space, fragility imputed by their unique observation of porosity, some what directly, though, they cannot decide if their space is the *pre-existing* or the *elsewhere* which can be inhabited securely. Gloria Anzaldua attempted a tentative answer:

When I write it feels like I'm carving bone. It feels like I'm creating my own face, my own heart a Nahuatl concept. My soul makes itself through the creative act. It is constantly remaking and giving birth to itself through my body. It is this learning to live with *la Coatlicue* that transforms living in the Borderlands from a nightmare into a numinous experience. It is always a path/ state to something else.

In all difficulties which the *pre-existing* encounters to negotiate with the colonially existed, an yearning is expressed for the *elsewhere* to be found in the twilight of the horizon. It is the metonymic of the post-colonial where the innocent habitation in a home is intimidated not only by the inviolability of the fences but also by the ambiguity of the location. So, it is often found that the architecture of varandah is used as the metonym for a no-man's land where the transculturation of the 'insider' and 'outsider' may take place in an apparently non-negotiable boundaries. The metaphor of the contact zone suggests that the discourse is replaced by a counter-discourse in which the very identities of the 'inner' and the 'outer' become negotiable. Its alterity, the imposition of a home on an alien land by the colonizer, is the arrogant 'extra-

territoriality' which is flaunted to demarcate the 'no entry' to those who own the land in tradition and in contemporary legality. In *The Ancestor Game*, Alex Miller introduced Lien to extraterritoriality as '... the continued jurisdiction of their country of origin over foreign nationals resident in the International Settlement ... Did this mean, then, she had wished to know, that these people had travelled to the far side of the world from their ancestral home-lands and yet had managed to remain at home?' Under the circumstances the metaphorical varandah, though emotionally unsafe to live, furnishes the only place for post-colonial habitation where the cultural discourse of the 'inside' and the marginalized 'outside' is less intimidatingly conducted.

So, the question remains how is the home to be inhabited, and what is it that is the authentic home of the estranged. Tom Morrison has struggled with the dispensation of the Western epistemology to liberate the home from its inherited frontierities. In his *Paradise* he pronounces for the black Americans:

This their home; mine too. Home is not a little thing.

I'm not saying it is. But can't you even imagine what it must feel like to have a true home? I don't mean heaven. I mean a real earthly home. Not some fortress you bought and built up and have to keep everybody locked in or out. A real home. Not someplace you went to and invaded and slaughtered people to get. Not some place you claimed, snatched because you got the guns. Not some place you stole from the people living there, but your own home, where if you go back past your great-great grandparents, past theirs, and theirs, past the whole of Western history, past the beginning of organised knowledge, past pyramids and poisoned bows, and back to when rain was new, before plants forget they could sing and birds thought they were fish, back when God said Good! Good! – there right there where you know your own people were born and lived and died.

Imagine that. Pat. That Place. Who was God talking to if not to my people living in my home?

Morisson has espoused a theoretical legitimacy to reconstitute to Richard a home which he has never lived, but its constitutive being neither the anticident nor the elsewhere has landed him into the unsuspecting freak of the post-colonial argument. If it is all where your own people were born and lived and died, it could be no more than the reiteration of the carefully fenced space, which for its rejection of others, is the same sordid space whose other side is settled by the colonizer with their extraterritorial proclamations. It is a paradox of two modes of habitation, two different ways of being in the same world. Contesting marginality is a legitimate enterprise of the estranged, but finding no better term to do so than recapitulating the argument of fences whether colonial or post-colonial is the resignation of an ideology. The diasporic probably can do no better than that. Boundaries originate in imperial imagination to regulate cultural space of the colonized; but the potentiality of the post-colonial space, unless it is inhabited, is wasted in its invasion by the imperial imagination. It is also equally true that the post-colonial space cannot be settled, as long as the transcendence of the cultural horizon is not materialized, in a rejection of the geopolitical, ethnic, cultural cartography. David Malouf has tried to narrate in *Remembering Babylon* how different it could be to inhabit the post-colonial space from that the habits of European dwelling dictate. The theoretical rejection of the cartography of divisions is the background on which can be foregrounded the conceptual and cultural fences in an underpinning of horizontal consciousness.

Remembering Babylon narrates the sojourn of Gemmy, a white castaway whom the aboriginals nurtured beyond civilization. Gemmy has once hovered

like a bird on the fences which enclosed a space habited by a small Scottish Settlement in Queensland, and in his rendezvous he has first negotiated with the enclosure of civilization. Malouf describes:

Out of a world over there, beyond the no-man's land of the swamp, that was the abode of every thing savage and fearsome, and since it lay so far beyond experience, not just their own but their parents' too, of nightmare rumours, superstitions and all that belonged to Absolute Dark.

The Absolute Dark is the conceptual contestation of the frontierity between the savagery and civilization, between the colonial and the colonized, the home and the world. Gemmy unwittingly aims to reconcile his authentic discourse with the one mediated by imperialism. His encounter with both in a state of simultaneity reveals a universe of densely stratified multiple discourses.

It was a question of covering the space between them, of recovering the connection that would put the words back in his mouth, and catch the creature, the spirit or whatever it was, that lived in the dark, the creatures, the spirit, or whatever it was, that lived in the dark of him, and came up briefly to torment or tease but could be tempted, he now saw, with what these people ate and the words they used.

Gemmy's historical subject hood of his aboriginal discourse is now interrogated by his being on the fence of civilization. The boundary demarcating discourses suddenly turned out to be so porous that horizontality, as a loud theoretical rejection of all the claims of inalienable frontierities, has emerged as the logical retrieval of the cultures from their binding paradoxes. The movement from being out of historical subject hood to be within the subjectivity of history is therefore a matter of serious strategic interest in the post-colonial discourse. Gemmy is the paradigmatic other of Kim whose childhood history of Indianness was the pre-history of his

European adulthood, narrative of boundaries culturally fissured and horizontality having travelled through it at ease was suddenly repaired by the discourse of imperialism to grant subject hood to Kim on the notion of 'race'. For Gemmy too the question remains; though he started out white, had he remained white? Can he loose it? The binarism of 'black' and 'white' is the comfortable identity which has been appropriated by colonialism to signify the otherness of the 'other'. Gemmy seeks to violate the frontier edicts by his transgression, because:

You meet at last in a terrifying equality that strips the last rags from your soul and leaves you so far out on the edge of yourself that your fear how is that you may never get back.

It was the mixture of monstrous strangeness and unwelcome likeness that made Gemmy Fairley so disturbing to them, since at any moment he could show either one face or the other; as if he were always standing there at one of those meetings, but in his case willingly, and the encounter was an embrace.

For Gemmy in as much as for child Kim the question continues to exist; can there be a white Aboriginal? For Kim the answer has been an unmitigated 'no'. The white face was finally shown, because without it the foundation of imperialism which has been laid on the racial metonym for demarcation will be weakened. The entire past of Kim, the Indian summer, has been abrogated with all its authentic existence as a strange nightmare of a cultural fugitive. 'The East is East and the West is West' is the appropriate imperial rhetoric which has to be engaged to reclaim the civilization from the invasion of its aboriginality. Gemmy's hybridity is also oppositional. It may seek to subvert but in its subversiveness it evidences the oppositionality of the horizontality discourse of post-colonialism.

Though Malouf's novel offers a different kind of horizontality which

intends to modify the rigidity of opposition that a post-colonial fiction normally posits, but the general trend to 'write back' remains the basic argument in this enterprise. Coetzee's *Foe* which is symptomatic of 'writing back' to Defoe's imperial edict *Robinson Crusoe* is an espousal of *alterity*, an alterity that is grievously searched to retort the hegemony of the 'Great Tradition' of empire. It is a discourse that questions the existing, the enclosed and the codified by offering discursive modes that are fluid, almost indefinable and continually renewable. Coetzee has decided to foreground the battle for the conquest of the identity of difference in a narrative of indigeneness. 'Indegenous', culturally legitimate and legally valid for its operationality, is the counter-point with which the imperial discourse aimed to marginalize it to the farthest extremity of its conceptual habitation. In this powerful enterprise of rejection the voices from the margin grow ever stronger, ever more intelligible without even a limb of articulation, the lost self of Susan and the cannibal's marginality of languageless pre-history, which like Friday can only breathe the sound of the islands. Cruso is said to have uttered once. 'The world is full of islands', but very unsuspectingly he has also given voices to the multiplicity of discourses which each one of his islands, as metaphor, signals. Cruso has contrived a discourse to appropriate the marginality of Friday, until Susan landed, to construct his hut which he pompously calls his 'castle' emponymized for imperial power and hierarchic distantiation. A sequestration has been thoughtfully achieved by:

A fence, which a gate that turned on leather hinges, completed an encampment in the shape of triangle which Cruso termed his castle. Within the fence, protected from the apes, grew a patch of wild butter lettuce. This lettuce, with fish and birds' eggs, formed our sole diet in the island. . . .

The hut, ringed with stakes like a

stockaded fort, defends Cruso's private space, because the space for the 'other', space of the marginal, the shifted indogenous (the apes, cannibals and castaways) is public, which has to be gazeable to the hegemonic scrutiny. He inscribes on that enclosed privacy the visible presence of the colonizer; Susan's silent diseant on claims of adequacy, because something more is needed to evidence their arrival at the periphery of the world is refused by Cruso. 'Nothing is forgotten . . . Nothing I have forgotten is worth the remembering' is the patented language of authority, but Susan contests, which is also the discourse of the marginal that:

You are mistaken! I do not wish to dispute, but you have forgotten much, and with every day that passes you forget more! There is no shame in forgetting: it is our nature to grow old and pass away.

To this Cruso has responded with the first-order subjecthood, the checkmate *I*, while other requirements, as originations of the gendered second-order subjecthood of Friday and the feminine third-order subjecthood of Susan, are incongruent to the discourse of the *imperium*. The imperial discourse has been continued by Cruso in levelling the terraces, walling them with stones dug out of earth to prepare the 'text' on which others, the invaders like him, can inscribe their 'signs', their 'alphabet' and thereby 'write' a meaningful story. Susan cannot share the overwhelming confidence of the imperial will to be the single authentic historian of the enterprise of appropriation. So Susan feels that the island is never still, it seems to gently slip into the waves.

When I lay down to sleep that night I seemed to feel the earth sway beneath me. I told myself it was memory of the rocking of the ship coming back unbidden. But it was not so; it was the rocking of the island itself as it floated on the sea. I thought: It is a sign I am becoming an island-dweller. I am forgetting what it is to live on the mainland. I stretched out my arms and laid my palms on the earth, and, yes, the rocking persisted, the rocking of the island as it

sailed through the sea and the night bearing into the future its freight of gulls and sparrows and fleas and apes and castaways, all unconscious save me. I fell asleep smiling. I believe it was the first time I smiled since I embarked for the New World.

The narration, presumably, is that of a movement of the imperial discourse being spilled over by the post-colonial discourse of the questioning marginals. It is a movement, which necessarily eclipses memories, erasing the strong, long-established image of a closed space and a linear and stable temporality. Consequently, it imposes the mobile dialectic of different moments and diverse types of temporality: Cruso's linear time, Susan's female, repetitive time; Friday's pre-verbal, indecipherable, native time. It is also time of the post-colonial future. Through her sudden perception of the movement of the island Susan understands that, along with her biologically determined identity, another is being constituted, which also has temporal implications. It is indispensable for Susan to know herself, her own personal story, to construct her own identity and to make her own choices, even if this only means deciding what to recount of her own experience.

I am not a story, Foe. I may impress you as a story because I began my account of myself without preamble, slipping overboard into the water and striking out of the shore. But my life did not begin in the waves. There was life before the water . . . All of which makes up a story I do not choose to tell. I choose not to tell it because to no one, not even to you, do I owe proof that I am a substantial being with a substantial history in the world. I choose rather to tell of the island, of myself and Cruso and Friday and what we three did there; for I am a free woman who asserts her freedom by telling her story according to her own desire.

Understandably, Susan's narrative is the rejection of the third order statehood of a tortured feminine self; she seeks to

reclaim her authorship and to securely found it on her assertion to operate her *will*, but in the process she had also to contend with silence, the silence of 'unspoken words', the silence of 'sights concealed'. Susan is verbal which has privileged her to state her assertion, but Friday, the second order pre-verbal statehood, who has already had endowed his silence with a gesture of articulation, is also staking claims of his historical subjectivity. It is in Susan's intense dialogue with Foe that the sound of silence could be heard. Foe continues:

I said the heart of the story . . . but I should have said the eye, the eye of the story. Friday rows his log of woods across the dark pupil or the dead socket of an eye staring up at him from the floor of the sea. He rows across it and is safe. To us he leaves the task of descending into that eye. Otherwise, like him, we sail across the surface and come ashore none the wiser, and resume our old lives, and sleep without dreaming, like babes.

Foe has decoded the silence and Susan tries to read Friday with her sense of responsibility, 'it is for us to open Friday's mouth and hear what it holds; silence, perhaps, or a roar, like the roar of a seashell held to the ear'. Towards the end of the narrative Friday's silence has been fully deciphered; out of his silence a *meaning* has been retrieved that in his subterranean marginality Friday is the eternal fluvial of civilization, a quiet defiance of his indignity and the indignity of those who have been pushed to the brink of placelessness by an unfeeling territoriality. Coetzee almost poetically writes:

But this is not a place of words. Each syllable, as it comes out, is caught and filled with water and diffused. This is a place where bodies are their own signs. It is the home, Friday.

He turns and turns till he lies at full length, his face to my face. The skin is tight across the bones, his lips are drawn back. I pass a fingernail across his teeth, trying to find a way in. His mouth opens. From inside him

comes a slow stream, without breath, without interruption. It flows up through his body and out upon me; it passes through the cabin, through the wreck; washing the cliffs and shores of the island, it runs northward and southward to the ends of the earth. Soft and cold, dark and unending, it beats against my eyelids, against the skin of my face.

It is precisely the *non-being* of the island, the subalterns on the margins of empire whose silence is not defeated by the archaeology of a noisy centrality, is the principal actor on the centrestage of Coetzee's 'writing back'. It is in this new speech act the Fridays make a radical creative space which affirms and sustains their subjectivity, which gives them a new location from which to articulate their sense of the world.

Further, the entire issue is belatedly felt to centre around the concepts of 'place' and 'habitation'. Can the marginal inhabit a place which satisfies *place-ness*? There is probably no better conceptual arsenal to negotiate with the intractable question of *place-ness* than 'habitation' as the strategy to address the problem of the current universality and also partly anonymity of the Western representation of place. 'Where is my place' roused by the indeterminacy of the place offered/proposed to be offered by the post-colonial settlement arguments has intricately the issue in its studied silence to answer the other question, 'where do I belong to'? The question of belonging bothers as long as *belonging* is despised as an intangible emotional captivity, or it is not regarded as a serious statement of identity as well as a means for the transformation of the conditions of one's life. The conceptual shift from spatiality to 'place-ness' has been necessitated to be a shift from empty space to human and social space can obtain its material and ideological conditions of *place-ness* in a densely woven network of ethnic, cultural and historical belonging only. So, the urgency to search for the roots takes

precedence upon other conditions of habitation. Sally Morgan's novel *My Place* and later Amitav Goshe's novel *Search for Roots* are indeed a quest for some physical and cultural locations to confidently refer to the hidden identities. But it is also an irony of colonial existence that though Morgan has traced the ancestry to Corunna Downs, the return to it is stiffly terraced by colonial displacement. Corunna Down, Sally's 'my place', the object of unchanging pre-colonial identity is not just a post-colonial location, a postal address for mere habitational attestation, it is nurtured by various physical and imaginative environments. In the earlier part of the novel the reader can explore from Sally's grandmother the way of inhabiting space that enables one to transform it, to own it, to make it an extension of one's self. Significantly Sally has been asked to sit on the step and be very quiet;

Suddenly, the yard filled with a high trilling sound. My eyes searched the trees. I couldn't see that bird, but his call was there. The music stopped as abruptly as it had begun. Nan smiled at me, 'Did you hear him? Did you hear the bird call'?

'I heard him Nan'. I whispered in awe.

It is a way of inhabiting Corunna Down, which makes it Nan's own; it dwells in a space outside location, in the imaginative *place-ness* which in the sense of being has carefully nurtured her sense of belonging. In fact, it is a way of being more than location that securely installs the idea of habitation. For Nan 'my place' suggests an inherited way of physical and imaginative habitation which authenticates her Aboriginality for her identity. The gift of being transforms into belonging a location, a human space. But the critical point in the discourse is could Sally retrieve 'my place' from the obliteration of the colonial a-historicity? bell hooks proposes that for a diasporic or estranged people, in particular for those dislocated in one way or the other by

the historic dislocation of colonization, 'Home is that place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference'. It is a strange way of recovering 'boundary' for 'my place'. Paradoxically, even Coetzee who has contested boundaries in his *Foe* as the legacy of hegemony, which has disclaimed not only legality of authorship and along with that the liberty of imagination also finds boundaries in a previous novel necessary for the civilizing project. Indeed the trope of boundary has become inextricable from the trope of seeing in Western epistemology. Boundary, as a metaphor, has a strong presence within the discourse or spatiality. Its rejection does not constitute *place-ness*. Its acceptance does not transform a habitation into 'my place'. Coetzee has been imprisoned by this paradox in his *Dusklands*.

We cannot count the wild. The wild is one because it is boundless. We can count fig-trees, we can count sheep because the orchard and the arm are bounded. The essence of orchard tree and farm sheep is number. Our commerce with the wild is a tireless enterprise of turning it into orchard and farm. When we cannot fence it and count it we reduce it to number by other means.

Here the mathematical configuration and bounding of space are shown to be critical in the colonizing project, in as much as it is for the purpose of habitation, by 'enclosing' with both physical and epistemological means to install 'my place'. The boundaries in the colonial discourse are therefore very subtle and pervasive. It is being increasingly realized that the 'boundary' in the post-colonial discourse entails a capacity to re-appropriate, renegotiate, realign and replace colonial boundaries not solely as legacy of colonial spatial division and epistemological extremities but as opportunities to manipulate wide variety of circumstances, cultures and societies to serve habitational purposes.

Therefore, the question of the colonized response to boundaries is a critical one in the post-colonial discourse, its own construction of horizon, the conceptual admission of porousness, the disclosure of space and the *place-ness* of the habitational space have woven a dense theoretical snare in which the post-colonial freedom is imprisoned. So, bell hooks suggests that there are other ways of dealing with boundaries than by simply rejecting them, and the most subtly transformative way lies in the mode of their habitation. Probably, pragmatism may legitimate some such position, though the provisionality of boundaries held as the key in this argument to a more subtle dismantling is doubtful. It is true that the pre-colonial *erstwhile* does no longer exist in its inherited geometry of space; it is a mobile topography mediated by a mobile culture and by a mobile social space. Therefore, the trope 'my place' in the post-colonial discourse, without which location cannot be settled by any theory of habitation, necessitates the acquisition of some new meanings in terms of an internalized sense of speciality and of post-colonial epistemology. The tenuousness of the colonial spatial function of boundaries is to be contested, because without some such act the question posed by Gayatri Spivak that 'Can the Subalterns Speak'? perhaps cannot be answered. If the *erstwhile* eludes, as the colonial conditions have made it very ambivalent, then the act 'to habitate' has to be performed outside the epistemological limits of the West into the *elsewhere* of the post-colonial epistemology. The *elsewhere* which was also the erasure of Tagore, '*not here, not here, elsewhere, somewhere else*' is the inevitable predicament of the post-colonial existence.

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The Indian Village Colonial Power, Historiography and Forms of Knowledge

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Recent scholarship on South Asia has distinctively brought to our attention the power relations of colonial categories, and the constructed and highly mediated nature of social and cultural historical experience. While focusing on the interpretation of power and knowledge in the colonial archive, they convincingly demonstrate the processes through which experiences of colonial modernity were constructed and organized into the lives of the colonized. The colonial state formation was not simply an episodic moment in the long historical journey of the Indian society. Rather, the practices, modalities and

projects of the colonial state constructed a new understanding of caste, tribes, religion, and the village. As Dirks puts it succinctly, 'the power of colonial discourse in India was not that it created whole new fields of meaning instantaneously but that it shifted old meanings slowly, sometimes imperceptively, through the colonial control of a whole range of institutions'.¹

These theoretical and methodological shifts in the concerns of the anthropological practice, from the bounded spatial entities to 'the construction of cultural categories and the process of that construction', have yielded rich

insights illuminating the power relations of colonial history.² They have helped to interrogate processes by which official knowledge was produced. Not only do they foreground the implication and deployment of anthropological knowledge in all the administrative concerns but also reveal the creation of new subjectivities and political language. Even otherwise, a critical assessment of the legacy of colonial knowledge and its categories is more than an arcane question of representation. This legacy has posed great challenges to the postcolonial enterprise of nation building. In a way, 'the postcolonial

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predicament' remains rooted in the knowledge, assumptions and representational categories of colonial modernity notwithstanding political independence and decolonization. Evidently, anthropology can no longer claim an unmediated access to an objective social reality. Its prime task turns out to be a mapping of the discursive terrain in order to retrieve historical narratives that have a bearing on the contemporary context.³

We have come to appreciate the constitutive role of colonial 'investigative modalities' (conceptual categories and the assumptions underlying them) in the representation of Indian society as a series of facts. For the colonialists, the administrative power stemmed from an accurate knowledge and an efficient use of these facts. What recent studies have highlighted is that the forms applied to these facts were far from self-evident.⁴ In this paper, we attempt to explore the ways in which colonial discourse brought about a fundamentally different view of Indian village, or rather where no view of village as a separate objective entity had existed ever before, there emerged an official view of Indian village.⁵ Not only did the village occupy a prime place in colonial social morphology but also became enmeshed in the leading theoretical and historiographical debates of the day. It became the theoretical site where conceptual knots of some of the grandest evolutionary schema of the nineteenth century were sought to be resolved.

Given the theoretical, ideological and pragmatic salience of the village for the colonial rule, this paper looks at the colonial idiom of the village as a pretext to understand the history and character of colonial forms of knowledge.⁶ Arguably, the nineteenth century debate on the nature of the Indian village community has determined the nature of the discourse on the Indian village since then.⁷ However, our intention is not to examine the facticity of the British accounts in relation to the

supposedly indigenous categories and forms of thought concerning the village. Rather than unravelling the distorting influence of colonial history and western social scientific categories, we endeavour to foreground the capacity of the colonial state to reconstruct fundamental aspects of Indian society—village in the instant case.

THE INDIAN VILLAGE: GENEALOGY OF A STEREOTYPE

The village has been at the centre of unending historiographical controversy being deeply embedded in the historical morass caused by the interlocking of land tenures with tax collection structures in an ancient order of civilization. The discrepancy between 'the British law and the Indian fact' has been as true of the village as of the other institutions.⁸ Quite often, 'the legal description of the society failed to fit the economical and sociological'.⁹ That does not, in any case, undermines the power of the colonial discourse to recast the village as the fundamental working unit of Indian society. The discovery of this cornerstone of society started mundanely, as the colonial administrators felt the need to collect and compile factual information about land settlements and revenue collection. Indeed, most of the characterizations of the village are contained in the despatches of senior British officers engaged in land revenue administration. One such despatch, which formed the basis for discussions in the British House of Commons in 1812-13 on the renewal of the East India Company's charter, outlined the idea of the village as a mini republic. More particularly, it is in Thomas Munro's report on the Ceded Districts of Madras (1806) that one comes across the initial stereotype of the village as a little republic.

Like his contemporaries, Munro was less concerned with the village as such than the mode of land settlement. His primary interest was to plead and win

the case for *ryotwari* settlement in the Madras Presidency as against Bengal Presidency's *permanent* settlement. In his acrimonious debate with Francis Ellis, he showed that his advocacy of *ryotwari* respects the principles of native tradition and that he was merely adhering to indigenous precedents. Once Munro became the Governor in 1820 and established *ryotwari* as the definitive legal basis for land settlements in the Madras Presidency, his formulations became part of the official wisdom.

Some of these administrative reports set the tone for future debate on the nature and character of Indian village. In the subsequent literature we find repetitions and variations on the same set of themes that formed part of the Fifth Report. What is noteworthy, however, is that the celebration of the Indian village is guided more by the ideology of particular administrator/s than the characteristics that the village actually displayed. Stokes identifies administrators, such as Munro (1761-1827), Malcolm (1769-1833), Elphinstone (1779-1859) and Metcalfe (1785-1846), who served under Lord Wellesley, the Governor General (1798-1805), as the chief proponents of the republican nature of the Indian village.¹⁰ Munro was the leader and founder of this particular school of thought. While sharing a certain emotional kinship with the heritage of the past, these *Romantic Paternalists*, as Stokes labels them, were horrified at the wanton uprooting of an immemorial system of society. In their general political orientation, they were antithetical to the liberal attempt to anglicize, assimilate and reform Indian society. From their attitudes of romanticism and paternalism flowed a certain conservatism of thought that made them challenge and resist the policy of applying British constitutional principles to the Indian administration. In terms of routine administration it meant countering the spirit of Cornwallis system.

Whereas Munro was in favour of the *ryotwari* (cultivator-wise) system of land settlement, Metcalfe made a powerful advocacy of the *mahalwari* (village-wise) settlement. Madras and Bombay Presidencies largely followed *ryotwari*, but, in the Northwest provinces, Metcalfe ensured that the village communities were made the basis of revenue settlement.¹¹ Clearly, their advocacy for a particular type of revenue system was contingent on their political philosophy. Their opposition to the utilitarian *laissez-faire* was reflected in their attempts to preserve something of the methods and institutions of Indian society. Their opposition to the Cornwallis system was, in essence, an opposition to the imposition of English ideas and institutions on Indian society. In their attempt to cushion the impact of foreign dominion they resuscitated 'unchanging village republics' as a sign of their benevolent paternalism. Village communities provided them with a system of indirect rule without much meddling in Indian affairs. They firmly believed that the ultimate objective of their variant of land settlement was the protection of the (village) community by the government, and not against it. Fearful of the social effects of the sudden dissolution of the co-sharing village community, they were in favour of fitting the colonial administration to the native frame of society. Their awareness of the wholly artificial and foreign character of administration made them hesitant and wary of interfering with the prevailing forms of society. They were convinced that once law and order had been established and property rights in the soil defined and land revenue fixed in cash, there was no need to subject the village to disruptive changes and disastrous effects of the *Anglicization* drive. For them, *Anglicists* were responsible for setting aside the immemorial institutions of the native people and erecting in its place an incomprehensible

technical form of law that was unsuited to the native genius. In other words, these paternalists were all set to challenge the dominion exercised by utilitarianism and show that utilitarian principles were not of absolute and universal validity.¹² Since utilitarianism and its underlying principles were conditional truths by virtue of their historical origins, there was the urgent necessity of restraint in pressing Western reforms upon an oriental society like India. To them, unbridled utilitarianism only increased the danger of a rapid disintegration of Indian society. Munro went to the extent of advocating the restoration of the jurisdiction of the village panchayats so as to prevent the further erosion of this mainstay of the social order.¹³

Ironically, the village community was, used as an argument against the generalization of Munro's *ryotwari*, both in Madras and in Delhi. Those who were in favour of *mauzawari* or *mahalwari* shared the apprehension that direct engagement for revenue with each separate landholder or cultivator (that is, *ryotwari*) might lead to the destruction of the original constitution of the village. Though the early administrative literature of the nineteenth century does not talk of the community, the stereotyping of the village emanates from its community character.

The colonial stereotyping of the village community had, thus, two principal ingredients: (1) the portrayal of the village as an idyllic and utopian political community—a society of equals, and (2) its characterization as a body of co-sharers of the soil. This emphasis on the village community as a political entity tended to ignore or, at least, underplay the facts of dominance and hierarchy within the village. The stability and isolation of the village and its political independence from the state were over-emphasized. Given the political fluidity that was evidenced at the macro-level, the permanence of the village held a great attraction.

Yet, this romanticized vision of the village was difficult to reconcile with the community it described. Although the disruptions of the later eighteenth century had enforced a great degree of self-reliance upon the Indian village, it was much less isolated from the state and the market, and much less egalitarian than what some of the administrators believed. The community of co-sharers in the land rarely encompassed the entire population. Surprisingly, when village was being substantially incorporated into a system of general law and colonial economy, its alleged virtues of political autonomy and economic self-reliance were gaining ground. This clearly reveals the elements of nostalgia in the way village was perceived by early colonial administrators.

In a way, the stereotyping of the village emanates from the quantum conceptual leap from the realm of economic self-sufficiency and internal organization to the supposed political independence of the village.¹⁴ One does not find any reference to the existence of inequality in these early administrative accounts. This could be because inequality and hierarchy were considered to be natural and in tune with the spirit of the age. However, the village tends to acquire a metaphoric content as a 'republic', 'commonwealth', or 'state' by virtue of its being an ordered society in miniature.

The second aspect of the village stereotype, namely, that of a corporate body of persons sharing right in a common territory, is linked to the first one, for the idea of the village as a political community presupposes economic self-sufficiency. This view of the village finds its initial articulation in Ellis's *Report on Mirasi Rights* (1814).¹⁵ Also, it is this aspect of the village community which was catapulted to the arena of high theory by Maine and Marx.

The essence of all such characterization of the village was a euphoric

celebration of its inner elasticity as a system. Romantic conservatives were attracted to its permanence, more so when it was seen in relation to highly volatile and fluid character of the Indian state. Its high degree of internal cohesion and enduring solidarity, and its constitution as the sum total of mutually dependent groups rather than mutually antagonistic classes, provided the romantics the raw material on which to construct their image of the Indian village. In the inner-directed, tranquil, unchanging rhythm of the Indian village lay the secret of the wisdom of Indian civilization.

However, it should be noted that the enthusiastic reception accorded to the Indian village by these romantic paternalists was not shared by one and all. That is how the village was caught in the larger political battles of the day between 'conservatives' and 'radicals'. Administrators like Stephen and Strachey distrusted the sentimental attachment of the paternalists to the Indian village. For them, the truths of political economy had to triumph over nativistic sentiments, and that only in a system of free exchange and completely free individual property rights could the prosperity of the people be fully secured. Naturally, this meant stringent application of utilitarian doctrines to India irrespective of its effects on the village community.

Thus, a series of policy initiatives and the attendant ideological correlates went into the making of the Indian 'village republic' in the broader framework of the British colonial enterprise. With the consequent desire to dampen the pace of social change, more so after the Mutiny, the village community served the imperial need to fall back upon an unchanging and unthreatening institution. It came handy in projecting the Raj as a protector of native institutions. The ideological assertion of its enduring permanence fitted well in the colonisers' quest for a secure agrarian order. It could be seen as an ultimate refuge

against those forces of disorder that the Mutiny had unleashed. In other words, the very nature of the British rule necessitated a particular theory of Indian village, so that Indian realities could be fashioned not only to justify the rule but also its moral overtones.¹⁶

In a way, for the colonial scholar-administrators the Indian village was the ultimate touchstone to assess the content and direction of social change. If the village community were an approved form of organization, then its conservation had to be the primary duty of the state. Conversely, if it were condemned, then the state had to be called upon to hasten the pace of its dissolution through a *laissez-faire*-induced social revolution. In either case, attitudes to the village community were more the outcomes of the corollaries of attitudes to the great political doctrines of the day than direct responses to its empirical characteristics.¹⁷

VILLAGE AND THE MAKING OF AN AGRARIAN TERRITORY

Reconfiguring the village as a well-circumscribed area amenable to revenue assessment has been the driving force behind the colonial state's mapping of the agrarian territory. Being concerned with various aspects of agricultural organization, the state has understandably wielded its authority to regulate and monitor the territorial units of agricultural organization. As Ludden forcefully asserts, 'organizing agriculture in the circumscribed spaces and legitimating state authority in them have historically been the central concern of the state'.¹⁸

Admittedly, the state has historically been powerful in relation to the individual village/s. It has continually shaped property rights and revenue demands with respect to land. Though, the basic unit for this relationship has very often not been the village at all. At times, revenue demands would be settled on the basis of smaller estates

within the village. Likewise, many a times, larger estates comprising several villages would be the basis for revenue settlement. Marriott has shown how for the first time the whole countryside was divided into village units for administration with reference to *mahalwari* system of land tenure.¹⁹ In his 'Directions for Revenue Officers' (1844-1848), James Thomson (1804-1853) directed that wherever possible, the whole body of proprietors in each village should be made individually and collectively responsible for paying the land tax. This was a novel requirement, as the previous Mughal policy had often been to recognize estates as units even when they cut across several villages. In the new system, one finds some sort of a disposition to treat each village as if it were a great family. In this sense, the modern ideas of territorial organization of land (based on the unit of revenue village) have unambiguous colonial ancestry.²⁰ In fact, this was true for the whole of colonial Asia. Thus, in India, as in much of the colonized world, the village became a lynchpin in the overall colonial regulation of agrarian territory. It helped new rulers to settle farming regions in accordance with their conceptualizations of landed property and polices of revenue collection.

By 1815, the colonial rulers had settled upon the village as the basic unit of agrarian administration. While erasing the traces of the previous forms of territorial organization, the British rule enshrined the village community as the core economic, political, and social unit. This projection of the village as the elemental unit of Indian socio-economic organization sub-served several functions. In ideological terms, the village came to represent a survival of agrarian tradition and the administrative foundation of agrarian modernity. . . . The territory called 'India' became traditional and the village and family farm became its elemental units. The cultural construct called 'India' came to rest on the idea that one basic cultural

logic did in fact organize agriculture in all its constituent (village) territories from ancient to modern times.²¹

As the village was being made the basis of a new type of territorial organization, it came to be regarded as the repository of 'authentic' tradition and culture. Stable, traditional village societies got embedded in the territorial expanse of an ancient agrarian civilization surviving all sorts of historical odds. In a way, it was an archetypal 'invention of tradition' where modernity invented traditions of civilization in its own image.²² According to Ludden, 'the modern invention of civilisation territories continues a very old elite project of using narration to organise agrarian territories'.²³ By projecting the map of British India back into history of ancient times, the British sought to legitimate its authority over all the villages in this agrarian territory. Also, this projection helped achieve a continuity of discourse where the village represents a constant unit of agrarian order from ancient times to the present. To quote Ludden, 'village becomes that part of agrarian space which can be effectively bounded physically and culturally and marked as a spatial domain for organized state power and activity'.²⁴ Thus, under the colonial dispensation, the *revenue village* became the elemental unit of indigenous agrarian order.

This attempt to create a new type of unified agrarian territory around the idea of the village was bound to dislodge earlier conceptualizations of the village. As the British went about mapping and surveying every inch of the agrarian territory, and organize it in terms of the cellular units of the village, they inflicted enormous violence on those conceptualizations that considered villages as locales of social power outside the state. Even today there is a persistent discrepancy between what the *state calls* 'the village' and what the *villagers think* is 'the village'.

The pre-eminence of the state has

certainly resulted in the gradual loss of the defining characteristics of the village as a social universe. In an interesting study of a village in Tamil Nadu, Daniel demonstrates how the statist definition of the village has marginalized the villager's notion of the village. Contrasting *Ur* and *Kiramam*, he shows how Tamil villagers conceptualize the former as distinct from the latter.²⁵ A *Kiramam* refers to the revenue village, and thus, to a political unit created for the purpose of taxation and the organization of local government. Administratively, it is under the jurisdiction of the taluk, which is governed by the district, then by the state, and ultimately by the national government. There is no ambiguity about its boundaries, as *Kiramam* refers to the bounded, standard, and universally accepted spatial unit. The government determines what a *Kiramam* is, and it is the same for everyone. There is no contextual variation in the use of the term *Kiramam* even though it is abstract and distant.

While *Kiramam* is a term whose meaning is really context free, universal, and fixed, *Ur* is a person-centric term that derives its meaning from the contextually shifting spatial orientation of the person. In the words of Daniel, '*Ur* is not so much a discreet entity with fixed co-ordinates as a fluid sign with fluid thresholds'.²⁶ *Ur* is always in relation to a given person or *jati* that is known to have established a special relationship of substantial compatibilities with that particular *Ur*. In the reckoning of the villagers, *Ur* is culturally more significant as soil substance of an *Ur* mixes with the bodily substance of the human inhabitants of that *Ur*. In essence, *Ur* is an indigenous concept of territory. Villagers invariably draw the boundaries of the *Ur* with reference to 'ritually vulnerable spots, flow and transit of substance, shrines of the sentinel deities, the points at which roads or the village streams enter the village, the haunted tamarind tree at the edge'. In fact, 'the villager's concern is

not only with what substances enter the *Ur* and affect its inhabitants but with the effect of these alien substances on the substance of the *Ur* itself'.²⁷ Despite the fact that *Ur* and *Kiramam* are neither semantically isomorphic nor mutually substitutable, villagers misleadingly represent *Ur* as *Kiramam* in their routine practices. Irrespective of whether this isomorphism between *Ur* and *Kiramam* is apparent or real, it becomes evident that, in terms of scope and political significance, *Kiramam* has been overshadowing *Ur*.

Arguably, the village *per se* was not universally the key unit in terms of local political and power structures. In olden days, powerful notables determined where one revenue village ended and another began. The state did not have so direct a say in deciding the land rights. Until the 1870s, many struggles for the control of land occurred outside the purview of the state. In few cases, land rights were granted as part of remuneration of the state functionaries. There was a curious amalgam of land rights and official status. People with rights to land exercised various types and degrees of power over the local territory and its inhabitants. In other words, the boundaries among local politics, society, law, police and administration remained fuzzy, as land rights were the chief levers of power. In a restricted sense, those who controlled land also controlled much of civic and judicial administration. But then, as Heesterman notes, 'neither the vogue of the village, or the caste, seems to derive from any real Indian arrangement, but rather from the needs of the modern bureaucratic state as it was introduced at the beginning of the last [nineteenth] century'.²⁸

The colonial rule created a distance between state and society. Personal proximity to the ruled was unthinkable under the British rule, as it was based on supposedly universal principles of governance. Naturally, the pragmatics of governance required the making of

an official view for the purpose of dealing with society from a distance. This official view, as a rule, had to be an exhaustive grid of narrowly defined categories covering the whole of society and enabling the state to apply its impersonal rules and regulations rationally.²⁹

The manufacturing of an official view involved two things. In the first place, the whole of the territory had to be uniformly mapped out in discreet entities. These neatly separating official units obviously could not take cognizance of the multidimensional and widely stretched out networks and interests. The latter were part of the strongly personal and particularistic nature of the old regime, where the overlapping and shifting networks of various right holders and domains used to be the norm. Against the cacophony of the old regime, the British set apart the public domain of the state and society. Here, the concept of the village as an autonomous unit came into its own; it marvelously filled and legitimized the colonial need for a well-defined basic unit. The village made Indian territory intelligible and manageable to the colonial rulers in terms of categories which the latter preferred to employ, and which had historically made sense to them in the light of their own experiences as members of the English society. What caste did in relation to Indian people the village did in relation to Indian territory: made land and people intelligible for categorization and counting. Thus, 'making village knowable was part of the enterprise of making it governable'.³⁰

Viewed thus, the creation of 'revenue villages' was part of the making of modern institutions that delimited precisely the content of property rights in British India. The modern making of the village, however, took a long time. It set into motion processes that signalled a definitive shift in power relations between localities and the imperial state. That is, the emergence of the village as

the key unit of administration not only organized agrarian territories and farming regions, but also altered local power relations throughout India in the nineteenth century.³¹

Under the colonial dispensation, the definition and delimitation of localities were no longer the handiwork of powerful families and caste groups. They assumed an official institutional form. Even when village communities were organized around socially dominant landed families, they became part of the administrative jurisdiction of urban centres that housed government offices. The then-prevailing theories of culture and modernization fuelled the distinctive shaping of the Indian village and tried to naturalize it as an essential component of the new agrarian social order. The newly configured village was considered to be fit enough for modernization. The market economy and state policies were to liberate its progressive potential by dismantling old bottlenecks arising out of ambiguities and confusion about land rights, prohibitive social controls, and the dominance of caste, sect, and other forms of cultural collectivity.

There is another angle as well. The shaping of the village suited the supposed theoretical opposition between 'Europe's competitive, individualist rationalism and Asia's collective, traditional, peasant community consciousness'.³² This theoretical dualism has always highlighted the co-operative and harmonious aspects of the ontology of village while underplaying its internal diversity and conflict. In the colonialist reading, village communities formed solid collective identities with closed unitary moral economies. Dewey makes a related argument when he says that more directly dictated by the administrative convenience was the need to reduce social reality to a bi-polar constellation: state and village. There was an attempt to give content to the dictum 'the princes at court, the peasants in the village', so that an

authentic original situation is restored.³³

INDIAN VILLAGE AND THE COLONIAL TYPOLOGY OF CIVILIZATIONS

In the charged nineteenth century theoretical debates, village came to be seen as more than a historical relic; it was, indeed, imbued with much contemporary relevance. For the Westerners, village stood for a world that they had lost. Since it was a world almost lost, depending on one's ideological predilections, it could be embedded in one's version of 'progress' or 'degeneration' in relation to the present. For romantics, idyllic village communities of the past realized those qualities of life that they highly valued and craved for, and which could indeed be realized in some future utopia. Those who were on the side of progress—and there were many—set out to debunk the idyllic image of the village by associating it with economic inequality, a rigidly stratified and stagnant society and its historic subordination to arbitrary powers.

As history and progress were unremitting preoccupations of the nineteenth century Victorian mind, the conceptualization of village in this framework was itself only an instance of a larger problematic predicated upon the (lack of) commitment to progress. Village became a pretext to establish the civilizational stage to which India's extant conditions corresponded. An evolutionist reading of the Indian village suited the British in constructing such a civilizational hierarchy. In fact, the study of the Indian village cannot be seen in isolation of this primary and explicit obsession of the British mind. From the perspective of the Victorian social thought, India was an abstraction, 'variously represented through social structure, religion, mythology, and the pervasive influence of unreason, all embodied and represented in its history'. Not only its singularity and distinctiveness were simply played

down but they were also related to a vision of universal history that is itself 'tethered to an eschatology of progress'. India in general, and the Indian village in particular, had only a provisional status in this grand universal schema of history that the colonialists constructed. Whatever value Indian institutions had was only with reference to illumining the said scheme of progress and civilizational typology.³⁴

Expectedly, the construction of a history for India became the major interpretative strategy of the British. It was through her history that India was to become known to the Europeans in the colonial times. Europeans no longer saw India as merely an exotic and bizarre land but as a kind of living museum of the European past. More importantly, such thinking established an enduring structural relationship between India and the West. Notwithstanding the variations in the content of the literature produced on India during the colonial era, one message comes out strikingly: Europe is progressive and changing, whereas India is static and stagnant. It was this crude dualism that enabled the colonialists to look at India as a kind of living fossil bed of the European past. And where else to look for this past but in the living Indian village?³⁵

It has been argued that the colonial rulers tried to legitimize their presence in India by designating the village community as the basis of colonial policy. That is, the colonial construction of village was embedded in the principle of territoriality which formed the basis of colonial organization of power. By making village all-important, they could frequently claim to restore a pristine institution that had fallen from grace by the tyranny of the native despotic rulers. This also imparts to the British the credit for having brought to the fore a tradition that was unknown to Indians themselves. In this sense, colonialism as a form of knowledge has shaped much of the modern history of colonized places

and peoples. It went to amass knowledge to enable itself 'to classify, categorize, and bound the vast social world that was India so that it could be controlled'.³⁶

Inden gives an ideological explanation for the new preoccupation with the village as the basic formation of Indian society. He argues that the Orientalist perspective that gained currency during the nineteenth century placed European modernity in a hierarchical relationship with Asiatic tradition.³⁷ Seen thus,

The constitution of India as a land of villages was also due to the efforts of the British to deconstitute the Indian state. As they were composing their discourses on India's villages, they were displacing a complex polity with an 'ancient' India that they could appropriate as an external appendage of a 'modern' Britain. The essence of the ancient was the division of societies into self-contained, inwardly turned communities consisting of co-operative communal agents. The essence of the modern was the unification of societies consisting of outwardly turned, competitive individuals. Just as the modern succeeded the ancient in time, so the modern would dominate the ancient in space.³⁸

Clearly, India constituted a vast field on which the British could impose their own version of history. And in their versions, India was a land of oriental despotism, and it has been historically steeped in decay, degeneration and chaos. Nonetheless, there were enduring and unchanging institutions, such as village community, in India at the local level. This fitted well with their notion of unilinear history clearly organized into developmental stages. Thus, India's unchanging institutions based on family, caste and the village communities were construed as empirical indicators of the presence or absence of progress. In other words, Indian village was seen in the light of general concerns animating Western historiography. Certain universal features constructed as markers of progress (the presence of private property in land, for instance)

were vainly looked for in the historic constitution of the village. It was this empirical quest for the markers of progress or (the lack thereof) which made India and Europe appear as braided concerns, and which, in turn, also signals the entry of Indian village into the domain of European social theory.

COLONIAL CONSTRUCTION AND THE STATE-VILLAGE DUALITY

Dirks argues that colonial knowledge both enabled conquest and was produced by it. In certain important ways, knowledge was what colonialism was all about. In this view, colonialism was, nay, primarily, a cultural project of control.³⁹ For him, the historical anthropology of the colonial state must not be separated from the historical anthropology of the modern nation-state in general, as there was a range of institutional contexts in which colonial knowledge and colonial power were implicated. Indeed, what Dirks calls 'the epistemological violence of the British rule' has left its imprint in ample measure on the categories of contemporary thinking.

Effectively speaking, colonial construction of the village operated along three axes. First, it created a polarity between the ancient and the modern. The essence of ancient India was the division of society into self-contained, inward-looking communities consisting of co-operative communal villagers. Whereas the village was a pre-eminent institution in the ancient times, the state had a nominal presence. When the state was more than a nominal presence, it was rapacious, brutal and arbitrary in relation to the village. Very often, the Indian village was presented as opposed to the Indian state in its essence.

Second, the village was placed in relation to the modern colonial state. Not only was the Indian village opposed to the indigenous forms of state, but also

was the *other* of the modern colonial state being shaped in India. At the very same time the village was being brought into relation with the colonial state, it was also primordialized through a 'denial of co-evalness'. This was a spectacular instance of temporal distancing whereby a hierarchy of societies along a scale of modernity was constructed.⁴⁰

Lastly, the Indian village was placed in relation to a unitary developmental history. In the colonial construction, village had performed a number of survival functions for Indians by insulating itself from the tumultuous ebb and flow of Indian history. In the process, it had stagnated at a low level of political and technological development. Clearly, there was an urgent need to draw the village into the general spirit of the day, that is, development. And, since the colonial state was based on the accumulated wisdom of science and rationality, so the Utilitarians thought, it was the agency to 'develop' the village and restore to it its lost glory that the Romantics had always celebrated.⁴¹

What comes out strikingly from the colonial accounts is an overdose of generalization on the basis of limited empirical experience. Very often, villages found in one area, or amidst one particular community, were made to represent as the Indian village (for example, Metcalf raised the Jat villages of the region of Delhi to be the embodiment of the Indian village). Viewed thus, idealization of the village necessarily entailed its reification. For the colonialists, village was not merely a crucial institution by virtue of its being the bedrock of land systems or land revenue administration, but was also associated with a characteristic approach to knowledge about Indian society. Underlining the epistemological and political significance of the village, Smith goes to the extent of saying that 'government intervention in village affairs was clearly more basic a condition of British rule than the

periodic enumeration and classification of its subjects'.⁴²

In the stereotyped colonial village, time stood still. In no uncertain terms, this yearning for the past, and the consequent desire to keep the past alive in India, was reflective of a certain disenchantment with the Victorian British civilization itself. The ideal of the village community in particular resonated well with nostalgia for 'the world we have lost'. In other words, the stereotyped village served the needs of the British Empire, Western social theory as well as the English nostalgia for a romantic past.

In effect, the conception of a village community, though subject to some shifts in emphasis, cannot be dislodged from its place in the relations between the West and India, both in practical (i.e., political) and theoretical terms.⁴³ It also betrays a particular European disposition towards the idea of community.⁴⁴ In the Indian context, the then reigning Orientalist discourse saw community as something, which the East had retained, but the West had lost. Community was seen as a foundational category in the East, and a theoretical opposition between community and individual, or community and modern society was central to discourses on modern society that developed in Europe and which had a discernible impact on the way Indian village was conceptualized by European scholar-administrators.⁴⁵ Positing community as the hallmark of traditional society relegated the Indian village to the realm of an unchanging East that stood in sharp contrast to the individualism of modern society.

CONCLUSION

Thanks to the colonial construction of the 'immemorial' village community, even for Indian nationalists, the village remained a compelling sign of 'traditional' India, which the colonial

rule had sought to sustain for its own purposes. Eventually, Indian nationalists appropriated this idealized village, as they saw in these communities evidence for the antiquity of an indigenous concept of democracy, socialism, and much more that suited their ideological palate. The elements of traditional India constructed by the British had always fitted jarringly with the commitment to the ideals of progress and modernization that the nationalists held. An incipient nation had to muddle its way through, without unsettling the basic elements of 'traditional' India such as the village. This reinforces the argument that, in our times, the state has also become dispenser of socio-political identities. This means that the process of labelling (be it of territorial units or social groups) by the state contains the potential of unleashing new solidarities that the labelling might itself engender.⁴⁶ In this sense, to label a given human settlement as a village is rarely just a taxonomic or classificatory exercise. The village becomes much more than a semantic slot or a lexicographic gloss. It gets firmly entrenched in the dynamics of power/knowledge. Unfortunately, the locality (place, territory) as a component of social identity has been a largely neglected field of study in Indian sociology/social anthropology.⁴⁷

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5. Some of the scholars assert that the discourse on the Indian village under the colonial rule was not fashioned exclusively in the form of revenue and settlement reports. They point toward the vernacular literature—innumerable short stories, novels and other genres—which contains accounts of the Indian village in all its richness. Sadly, so far professional sociologists or historians have barely tapped this literature on the village, which started pouring from the end of the nineteenth century. For example, Lal Behari Dey’s *Bengal Peasant Life* (1906), a description of his native village in the Burdwan district, is frequently cited. Also, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay had composed a tract—*Bangadesher Krishak* (Peasant in Bengal)—around the same time as Maine was constructing his theory of the Indian village (see Ronald Inden, *Imagining India*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1990, p. 151; Jan Breman, “The Village in Focus”, in Jan Breman *et al.*, eds., *The Village in Asia Revisited*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, p.63. For the use of vernacular literature for social scientific analysis, see Rajat K. Ray, “The Rural World of Tarashankar Banerjee: Social Divisions and Psychological Crosscurrents”, in Peter Robb, ed., *Rural India: Land, Power and Society Under British Rule*, London: Curzon Press, 1983, pp. 275-311 and Vikash N. Pandey, “Re-presenting Rural: From Definition to Discourse”, *Sociological Bulletin*, vol. 52, no. 1, 2003, pp. 32-52.
 6. This has been a noteworthy contribution of the historically inclined social/cultural anthropologists. It should be noted that village community is currently the provenance of the anthropologists so much so that it has aroused vociferous protests over the ‘annexation of Indian anthropology by the village community’ (for example, Louis Dumont and D.F. Pocock, “For a Sociology of India”, *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, vol. I, 1957, pp. 7-22 and Satish Saberwal, ed., *Beyond the Village*, Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1972. The longevity of the debate over the appropriateness of the village as the unit of sociological analysis shows how firmly it has been placed in sociological/anthropological imagination of India. The dominance of the anthropologists, however, is a recent phenomenon. As Clive Dewey, “Images of the Village Community: A Study in Anglo-Indian Ideology”, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol.6, no.3, 1972, p.291, observes, ‘prior to the post-war anthropological boom, the village community was the plaything of historians and administrators’. In the West, studies of the village were primarily carried out by historians under the influence of the German historical school. This was so because, except for a handful of survivals, the village community was a purely historical phenomenon there. On the contrary, in India, village being an omnipresent reality was studied initially by revenue officials as part of assessing and collecting land revenue. In the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the East and the West, the historians and the revenue administrators, literally met so far as the study of village community is concerned. This brief interaction was made possible thanks to the growing popularity of *evolutionism* and the *comparative method*. The convergence of these two ‘insisted on the essential identity of the defunct English village community and the living Indian village, separate in time and space, but co-existent in the same phase of social evolution’). *Ibid.*
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The Neurobiological Paradigm of Consciousness

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Kuhn in his defining moment of 'revolutionary science' simultaneously defined and deconstructed the notion of paradigm in Philosophy of Science. Existing paradigms are always under determined by new methods and new facts such that tradition shattering complements determine the attitude to scientific inquiry. Neurobiological explanations (NBE) of human consciousness throw up quite a few disparate facts like activated processing of neural masses that do not have to either supervene on syntactic or corresponding external content from the world. NBE, therefore, marks a shift from a synthesized and integrated nativism to an activation based multiple processing of accessible internal states. But such a shift is not without its casualties: computational neuro-biological models of Churchland, Dennett and Searle are either reconstructed to fit into the self-organizing autonomous agency of the mind, or they are abandoned along with many a philosophical parallelism drawn between biological systems and the conscious processes.

The so called cerebral celebrities like the globally available physical state N and the hard problem-binding problem duet are now exchanged with a partially ordered matrix of non-conscious judgments that depends on propagation of a dynamic neural loop. Such a partial ordering opens up a new neurobiological paradigm of 'radical interpretation' of the feedback loop created out of activation and transition. This offers a different choice of 'parameters' that plays the natural game of conscious decisions differently, by way of introducing continuous and graded levels of activity. In the words of Stuart Kauffman of *Investigations*, 'Being autonomous agents, cells must, as individuals living in communities, make the maximum number of reliable discriminations possible and act on them reliably, without "trembling hands".'¹

If neural descriptions of conscious phenomena achieves what Kauffman called 'expanding the adjacent possible', that is, a transitivity of the form, the representation of a content in

a neural mass N is sufficient to represent that content in the Conscious neighbourhood of the agent. Such a transitivity marks a Turing type computation of internal states of an organism that works in a dynamic manner in order to evolve a semantic content that not only establishes a context dependent relationship with physical constituents of the system, but it also assumes an epistemic 'view from within' kind of function. Such a function is dynamically incoherent at the level of physical constituents, while it attains an epistemic regularity and success at the level of self-organization. Dynamic incoherence at the level of the causal affect of the world is the determinant of context dependent self-organization that contingently orders the internal states of the biological system. Kauffman's methodology of 'Boolean networks' that is self-consistently self-organizing along a classical limit portrays co-evolving networks in a fitness landscape. These networks assume the form of 'information carriers' that could be decoupled from a particular dynamic agency. Further, it is possible

to maintain a distinction between genes that carry information, that is, those which know the amino acid configurations in themselves as well as what they are going to encode, *and* those genes that merely copy certain codes. Such a distinction brings out a distinction between internal/external boundary conditions that is conceptualized by Howard Pattee as 'semantic closure' condition of coding and information through genes in a material symbolic system.² Such a closure is a necessary result of a dynamic system that can reproduce the initial conditions of replication, but this does not need a prior knowledge of the code, it only needs information about its own components. Such information is carried by a configuration of amino acids to implement a semantic relationship with the genic products. Such a semantic relationship depends on the structure of codes that genes carry with themselves, which is communicated through the processes of selection. The moot question that we can ask at this point is, can the neurobiological explanation use genetic processes as a substratum of constitution of conscious agents?

Taking conscious agents to be self-consistently self-organizing, one can go into the functioning of the system in terms of influence of an external world that can act as the trigger for selection of certain memory tokens that constitute the internal state of the system. Such an internal state acts upon the repercussions generated within the system by the external trigger by way of selection of 'meaning' that can only be understood in the context of selection pressure on the agent. Such a meaning is emergent as the internal states of the agent are caused by a dynamic interaction with the selection mechanism. This is how the molecular strings of genes only become symbolic representations if the physical symbol tokens are, at some stage of string processing, directly recognized by translation molecules (tRNA's and synthetases) which

thereupon execute specific but arbitrary actions (protein synthesis). The semantic closure arises from the necessity that the translation molecules are themselves referents of the gene strings. Through such translation molecules, which themselves are alterable in the process of decoding DNAs, and by this, they can switch on or off any part of the Gene. In other words, it would be proper to consider the notion of semantic closure in terms of arbitrariness such that the code for protein contained in Genes is switched on or off in relation to their causal role in interactions with RNAs. The notion of semantic closure, therefore, provides for a different translation molecule giving rise to a different genetic code. So, *there is a code switching mechanism latent in the very process of decoding.* What made it clear is the discovery of messenger RNA (mRNA) molecules containing information not coded in DNA. The difference in code between pre-transcription and post-transcriptional alteration of genetic information was called 'RNA Editing'. The term is used to identify any mechanism which will produce mRNA molecules with information not specifically encoded in DNA. Further through such a mechanism of alteration of translation molecules, there is a connection between the gene and the non-genetic factors that can also encode significant information and can enter into larger regulatory processes of interaction. Such interactions are crucial to determine the strength of interaction between a genetic structure and the environment.

The question is, can such explanations based on genetic activity explain the claim of mind or consciousness in the brain? The crucial feature of consciousness understood in terms of a distinction as employed by Ned Block in terms of 'phenomenal consciousness' and 'access consciousness' is of much use here. If genes constitute information about a certain phenotype and its brain,

do we maintain that genes as carriers of information are phenomenally conscious, while they do not per se access information about what the phenotype expresses in terms of self-consciousness or consciousness of the world? This gives us a clue to understand why *genes do not encode information such as how to fold a protein. The mechanism of protein folding comes for free with the laws of matter and self-organization.* Such laws of matter are expressed not just by the genetic code but by the entire causal pathway through which amino acid in genes would bind themselves with other molecules like nucleic acid. What the genes do is to organize the protein sequence into a code that carries 'information' as a material symbol system (MSS) with a semantic content. What Pattee argued is that such a MSS gives us a precise semantic message that could be rendered as a self-organization of protein sequences.³ He further argued that there is no open-ended evolution without symbols, but conversely, there is no need for symbols without material self-organization. Such a material organization is a genotype encoding amino-acid chains (initial conditions) for proteins to be folded into dynamical self-organization. Such proteins-to-be-folded is mediated by coding relations that bear a dynamic incoherence with the environment. This incoherence can make us think of genes not as description or programmes, but as data to the dynamic self-organizing agent. How a *semiotic code* between symbols and building blocks (DNA/RNA) can arise from a material system is still very much a mystery both for biological and cognitive systems. The semiotic code between bases of nucleotide is a double stranded molecule running in two opposite strands such that bases across from each other are complementary. For example, a DNA strand is a set of nucleotide bases like {a,c,t,g} in which a and t are placed opposite and c and g are placed opposite to each other. Various ways in which base-pairing

could be permitted follows the basic rule of pairing opposites such that one strand uniquely determines its opposite. When DNA is converted into RNA, it follows the same interactions that occur between opposite elements of the base-pair in the DNA and indeed between DNA and RNA bases during the process of transcription. The relationship between DNA and RNA assumes a semiotic relationship in the sense that DNA-RNA sequences are signs for proteins and genes that are produced out of this interaction follows, according to Pattee, follow the laws of the environment. This following of law is explained in terms of dynamic incoherence with the environment that acts as a selection mechanism.⁴ But such a mechanism turns out to be 'fuzzy' as the emergent relationship between self-organizing system and the external environment turns out to be non-descriptive symbolic systems that do not follow laws of self-replication in toto.⁵ Rather evolutionary strategies of self-organizing systems can alter the interactive patterns that are emergent by way of operating within a causally enactive environment. Therefore it could be maintained that parameters determined by the genetically encoded material symbol system are causally as well as semantically closed, although they are not necessarily self-replicating. This violates a Von-Neumann type 'Universal Instructor'⁶ machine primarily by way of post-transcriptional coding relationship that evolves through context dependence. How this context dependence results into a creative reproduction of a genetically encoded self-organizing system could be understood following the processes of RNA editing. By a close parallel what cognitive scientists do is to treat such context dependency of symbol manipulation in terms of an unalterable signifier-signified relationship that makes reprogramming subject to laws of *eigenstates*.⁷ Such Eigenstates

represent the externally observable manifestations of the phenomenally accessible cognitive states. Such eigenstates, in case of MSS in biological-genetic organisms turn out to be fuzzy that takes care of emergent causal networks between internal-external environments.

COMPUTABILITY AND PLASTICITY OF EVOLUTIONARY MECHANISM

Autonomous Agents (AA) stand out as a model of self-replication as well as action in/on the world.⁸ Autonomous agents not only functionally know what a part of it does, but it also alters its states in response to the world. The tradition shattering challenge comes from the intelligent character of AAs, who not only makes it possible to give an *interpretation* of their states as reflective and rational in the sense of what they do. The ascription of self-consciousness to AAs in terms of their recognition of themselves as the same thing/being is justifiable by facts of semantic-semiotic-linguistic genoneural architecture, which is also an emergent property of AAs. Such AAs are situated in two interrelated contexts: one in the connection between evolution and computational embodiment of AAs and second, looked from the side of the world, how evolution throws up self-constructing agents. This double situatedness of AAs in embodiment and agency, both taken together are implicated in a co-constructing, co-evolutionary and localizable topos or space that blur the boundary between the real and the imaginary, between the experiential and the fictional boundaries of centring consciousness in an agent. In this crossing of boundary, blurring of boundary between the genoneural and the lived specie, the incommensurability between neurobiological and the anthropological paradigms of consciousness falls apart.

a. Genoneural Structure of Consciousness

Methodologically speaking, there is an inherent challenge to the closures produced by computational-intentionalistic and building block approaches to consciousness that thrives on a metaphysical two-dimensionalism: the envatted and the enclosed versus the enworlded and the enacted. From the point of view of a disembodied paradigm of reason and control, it is possible to disengage mind/consciousness from AAs in the sense of AI, but the challenge is that AAs are nonpositional and yet base themselves on the concrete universe of external world that supplies the context. Given that Kuhn adopted a transcendental perspective in determining paradigms, the role of AAs in the immanent world of the concrete produces incommensurability with the very notion of paradigm and therefore, assumes autonomy. This autonomy of AAs outside paradigmatic sciences creates a demand for itself such that some of the qualitative features of the transcendent can now be re-translated into the domain of the AAs. This is the neurobiological explanation of AAs, where the explanans is evolving in relation to explanandum and hence assuming the form of a critical reflection on parallel between them. The parallel that is drawn between the computational and the cognitive roles of mind, between the genoneural architecture and the lived expressions of conscious mind is based on an apriori/aposteriori factual/counterfactual connection that demands reduction of consciousness in that connection. Such a reduction not only leaves an explanatory gap but it also becomes a simultaneous movement between a conscious machine and the real world consciousness, which is a move from the intensional to the extensional referent.⁹ Such a move is an abstract parallelism that identifies a

physical substratum with consciousness in terms of similar roles: role played by physical processes in explaining consciousness is the same as role played by consciousness in explaining first person ascription of mental/physical states. But there is no conceptual apriori entailment of physical processes from consciousness and vice versa- the parallels do not meet ever in their explanatory purposes. The conceptual gap rather demands that we discover a common underlying layer to both the physical processes and consciousness may be in world of pure bits or in a unifying theory. The best outcome of this demand is brought forth in its non-accomplishment in a twisted matrix: blurring of the boundary between the physical and the embodied by way of shuffling and mixing them in a given centre of consciousness. Further the parallelism takes the form of a structural hierarchy (S-H) that posits an underlying state as the explanatory basis of the physical aggregate of the total structure as in the case of the physical process. Yet another form of this parallelism finds its expression in a control hierarchy (C-H) that turns underlying states into messages that are assigned a linguistic-semantic and semiotic role in the structural description of Consciousness as an integrated whole.¹⁰

The neurobiological challenge lies in understanding how the symbolic role of DNAs as the building block of self-constructing autonomous agents emerge in an activation of biocognitive phenotype that embodies the process of its becoming? In other words, how is that a biocognitive phenotype is both a product and an effector of genoneural architecture? What seems to be the apriori necessity of the role of consciousness in the human-world embodiment is an intersubjective realization of ascriptions of content, which gets its *affect* in a genoneural architecture that passes through such a

necessity in a dynamic iteration of certain patterns. Such ascriptions cannot prestate the initial conditions and the boundary conditions.

b. Language in Genes as Conscious Codes

Finite number of symbols (e.g. codons in DNA) can encode a finite number of primitive parts (e.g. amino acids). Functional structures that can be constructed from these 'parts' are 'recognition sites' that recognizes which structure of amino acid matches or mismatches these codon or mRNAs. Such matches could be counted from a number of mutations that have occurred from a given initial condition. The encoded messages in genes which we call 'representations' are embodied and enacted through this process of parsing a part of the code. For example, a grammar for an RNA molecule called transfer RNA (tRNA) provides a syntactical and structural description of how tRNA is going to capture a folded structure of protein, but such a description is based on actual protein structure of the tRNA. Therefore, it is rather a rule following move or a strategy that is evolved in operations like re-combination and splicing. More than the physical process, tRNAs follow a pathway of action that is strategically embedded, depending on which protein it is going to fold. Can this pathway be expressed for the symbol manipulation kind of operation through representation of external reality as cognitive scientists would design in understanding neuronal behaviour in the brain? Or is it like the extended Computationalism that reduces the functioning of self-organizing systems to connections with external-world-as-memory? Or is it like an off-line advance planning to match with the task that tRNAs perform? The agent neutral neural phenomena in their dynamic structures, as explained by an inherent and embedded functionalism

with a computational-intentionalistic-connectionistic-synaptic explanation conflates agency with manifest external functions. But the conceptual role played by tRNAs in amino acid folding is 'instructional' such that genes can produce a certain phenotype in the causal network of the organism and the environment. The sense of instruction here is that tRNAs fold protein in a certain way, which is essentially a part of code-switching events in evolution as well as in mutation.

The sequences of amino-acyl-tRNA synthetases are proteins that assign amino-acids to codons. Those tRNAs that are charged with the correct amino-acids can produce functional proteins from genes. How do the first synthetases arise that functionally distinguish within classes of amino acids and codons? A defined code in DNAs catalyzes the synthetases to assign the correct genetic code. Some genetic sequences interpreted by assignment catalysts are reflexive with respect to the mechanism of their interpretation. The choice of a certain subset of all the proteins as catalysts also is reflexive with respect to genetic information. But the genetic information needed by a catalyst is ambiguous until the catalysis work begins in the tRNA. In other words, the amino-acid structures in DNAs undergo states of transition in catalysis in order to reorganize the genetic information. This reorganization is constrained by the way catalytic proteins in tRNA are related to their sequences. A set of proteins that execute the rules of a genetic code can be re-constructed from not just the functions of genes but from what those protein containing cells perform. For example, promotion of dendritic growth by the gene called CPG15, an activity induced signaling molecule and the role that it plays mediating synaptic plasticity is a case in point.¹¹ Such signaling molecules are reflexive by their very structure in a self-regulated expression of genetic

information. The important philosophical question is, *can we ascribe phenomenal consciousness to such self-regulated expressions?*

Two arguments: (1) Cariani argues that to the extent an adaptive epistemic system constructs itself and determines the nature of its own informational transactions with its environs, to that extent the system achieves a degree of epistemic autonomy relative to its surroundings¹² and (2) Von Neumann's argument maintains that if we do not have symbolic descriptions directing self-replication, then an organism must replicate through material self-inspection of its parts.¹³ Cariani's argument about epistemic autonomy expounds the notion of brains as material systems capable of supporting conscious awareness in terms of classes of linkages between neural patterns produced by sensory inputs (external semantics), those produced by internal coordinations (syntactics), and those produced by intrinsic goal-states with correspondences in the structure of experience. These internal co-ordinates are catalysts that unfold protein sequences in the relevant areas of the brain. So, it has both a subjective and objective dimension, for example, genes encoding odour receptors proteins are active in the olfactory neurons such that each olfactory neuron expresses only one receptor gene.¹⁴ The neural signal patterns generated by internal coordinations are the means by which the brain interprets its own states. Such interpretations are causally re-afferent and they are circularly built up through dynamically created templates such that they act as autonomous subjective states of the brain. The tRNA molecules that map particular tri-nucleotide codons to particular amino acids in transcription implement the interpretation of the genetic code that plays not just a physical-constitutive role in the genoneural architecture. Rather tRNAs observe and interact with their genic environment and this results into alter-

native and even multiple interpretations of the same nucleotide sequence. As Semir Zeki argues how form, colour and movement are understood differentially in various areas of the brain follow how genes are mapped in neurons in those areas. In the case of prosopagnosia, as Zeki shows that the capacity to recognize familiar faces is absent thereby showing in genic terms that the genetic code responsible for 'information about a face' remain inert, although the regular visual neurons are fired.¹⁵ These internal patterns are not related to goal-states which the brain can measure or observe and this non-relation is experienced as pain or grief. But the pattern is there as genetically encoded functions in a damaged neural area only need an improvement. Following laws of self-organization, these internal states are simultaneously effectors and affected as explained by Ramachandran's study on synaesthesia where brain areas for smell get crosswired with colour neurons. In fact synaesthesia as a phenomenon can explain the brain process that recognizes, although wrongly, colours as sounds and shapes as tastes, which are not affected due to smell areas being affected. This is an embodiment of the phantom colour that Merleau Ponty called 'reproduction intention'.¹⁶ Such an intention is expressed in the neural assemblies of the brain that makes use of genetic information by way of what Merleau Ponty explained later as a need for 'form' to enter into the world.¹⁷ This also is a telling evidence of the epistemic autonomy that arises in organizing the neural configurations such that genetic code works in a bottom up way. tRNA molecules are single nucleotide triplets attached to single amino acid that are located by codons at ribosome such that codons can strip off amino acid from the distant end of tRNA and add it to the protein that ribosome is building from mRNAs. In case of prosopagnosia, for example, the polymorphic character of expression in

genes *affects* at least two different areas of the brain, namely olfactory and visual. The modular distinction that is supposed to be there between distant area and nearer area seem to get crosswired in a modified sensorimotor activity. The affect is that the corresponding reports enjoy only a first personal veracity without an integrationist perspective. In case of prosopagnosia, the properties of being such a sort can be there in the Subject without being conscious of it. Such affect is different from mere processing deficits such as 'congrual processing'¹⁸ of inputs from the face as an object, rather it has to do with the subjective incapability to recognize the face as an object. This means that there is no corresponding representation of the face in the brain, but there is a mere awareness of something external, like a pattern that could be accessed by a flick of the eye or attention. In terms of mRNA and tRNA it simply means codons strip off those proteins from tRNA that are responsible for smell in an 'instruction' for vision- it overcomes distances within brain areas by mere awareness. Ramachandran's explanation of synaesthesia in terms of absence of sequencing that happens through importation from one region of the brain to the higher regions as in the case of normal brains merely explains the context of synaesthesia.¹⁹ It does not explain what is to see, hear or taste for a synaesthetic Subject, rather it only explains the effects in terms of underlying physical processes. In contrast, need for 'form' is phenomenal in order to explain how synaesthetic subjects organize their world.

How Subjects organize their world could be understood from Von Neumann's arguments about self-inspection by molecules like Genes. The internal processes that transcribe and translate the genetic information contained in the DNAs do not fully specify the neural configurations that act as stand-in for on-line intelligent

consciousness. Genetic information rather works offline by way of decoupling on-line from off-line, while at the same time internal states and processes can be exploited by an organism to develop certain connection with the external. This makes any sequence of nucleotide possible and its informational value does not depend on couplings with the external environment. Such functional dynamic structures like nucleotide do not depend on physically non-functional descriptions. Rather they unfold themselves so that they can replicate and this function of 'replication' cannot take place without an inspection of its internal states, as if such states are owned in various parts of the constitutive elements (e.g., genes) of the dynamic structure. In the genoneural architecture, such genes play a cognitive role by unfolding themselves from the code or symbolic structure of itself and thereby selecting those parameters that allow replication through inspection of its parts. Such selection based replication acts like a gene or protein copier and a reader that correctly reads the information encoded in the gene. Such copier and reader role of genetic molecules construct the initial conditions from the dynamic function of the genes, which is mediated through an arbitrary coding relation that translates nucleotide sequences into amino-acid sequences that express genetic information. At this point a crucial distinction could be made: genotypes without descriptions of amino acids that they are going to fold might reproduce themselves differently, while phenotypes bearing determined coding relations shall reproduce themselves in toto. As far as genotypes are concerned they can recover the initial conditions, while the phenotypes evolve into a complex organism that cannot recover the initial amino acid building blocks. Protein sequences as symbols do not participate dynamically (chemically) in the self-organization process of the encoded

building blocks. Rather, they participate as information carriers which are effectively read to construct initial conditions for self-organization.

In the case of autonomous agents, such a self-organizing process enters into an intersemiotic identification of functions like reading, copying and reproducing. Such an intersemiotic identification of processes are mapped into the complexity of organization of autonomous agent. In other words, determination of conditions of identification of processes implies a space of distribution of singularities such as synthesis/folding of protein that goes for determining the very character of genetic information. Protein acts as the space for self-determination of the genes. In our metaphysical and transcendental notion of ground of Consciousness, such self-determination remains indiscernible unless genetic information/code finds its semiotic relation within the specific areas of the cell/brain. One can talk of AAs in a manner that it does not need specification of a completely determined brain, as that would amount to a kind of neural reductionism. One implication of such reductionism is that it assumes an internal first person state as well as a blissful ignorance of the microphysical parameters of the conscious experience. Contrarily, a genetic explanation of consciousness is an intersemiosis between the syntactical, i.e., base pairing rules between codons and tRNAs and the semantical, i.e., the phenotypic traits. The very nature of the intersemiosis can be understood from how the syntactic and the semantic relate to each other by way of performing roles that are signified by genetic code. The signifiers of reading and copying as syntactic roles and the signifiers of semantic properties such as localized genes turn into 'signified' in the course of self-organization. This also marks a transition from semiotic states to world states. Such a transition again signifies an absence of self-

referring subjectivity in the very process of ensuring self-inspection through signs.

PARALLELISM REVISITED

What sophisticated parallelism between the genetic and the anthropomorphic-linguistic approaches to Consciousness aims to do is to read one off from the other without exploring the possibility that one can read the other off only from a situation of mutual embeddings. How such embeddings happen in explanations could be grappled with from a specific theoretical move of dissipating some of the usual binaries like self/nonself; conscious/non-conscious etc. into the self-organizational properties of autonomous agents who make the external into internal in order to make functionings a process of decoding the world from the internal codes. As Post-structuralists famously state that the self as an agent is produced by a discursive formation by way of freeplay between the semiotic code and the world, similarly in the context of genetic explanation, it could be surmised that consciousness is a process of forming and forging gene-organism relations that complements the conscious relation between the self and the world. For example, the way genes response to the external or the way genes tolerate an external intervention and the way in which they work as an assembly to establish a fit between the world and the organism is much more than causal. It is quite self-conscious as each molecule knows how to respond to the role played by other molecules in the system to evolve in an open ended manner.²⁰ Such evolution makes molecules behave in a manner that the causal connections with the world can be subsumed under the process of self-inspection. This makes the world jump out from the activated states of the system to an abductive knowledge of the mind. This is a simultaneous organization of the self

and the world that manifests itself in almost indiscernible molecular interactions that subsume the very consciousness of it only to give birth to a depth that consciousness can only fathom with. This is what made Wittgenstein to remark, 'Being able to climb a mountain' may be called a state of my body. I say 'I can climb it-I mean I am strong enough'.²¹

What Wittgenstein meant is that the verb 'climb' is to be understood not in terms of the mountain but in terms of the ability of the agent. The question here is, is the ability necessarily self-referring, or it is more of an apriori cognizance of capability? Wittgenstein's answer lies partly in the capacity to use the word 'ability' correctly in language and it partly lies in organizing the act as represented by the verb in language. In genetic explanations, consciousness is more like this simultaneous correct use and organization of the information by an organism in which genes are both the cause as well as the effect organized by a network of prior connections between the genes and the world. As Hermann Weyl remarked,

... we need *signs*, real signs, as written with chalk on the blackboard or with pen on paper. We must understand what it means to place one stroke after the other. It would be putting matters upside down to reduce this naively and grossly misunderstood ordering of signs in space to some purified spatial conception and structure, such as that expressed in Euclidean geometry. Rather, we must support ourselves here on the natural understanding in handling things in our natural world around us. Not pure ideas in pure consciousness, but concrete signs lie at the base, signs which are for us recognizable and reproducible despite small variations in detailed execution, signs which by and large we know how to handle.²²

A genetic code is like these signs made with evolutionary mechanisms on the 'fitness landscape' of co-evolving species. Although such signs follow the

laws of physics, but when they are treated as observables, they are understood the way Wittgenstein understood 'climb' reflexively that is by way of observing the reflexivity between genes and the evolution of self-inspection in autonomous agents. We can justify this by reproducing what Gary Marcus says about this reflexive character of genes.

Genes are widely seen as either blueprints or deterministic dictators but, in fact, neither view is correct. A single organism's collection of genes—its genome—can lead to many different outcomes, depending on the environment surrounding that genome. The African butterfly *Bicyclus anyana*, for example, can take on two different forms—a colorful version in the rainy season and a dull brown version in the dry season—depending on how its genes are switched on and off.²³

In other words, the capacity to switch on or off according to environment as well as the internal capacity to know what the other parts are going to do are essential for an autonomous agent to have judgments as they are reflected in choice of action. What is reflected gets decontextualized from the process of its culmination in a notion of consciousness that centres on the supremacy of the self. It means that the genes can do what phenomenal consciousness can do and this doing do not depend on access to states of mind/world. Access is rather an end product of a flexible re-wiring of brain areas. Such re-wiring ensures recursivity of genic communication that reproduces the phenotype with functional variations. It could be argued that a single gene can take multiple functions and its copies can take new functions. Otherwise, a single gene can serve multiple functions recruited in multiple domains. In all such cases, the autonomy of the agent in being aware remain intact, although it will establish new kind of dynamic loops that will break the stable circuitry of cognition.²⁴ This also shall make an abductive

switching from awareness to consciousness without the apriori necessity that a conscious machine, going by our usual metaphysical presuppositions should possess. This will rather be recursive neural-genic loop that needs an access to an external world and such an access shall be further regulated by self-constructing loops through self-inspection.

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Need For a Participatory Model of Development

SR MEHTA*

An attempt has been made here to critically examine the various perspectives of development. Of these, the dominant paradigm of 'Modernization' based on the capitalist path of development was found inadequate and weak for the development of the developing nations. Instead of development of new nations, this led to crisis of income and regional disparities, poverty, unemployment and underemployment, shanty living conditions, inadequate educational and healthcare facilities and

population growth. In response to inadequacy of this paradigm, Latin American scholars proposed a framework of development for the developing nations, which is a derivative of Marxian perspective of political economy and recognizes the underdevelopment of new nations as a consequence of the development of the developed nations. These have been referred hitherto as the Dependency Theory or the World System Theory within the realm of the sociology of underdevelopment.

Of these neo-Marxian perspectives, the World System theory has been observed to come closer in understanding the influence of international capitalism as a factor of development or underdevelopment of a nation. However, this perspective also falls short of the expectation of the developing nations and has faced the wrath of both the Marxists and the non-Marxist scholars. It would be worthwhile to examine the critique on this perspective before we direct our attention to the need for the participatory model of development in the context of

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developing nations which has amply shown positive results in Mao's people's movement in China, Gandhian mass movement in India, Another development and its application in the Latin American countries as a result of Human Scale Development, and increasing involvement of grassroot organizations and social action groups through the process of conscientization, multiplying effect of electronic media, and diffusion of innovations as a part of development communication perspective.

However, let us first take up the critique provided by the Marxists and non-Marxists on the underdevelopment theory (dependency theory or its sister variant world system approach) Marxist scholars' argument is that in conceiving capitalism, the relations of production within the capitalist system have been ignored both by Frank and Wallerstein. In fact, they have confused capitalism with the existence of an economic system. Even no importance has been accorded to the factor of unequal exchange so crucial in productivity of its free labour force in the growth and maintenance of capitalism. As such, both the class formation and class struggle have been treated as residual categories in the analysis. The thrust on national and international contexts of class struggle has not been taken into account. This has compelled the Marxist scholars to emphasize that there is a need to consider the nation-State as a unit of analysis rather than the global capitalist system. This necessitates to consider class conflict existing within the indigenous social structure of the developing nations for the development purposes. Empirically speaking, even some of the Marxists observe that the underdevelopment theory has not correctly interpreted the empirical data on the development of the developing nations as development is taking place and capitalism is fulfilling its historical mission. The development problem is not due to their dependence on the

developed nations but mainly due to internal contradictions within these nations. The world system theorists studied relations of the 'core' with the 'periphery' but they focussed on the capitalist 'core' countries to the neglect of the socio-economic structures of the Third World and misinterpreted the nature of capitalism which was contrary to the expectations of the Marxist scholars (Harrison 1989).

On the other hand, the non-Marxists pointed out that the world system approach is tautological. It is argued that if formal colonialism was responsible for the under-development of the Third World, then it should imply that countries which did not experience colonial domination, should be more developed than the other parts of the Third World. However, this theory negates any such division because it believes that capitalism has penetrated every new nation, whether it experienced colonialism or not. These nations have been classified as colonies, semi-colonies or neo-colonies and even nations of Eastern Europe and China have been incorporated into the world system. It is further observed that every society, to a certain extent, is dependent on the other, so the dependency of the developing or the developed nations is not an issue of underdevelopment. Besides, we cannot ignore the non-economic linkages of the 'periphery' to the 'centre' as these are contingent upon the specific cultural characteristics of the developing nations. The world system theorists considered all social action and interaction and culture to represent some kind of objective economic interest and this is non-convincing. Moreover, non-Marxists like Marxists, argue that empirically speaking development can and is taking place in the Third World and it is closely linked with the formation of close ties with the 'core' societies. It is stated that as and when these ties are weakened, the underdevelopment of the periphery nations increases. Moreover, the

dependency theory fails to account adequately with the transfer of technology and the role of values and diffusion in development. These arguments suggest us to get back to the position which the modernization theory occupied (Harrison 1989).

In the wake of the above critique on the sociology of underdevelopment (dependency theory and world system theory) and earlier criticism of the 'modernization' paradigm, it is clear that none of these perspectives are adequate in articulating and managing social and economic inequalities in the developing nations. The debates and the counter debates in these perspectives are inconclusive. The gun or butter argument by development scholars, currently is, that there is a need to take into account the indigenous social structures of the developing nations including their political structures and the relationships of these nations (social, economic, cultural, political and military) with the developed nations, through development oriented bureaucracy and local leadership along with participation of people to relate development initiatives to their needs and aspirations. This should form the basis of a 'paradigm' for the development of these nations. This brings into focus the participatory model of development for the developing nations as the earlier perspectives (Modernization and Dependency and World System Theory) on development have provided only privileged roles to national elites (Mehta 1999). As such, people's movements through the mobilization of grassroot organizations and social action groups supported by NGOs in interface with local leadership and bureaucracy for encouraging development initiatives that suit to the needs of the people, remain a serious alternative for the development of the developing nations.

Before we highlight the essential elements of a participatory model of development for the developing nations, we need to understand the concept of

participation. Puri (2004) in her perceptive analysis of participation at the community level points out that over the years there is a greater agreement about the desirability of participatory model of local resource management, both by those who emphasize on participation as a means to achieve institutional efficiency, and others who conceive participation as a mean to realize the goals of empowerment, equity and democratic governance. However, recently the second dimension of participation has caught the imagination of academics and the policy makers because of people centred policies, civil society and social capital aspects associated with the participation than the first one. Despite it being a fuzzy concept, participation to some may simply mean membership in a group and to others, it may convey having an effective voice in the decision making process.

Referring to Amartya Sen's capability approach (the goal of the Public Policy approach is to enlarge a person's functioning and capacity to function and expand the range of things that he or she can do in his or her life), a distinction has been made by Puri between efficiency-based participation and agency-based participation. The former focusses on participation as an instrumental means to achieve the goals that may vary from institutional efficiency to the state-defined public interests while the latter emphasizes on the role of human agency in empowering those who are affected by policies and political change, besides providing opportunities that may promote an equitable distribution of costs and benefits among them, thus making participation a goal in itself.

In the historical context, we can look towards Aristotle who considered a citizen as one who is entitled to participate in an office and contributes towards deliberation or decision for the self sufficiency of the city or to other political scientists, who conceive of

political participation as a mechanism of communicating the needs and preferences of the citizens to the decision makers in the political system in order to bring pressure on them to respond. In the Indian context, Gandhi's concept of 'Gram Swaraj' and MN Roy's people's committees, come close to treating participation as an end to itself to promote participatory democracy based on community life and values. However, in the contemporary scenario, participation has to be viewed in the context of a liberal bureaucratic welfare state, the decisions of which determine, practically all the spheres of public as well as private life besides situating it in increasing process of globalized economy and knowledge revolution and of demands made through a political voice by marginalized groups and other excluded sections of the society. As such, participation shall have to be viewed in relevance with the role of the State to provide institutional structures to facilitate it besides that of global organizations like The World Bank and the global and local actors (NGOs) and research institutes and universities which generate global knowledge and identify the people who need to be included in the participatory process (Puri 2004).

For effective 'Good Governance', it is argued that two pre-requisites are essential. First, there is a need for active participation of the civic community in public affairs while the second refers to a civic culture which should bind participants together through horizontal relations of reciprocity and cooperation and not through vertical relations of authority and dependency. Further, there is a need to instill in the minds of the people norms and values that promote cooperation, solidarity and public spiritedness in terms of social capital to build up a social organization based on trust, norms and networks in order to improve the efficiency of the society through coordinated action (Putnam 1993). So, instead of 'top-

down' approach of the State for the development of the developing nations, the 'bottom-up' approach through involvement of 'people' was considered more effective in efficient development of new nations. There is, therefore, now a greater stress laid on social capital to shape or influence the development initiatives for mobilizing the already existing local social networks to achieve varied policy goals (Rankin 2002).

Apart from the institutional agency-based efficiency perspective on participation, as highlighted above, another approach which is applicable as a part of the democratization process to include and recognize the marginalized groups of society as collective identities for furtherance of democratization of the system which provides interventions of a nature that suit these groups, is based on the Amartya Sen's concepts of entitlements and capabilities. Sen's argument is that the normative goal of empowerment (enlarging one's capacity and capability to function), equity (of both costs and benefits) and human agency is much more significant than the factor of institutional efficiency in the development milieu. The basic objective of development is to expand human capability referred as the alternative combinations of functionings from which the person can choose out of a range of options in deciding what kind of life he or she wants to lead (Dreze and Sen 1995, 1999). It is in this sense that development policies should view people as an end rather than as the 'means of production' (Dreze and Sen 1995).

However, participation whether conceived in equity sense or based on agency interventions highlights significantly the idea of community and the local. Both these perspectives seem to ignore the fact that any community has internal differentiation, competition and conflict and power differential within its space. This has led to criticism of the social capital and efficiency-based participation approach on the

count that the proponents of these schema have not taken into account the elements of bad social capital existing in the community that is the paradoxical co-existence of trust, cooperation and reciprocity with coercive, hierarchical and exclusive communal formations. They also seem to have ignored the fact that in most situations, collective action at the community level is circumscribed by ascriptive affiliations such as caste, religion and tribe. On the other hand, the capability theory of participation is better equipped to withstand the ideas of difference, while dealing with empowerment, equity and voice. In this regard, Sen's argument is that a person is exposed to poverty when his or her exchange entitlement is insufficient to meet his or her basic necessities of life, which are often determined by his or her gender and class status in the society. But, in spite of that, issues of difference and power inherent in communities affecting their participatory goals for development are not given much attention. These are, rather, seen as impediments towards people-based development, but are likely to disappear, once the participatory development is institutionalized. In short, both the perspectives on participation (social capabilities more than social capital) have recognized that inequalities, social hierarchies and discrimination are realities confronted in day-to-day and face-to-face relations and interactions within local communities (Puri 2004).

After peeping into the window of theoretical formulations on participation as given above, it may be desirable to examine the operationalization of the same in the development process. It is now a very well recognized fact that in a participatory model of development, people have to be set in the centre-stage of development. The cultural perspective specific to a nation demands that people's needs, aspirations, motivations and inclinations should be given the utmost considerations. In this context, although it is

desirable to evaluate the value preferences of the people, yet it is a difficult task to make an assessment of the people's preferred social activities. In the context of the developing nations, there is a need to empower people, especially the weaker sections, so that they are capacitated socially and psychologically to initiate action on their own in relevance with their own needs and interests in a more effective and efficient manner. Felt needs of the people should be given priority over the real needs of the planners, by making a beginning with the overlapping needs, that is, the needs that overlap the felt and real needs. We need to involve people not only in designing but also in the implementation of the development schemes to promote agreement, cooperation and interaction not only in between the beneficiaries but between them and the implementation agencies so as to reduce delays, increase service output and minimize costs (Paul 1987).

Basically, three steps have been suggested in evolving a strategy of participation of the people in the development initiatives. First, there is an urgent need for conscientization of people through information sharing and consultations. A large segment of the population, especially the marginalized groups, have absolutely no idea of the type of problems that need developmental attention and tackling. They need to be made aware, conscious and given relevant information and provided knowledge so that they could assert their voices and make suitable demands through appropriate political means on the governing and implementing agencies. Secondly, people must be involved in various decisions on issues concerning them to undertake development initiatives. Decision making is a complex phenomenon and whether taken at the individual or collective level, is based on maximum utilization expectation of people from the actions involved along with the likely consequences that may result from such

actions. As such, we need to weigh pros and cons related to such actions within the social organizational and value framework of the community or society. This would necessitate analysis of the community or societal social structure including power structure and leadership patterns, norms, values and sanctions which may retard or promote development initiatives or diffusion of innovations, influence patterns through caste and class affiliations, gender roles and equity dimensions, land-labour arrangements and relationships, family structure, religious adherences of people etc. In short, a thorough analysis of the community social structure can prove instrumental in involving people and helping them to take decisions on the specific development schemes in relevance with their needs (Mehta 1999).

Before taking up the third step, an empirical model for Community Involvement by Christopher and his associates (1957) based on the analysis of the existing social structure of the community, is described briefly. Analysis of the community social structure brings out the convergence of interest of those members of the community that have appropriate sentiments related to social order, beliefs and rationally calculated purposes in regard to a problem which is also rationally perceived so by the agency involved to tackle the same. The next step is to establish an initiating set based on the convergence of interests to begin the action process by all those who can or have right to call upon each other and have some obligation in regard to each other through relationships which will provide a basis for them to cooperate and work together for the realization of some of the common goals or purposes. After the establishment of an initiating set, it must be legitimized and sponsored. In the case of a voluntary action, authorization of action should be diffused through out the community, that is, there is a need to have access to

groups, formal social institutional setups, and other influential persons whose sponsorship or approval can legitimize an action. This should be proceeded by the establishment of an execution set having personnel who need to work through various channels such as community organizations or groups, influentials or leaders, cliques or factional groups, propinquity (neighbourhoods) and kinship networks etc.

Further, there is a need to make use of the reciprocal rights and obligations already existing in the community to ensure that besides those who exhibited reservoir of good will, others who were indifferent, variable in their attitude, and had shown an organized opposition to the development initiatives or issues, are converted to the maximum extent to a group of people who provide legitimation, sponsorship and approval or remain neutral to the efforts of the agency to salvage the problem of development. This can be done by making appeals and justifications through both personal and impersonal channels of communication. Even then, there would be some contained opposition in the community to the development initiative, as no community is fully organized and there are factious and conflicting groups who compete, context and confront one another to find a space in the community. In this approach, the technical support system to the execution set is to be provided by the agency or organization seeking involvement of people (Christopher et al, 1957).

After having discussed the community analysis of the social structure to involve people in the decision making process in a community action programme which led to enlistment of a large number of personnel on voluntary basis to conduct a survey in the area of Public Health in a county in the USA, we may highlight the third important step of participation of people in the development initiatives. This is related

to institution building process at the community level.

As discussed above in the case of establishment of a execution set for community action, it is not an easy task to build up an institution for action as it takes long time through people's own initiative and affirmative action to tackle a developmental issue or a problem. A number of NGOs, over the years, are involved in the welfare of the people through their own initiatives. In fact, in the recent past, we observe rather an explosive emergence of these NGOs as a collective actor in managing the development activities. The invisible world of NGOs needs encouragement from the formal economic and political structures of the State, which often feel threatened by the emergence of such groups. As such, wherever, the spaces for economic and social development are available, the NGOs should be encouraged to occupy them (Maxneef et al 1989).

It is now increasingly realized that the mainstay of contribution to development by NGOs is not that much financial as it is organizational. In other words, the NGOs are not required to financially induce development but their efforts have to be directed in mobilizing people into organized structure of group action. It is also suggested that the two major actors in the development of people are the local governments and local communities but we have observed that bureaucracy and community are antithetical systems or styles of social organizations between the State and the people. As such, the alternative strategy to the governmental intervention is decentralization. Decentralization would comprise decentralization of power and authority through delegation of the same to semi-autonomous or parastatal agencies, devolution of power to local government and transfer of functions from public to non-governmental institutions or joint exercise of both (Cernea 1988).

But, the question often raised is that

if centralization has failed in accomplishing development then what is the guarantee that the decentralization approach will hasten the development process towards its ultimate aim. However, the argument in favour of decentralization is that through this approach, we could ensure greater commitment of people to develop themselves through participation in the development activities. Further, it will help them to build up confidence in themselves to take appropriate decisions on their own. Centralized planned development has brought in greater dependency among the people which needs to be discouraged to imbibe self-reliance, basic for the progress of people in the developing countries (Mehta 1984).

Coming back to NGOs, it is observed that they are subjected to many handicaps. There are limited reliability of their efforts on a larger scale, inadequate ability to have self-sustainable technical capacity and lack of broad programming context. But they are advantageous in certain ways, for example, they have necessary capacity and willingness to outreach the inaccessible areas and the rural poor, besides promoting local participation. They can also operate on a small scale while innovating and adapting themselves to the new settings and situations (Cernea 1988).

It is also observed that those NGOs which entered into coalition with others, promoting one or other aspect of development initiative like health, population, environment, forestry, gender equity and empowerment, poverty alleviation, land use through cooperative efforts or youth affairs etc or if they have established networks in between and among different NGOs, then they proved successful in determining or influencing policy concerns at the national and international levels in accelerating and streamlining the development of new nations through the skill of strategic competence acquired

by them. For example, in anticipation of the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo (1994), NGOs associated with women's right and women's health, throughout the world were mobilized at national and international levels, in order to influence the action programme, prepared in advance for finalization at that meeting (Klugman 2000).

It is observed that people's organizations should attempt to find alternative ways of organizing the community or society through generation of values that provide direction to our economic and political life. Of late, people have become conscious of their worth and started voicing that they should be allowed to shape their own development process through setting up of their own agenda which should match with their needs, aspiration and motivations. Poverty eradication, equitable distribution of resources, access to resources especially to the weaker sections, appropriate education and skill development, technological innovations, social and welfare services should be on the priority agenda for development of the developing nations.

Development schemes or projects whether implemented or instituted by the governmental agencies or community based organizations must be monitored periodically to improve upon or provide corrective measures for successful realization of the developmental goals or objectives. For that purpose, evaluation system must be built within the planning process of the development programme and through feedback and feedforward mechanisms to the programme management, the efficiency of the agencies involved in development of people can be enhanced by taking note of cost-benefit dimension, service output and delays in implementation of the projects or schemes. It is observed that in the context of the developing nations, the efficiency of an organization is

generally hampered by role diffusedness, structural inconsistency because of gap in expectation and performance and ad-hoc decision making. As such, evaluation can improve the functioning of a development agency and help in the process of institution building, so essential at the community level for involving leadership, voluntary organizations and mobilizing local resources for a wider community participation (Mehta 1999).

It is suggested that the essential elements in the participatory model of development are conscientization, organization and mobilization of people. This process can go a long way in ensuring greater social justice and equality for all. Further, it is believed that epistemologically speaking, the growth of development theory and practice will take place in a dialectic manner as at each stage, the lessons learnt out of practice will form basis for further building of theory in this model of development (Wignaraja 1991). We also need to have human rights and democracy as top priority on the development agenda of developing nations in a people-centred development perspective, in order to encourage human dignity and ensure full participation of people in the affairs of the nations. As such, a step towards social and cultural development must be in complement to economic development so necessary for human survival and well being. Media of communication can play a significant role in that direction. But, there is a need for democratization of media of communication for development purposes (Mehta 1992).

In short, the participatory model of development is mainly guided by the ethno-development perspective and the development communication perspective. In the ethno-development perspective, people are in the centre stage and they are to be conscientized, organized and mobilized and empowered to show commitment and responsibility towards themselves as well as towards others for

evolving a self-reliant development strategy. On the other hand, in the development communication strategy, communication acts as a catalyst to accelerate the development process of the people by evolving a popular culture for development purposes and helping people to arrive at value consensus through resolutions of conflicts and tensions. Perhaps, in the context of developing nations, these perspectives should provide a better impetus to the development process than the 'Modernization' paradigm or 'Dependency' or 'The World System' theory (Mehta 1999).

It may be appropriate to emphasize here that the participatory model of development based on development communication perspective appears in line with the Habermas Theory of Communicative Action which advocates an action based on the negotiated understanding of the actors in a societal system, acquiring knowledge affluence and looking beyond modernity to tackle some of the emerging issues or realities by enlarging the public rather than the private sphere of social life and integrating these (lifeworld) in a coordinated manner with the polity and the economy (system).

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Nirvāṇa in Candrakīrti's Prasannapadā

A Study in the Mādhyamika Concept of Nirvāṇa in the Context of Indian Thought

GC Nayak

The present work is an analytical philosophic enterprise dealing with a specific topic, viz. *nirvāṇa*, in Candrakīrti's *Prasannapadā*, which represents and is a standing testimony to the Buddhist critical philosophy *par excellence*. A unique revolution in the world of thought has been brought about by Ācārya Candrakīrti, the great Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika thinker of 7th century C.E., through his theory of *nirvāṇa* as *sarvalnirvaśeṣa Kalpanākṣaya* (cessation of essentialist thought-constructions/speculative picture-thinking) developed in his *magnum opus*, *Prasannapadā*, thus giving the idea of *nirvāṇa* a novel turn, viewing it from a fresh perspective.

The idea may have had its basis in *Mūla Madhyama Kārikā/Madhyamaka Śāstra* of Nāgārjuna, the unique philosophical master-mind of the world of 2nd century C.E., and of course in the enlightenment of the Buddha, the credit goes to the author of this volume, however, for bringing to the fore the genius of Candrakīrti in working out the theoretical and practical implications of this idea by a rigorous analysis of the logic of essences (*Svabhāva*) and allied concepts. A critical and comparative study of *nirvāṇa* of *Prasannapadā* with that of early Buddhism on the one hand and of *nirvāṇa* with the concept of Vedāntic *mokṣa* on the other as well as points of comparison and contrast brought out with such pioneers of Western thought as Aristotle and Wittgenstein are features of special interest in the volume, meant for promoting a greater clarity in understanding.

The volume, primarily aiming at an understanding of the Buddhist concept of *nirvāṇa* in its proper perspective, through eradication of certain earlier misconceptions, highlights for this purpose Candrakīrti's unique critical philosophy advocated and worked out so diligently in *Prasannapadā* which is a significant milestone in the development of the Buddhist thought. It is expected to be of interest for all scholars of Indian thought. At the same time it is likely to prove itself to be of value for further intensive research in the field.

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Shavayatra

OM PRAKASH VALMIKI*

(TRANSLATED BY NARESH K JAIN)**

In a chamar village there was a balhar family, which lived across the pond. The pond was like a boundary between the chamars and the balhars. During the rains when the pond became brimful with water, the balhars were completely cut-off from the village. On other days, when there wasn't so much water, they managed to reach the village somehow. That meant that there was no way by which the balhars could go over to the village. No one had ever felt the need to provide for it.

Whenever any chamar needed them, he would stand on the bank of the pond and shout. It wasn't such a big pond either, that he would not be heard by the balhars. On hearing the call they would come out.

There were only two members left in the balhar family now: Surja, who was getting old; and his daughter Santo, who had come back a widow from her in-laws in the third year of her marriage. Surja's wife had also died three years ago. It was Santo who had taken over the responsibilities of the household and outside. Even otherwise Surja had grown quite weak. His sight had also started failing. Still he somehow managed to do whatever odd work was required to be done in the village.

Surja had a son also, who had run away from home when he was ten or twelve years of age. After roaming about for a few years he had got a job in the railways. In fact it was this job that had drawn him to studies. He managed

to complete his high school and then got technical training and became a fitter in the railways. From Kallu, he had become Kallan.

Kallan had borne the entire expenses on Santo's marriage. Surja didn't have a single paise with him. Kallan too had got married in the railway colony. His father-in-law also worked in the railways. He had got an educated wife, which made a noticeable difference in their living. The whole tenor of his life had changed.

He came to the village only occasionally. But whenever he did, the chamars of the village eyed him strangely. They were not able to digest the fact that Kallu had become Kallan. In their eyes he was still a balhar, lowest in the caste hierarchy, an untouchable even among the untouchables.

He felt himself isolated in the village. There was no one, outside the family, with whom he could converse for a while. Even the educated persons in the village avoided him. He was a balhar after all, who lived beyond the pond. The villagers still called him Kallu balhar. He didn't like being addressed in that way. It pierced him like a sharp knife and filled him with a sense of inferiority.

This time he had come home after a long spell. As soon as he came he said to Surja: 'Come, bapu, shift with me to Delhi. We'll all live together in the government quarter.

'No, my son, no. Why do you want

us leave the village near the end of my life? At one time my ancestors had found themselves a place here. They all died here, on this very ground. I've spent my entire life living at the pond. Where shall we go now!' Surja, shutting his eyes intermittently, spoke from the heart, as though he was searching for something in his past.

Kallan looked at Santo. She of course wanted to get out of this barbarous existence. But she couldn't bring herself to contradict what her father had said, either earlier or now. She just sat scrapping the earth with her big toe. It was as though her thinking was taking her far in the distance where she couldn't spot a place to rest. Kallan said firmly: 'Bapu, here there is neither respect, nor livelihood; even in the eyes of the chamars we're mere balhars. It's because of you that I have to come. My children don't want to come here, they don't like it here. . .'

Surja stopped him short saying: 'Then don't come here, son. We'll spend our life as we've done. I'm only worried about Santo. . . she will be left alone. This run-down structure will probably not survive the rains this time. If you feel concerned about us, make it a *pucca* house. . .' Surja had thought of this several times but had not been able to say it. He found an opportunity to do so today.

'Bapu, I have saved up a little money, but what shall we gain by spending it on this house? I shall not stay here after

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you're gone. Santo will go along with me to Delhi.' Kallan spoke plainly.

On hearing this Surja burst out. He started spouting abuses. He shouted: 'You! Why even wait for me to die? . . . Take her away today itself. And listen. Don't you make a show of your money before me . . . Keep it with you . . . We shall manage the rest of our life as we've done, so far.'

It appeared as though the thread of communication between the two had suddenly got snapped. Silence spread all round them.

Early next morning Kallan left for Delhi. He returned a week later after making arrangements for money. His wife Saroj and ten-year-old daughter were also with him. They had left their son at the maternal grandparents' place. As Kallan came, he said to his father: 'Talk to some *mistri*. A truck of bricks will reach here tomorrow.' As he heard this, Surja's eyes began to shine. He didn't quite believe in what Kallan had said. But the latter assured him. That very moment he set out in search of a *mistri*.

Contractor Surat Ram had constructed most of the houses in the village. It was to him that Surja went: 'Thekedarji, kindly make a house for us also.'

At first Surat Ram looked at him up and down. He didn't have adequate clothing on his body and here he was, trying to have a *pucca* house built for himself. Surat Ram was in a hurry. He had to go somewhere. He put Surja off with a laugh: 'I've no time today. We'll talk later.'

Surja didn't lose heart. Next day he started out very early. Sabir *mistri* lived in the adjoining village. An old artisan, Surja told him the reason for his coming. Sabir agreed: 'All right. I shall come and see tomorrow. But I'll take my dues in advance.'

'That is all right, *mistriji*. Please come tomorrow. Our house is right at the pond.' Surja wasn't able to conceal his joy. It was as if he was walking on

air. His weak body too seemed to be full of energy.

By the time he reached home, the bricks had arrived. When he saw the red bricks Surja forgot all his exhaustion. He was filled with elation. He hadn't experienced a similar joy earlier.

It was no less than a miracle for the villagers to see bricks being unloaded across the pond. There seemed a virtual earthquake in the village. Many people of the village were standing on the other side of the pond.

Ramjilal was the *pradhan* of the *kirtan sabha*. There used to be a night-long *kirtan* on the occasion of Ravidas jayanti. He too was standing among the crowd. When he couldn't contain himself any longer, he shouted: 'Abe, O Surja, who's got these bricks?' Surja said in excitement: 'Our Kallan is getting a *pucca* house built for us.'

Ramjilal just looked wide-eyed, stunned. Keeping the rising jealousy and malice in control, he said: 'That is fine, Surja. But did you or did you not obtain the approval of the *pradhanji* before building a *pucca* house?'

Ramjilal's words pierced Surja's breast like an arrow. He felt as though some usurer were standing before him and threatening him. Without being able to control his anger, he growled: 'Why ask the *pradhanji*?'

'Still, you should've sought his approval.' Saying this Ramjilal went away but he had filled Surja's mind with doubts.

Ramjilal went straight to the *pradhan*. He presented a peppered account of the goings-on across the pond before *pradhan* Balram Singh. At that time Balram Singh did not make any comments. He just shook his head stroking his moustaches. The *pradhan* was a cunning man. He knew Ramjilal through and through. After he had gone away he became a little downcast. That Surja balhar was getting a house built was enough to make him feel restless. Even otherwise, Surja was no longer of much use to the village.

The news that the balhars across the pond were getting a *pucca* house built spread throughout the village. 'It's earnings from the railways; a truckload of bricks is coming; cement, sand, gravel, steel have been ordered.' The news snowballed so much that it seemed as though it was not a house but a mansion that would be built on the chest of the village. 'Teak is coming for doors and windows. It's rumoured that coloured tiles are also arriving.' The gossip multiplied with each teller.

The next day a messenger from the *pradhan* turned up across the pond. Surja, though unwilling, had to go with him.

As he saw Surja, Balram Singh shrieked: 'Now that you have made a little money, you have forgotten your limits! We didn't let the balhars settle here so that they would build a *haveli* on our chest . . . The land on which you live belongs to our ancestors. Live as you have been living, no one will have any objection. But if you try and raise your head, we'll shunt you out.'

Every word of Balram Singh like a poisoned dart pierced Surja's body like a sieve. All the bittersweet days of his life began to dance before his eyes. It seemed to have happened the other day: What was it that Surja had not done for the village! How Balram had entreated him for every single vote during the elections! At that time Surja was not a balhar, but Surja uncle. Surja heaved a cold breath and went back without giving any reply. Balram Singh tried to stop him but he didn't. At this Balram Singh's shrieks turned into abuses, which could be heard outside.

As he reached home, Surja said to Kallan, 'You were right, Kallu. This village is not fit to live in.' His long moustaches were quaking with anger. His eyes were wet.

'Bapu, there isn't much lost even now. Any one would buy the bricks. These people will not let the house be built,' Kallan tried to persuade Surja. But Surja was adamant. He wouldn't

bend. He would face whatever be the situation. He repeated this to himself. 'No, my son, the house shall be built. I will lay down my life but I shall not leave this village,' said Surja with self-confidence.

Kallan was in a cleft stick. In an emotional moment he had bought the bricks but the situation in the village alarmed him. He only hoped it wouldn't lead to a clash. His wife Saroj and daughter Saloni had come with him. But Saloni had developed fever right on the first day. Saroj gave her the few pills that she had with her. But the temperature continued. She got scared and repeatedly kept insisting on Kallan to go back: 'You're needlessly wasting money on the house. We'll take Santo along. Try and convince babu.' But Kallan was unable to do so. He said to her: 'Would it be right to cause him any distress at this stage of his life?' Saroj kept quiet.

Surja kept a nightlong vigil to guard the bricks. He didn't close his eyes even for a second. As soon as it was morning he left home to fetch Sabir *mistri*. He feared that someone might not tutor him. He had no faith left in any one now.

Saloni's fever remained unabated. Surja asked Kallan to get a doctor for her.

There was only one doctor in the village and Kallan went to call him.

As the doctor saw Kallan, he declined to come. After making some general enquiries he gave him some pills. Kallan entreated the doctor several times: 'Please, doctor sahib, examine her at least once.' But the doctor remained unmoved. Kallan then said: 'I will bring the patient here in your clinic.'

'Don't bring the patient here. Or else my shop will get shut down tomorrow. Don't forget you're a balhar,' the doctor warned him plainly. 'Give her this medicine. She'll be all right.'

Kallan came back dejected. The pills that the doctor had given also proved ineffective. Her body was burning because of high fever; because of it she

was continuously delirious. Saroj was tending to her and had not moved away from her even for a minute. Her worries about her were increasing. All kinds of fears assailed her.

Surja who had left in the morning returned in the afternoon, tired and disheartened. Seeing his condition Kallan asked him: 'What's happened, babu?' Surja spoke in a defeated voice: 'What was there to happen! The *mistri* has gone far away to a relative. He will come back after ten-fifteen days... Son, I don't think he will come here.' Surja expressed his disappointment.

'But babu, we were paying him all his charges in advance. Even then he's backed out,' Kallan said in surprise.

'Some one within the village must have prevented him... Sabir isn't a man of this kind. He too seems to have got scared of them,' Surja spoke out of deep despair. Both of them were plunged in deep worries.

'How is Saloni feeling?' asked Surja.

'Her condition has worsened a great deal. She will have to be taken to the hospital,' Kallan expressed his worry.

'Shall I send for a witch doctor? I hope it isn't some spirit or anything,' Surja vocalized his inner fears.

'No, babu, I shall take her to the town tomorrow morning. Only, if she is able to spend the night peacefully,' Kallan's voice was tinged with deep pain. Surja tried to console him.

They spent the whole night without sleep. Saloni's condition had deteriorated further. As soon as it was morning Kallan put Saloni on his back and covered her with clothes properly. Saroj was with him. They wanted to reach the town before it was noon.

The town was some eight-ten kilometres away from the village. There was no transport available. Kallan had requested the well-to-do chamars of the village for the loan of their bullock-cart, but they were not prepared to lend it to the balhars.

Carrying Saloni on his back was getting to be difficult. She kept sliding

down his back repeatedly. Kallan's wife walked behind him supporting her. They wanted to reach the town as soon as possible. But the end of the journey didn't seem to be in sight.

As the sun became hotter, Saloni's body was becoming increasingly enfeebled. Her breathing had slowed down. The town was now half a kilometre away. Suddenly Kallan felt that Saloni's burden had increased somewhat. The feverish body had become cold. He said to Saroj: 'Just see if Saloni is all right.'

There was no movement in Saloni's body. Saroj shrieked out aloud:

'What's happened to my daughter? ... Why isn't she moving, see?' she said weeping.

Taking her off his back, Kallan laid Saloni down on the wayside. He stood there in despair, feeling cheated. There was a tumult in his mind. Her ten-year-old daughter, alive and well, had become a corpse in his own hands. Everything had happened right in front of their eyes. They were crying loudly. The path was lonely and there was no one to heed them. They sat weeping and wailing for quite sometime. They didn't know what they should do. With the dead body of Saloni lying on the *kaccha* path they were in deep agony. After a long time they saw someone coming from the town. For a moment they saw a flicker of hope. The passer-by might perhaps help them.

For a moment the man stopped near them. But he walked on without saying anything. Perhaps he had recognized them. He belonged to the same village. Kallan realized that caste constituted a man's entire identity.

Eventually they got up and placing the daughter's dead body on his back started going back to the village.

The burden on Kallan's back was heavy but the burden in their heart was much greater. Saloni's childhood shouts kept leaping up in their memory. With a heavy heart they were moving towards the village carrying her dead body. The

journey seemed to be endless. It was taking them longer to reach the village than it had taken them to reach near the town. Saroj's own condition was causing anxiety. She just managed to drag on. Kallan too had broken down but was somehow holding himself up. Saroj was almost half-dead. She was finding it difficult to walk.

Surja had sensed their arrival from a distance. He was able to recognize them only when they came near but he could make out from their approaching faces who they were. The manner in which they were carrying Saloni alarmed him. From his house he came out on to the road. On seeing Saloni's dead body he was not able to control himself. He felt deeply agonized. Striking his hands on the ground, he started wailing loudly. Kallan's eyes too were overflowing with tears. Hearing this hue and cry Santo also came out. There was no one to console them.

It had taken them a lot of time trudging back from the town. There was no time to call anyone. They were in no position to wait overnight. Kallan wanted the cremation to take place before it was evening. Saroj was having

fits repeatedly as she saw Saloni's dead body.

Wood was a problem. They didn't have wood for the cremation. Surja and Santo went out to arrange for it. They went and beseeched the chamars but no one was prepared to help. Even after going about here and there for an hour, they were not able to get together enough wood for a proper cremation. There were dung-cakes in the house. Santo suggested: 'Take these cakes instead of wood.'

The cremation ground for the chamars was near the village. But the balhars were not permitted to burn their dead there. A similar situation had arisen at the death of Kallu's mother. The chamars had refused permission point blank. They had to cremate her three-four kilometres further away. Saloni's dead body had to be carried that far. Wood, dung cakes too had to be taken. There was no one other than Surja and Kallan who could help in this task.

No one from the village came to the balhars either to help carry the dead body or join in the funeral procession. Caste stood in their way. Kallan had tried hard. He had gone and met the

people in the Ravidas Mandal and Dr Ambedkar Youth Forum but no one was prepared to come. Everyone slinked away on one pretext or the other.

He started recalling the speeches made at the Ambedkar Jayanti. A deep repugnance rose up in him. He rejected all the ideas expressed there out of hand. He felt that all those speeches were hollow and unreal.

Kallan said to Surja; 'Bapu, let's not delay things any longer.' Both of them lifted Saloni's dead body wrapped in cloth. Women did not customarily go to the cremation ground among the balhars. But for Santo and Saroj there was no option but to violate this custom. Santo carried the bundle of wood on her head and also fire and a pot in her hands. Saroj came behind with a basket full of dung cakes.

Chamarins climbed up to their roofs to watch this funeral procession. Their eyes were wet. But they were helpless, each imprisoned in her ambit. These were balhars, after all. They were used to carrying not only their own dead but that of the others as well. . . .

A chamar village and within it a family of balhars!

DECLARATION

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I, Ashok Sharma, son of late Shri Harish Chandra Sharma, declare that I am the printer and publisher of newspaper entitled *Summerhill: IIAS Review* and that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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Writing 'History from Below': Challenges and Pitfalls

DEBARSHI SEN*

Debrahmanising History: Dominance and Resistance in Indian Society by Braj Ranjan Mani, New Delhi: Manohar, 2005, pp. 456, Rs. 895

At a time when the thrust is on deconstruction of history and debunking of conventional theories, it was only a matter of time when someone would come up with a book *Debrahmanising History*. The book is an attempt to portray Indian history in subaltern framework, an attempt in which the author seems to have been fairly successful.

I

In the first chapter the author writes that the Vedic people came from outside and subjugated the original inhabitants of this land, who were described as *dāsas* in their texts. The varṇa system was devised so as to maintain the brahmanical superiority and that the Vedic literatures and other ancient scriptures preached hatred for the people down in the ladder. It was marked by excessive sacrifices and rituals. The concept of *matsnyāya*—devouring of smaller fishes by the bigger ones—and *dandanīti*—rule by force—were the bases of the Vedic religion and Hinduism. Thus, the Brahmins were all powerful and subjugated the weak, i.e. the *dāsas*, who became the Śūdras. Gradually, a section of Śūdras became the *ati-Śūdras*—the untouchables. In a nutshell, the whole philosophy of

Hinduism was devised in the manner so as to keep some people—Brahmins—powerful and the larger masses subjugated. However, to counter this, the *śramana* sects emerged, which rejected the Vedic or brahmanical philosophy.

In the second chapter, the author opines that Buddhism and Jainism were the most powerful of the various *śramana* sects and emerged as major religions. But it was Buddhism which presented a viable and coherent socio-religious alternative to the Vedic-Brahmanism. He counters the view that Buddhism was originally 'a system of morality or ethics than a religion'. For him, Buddhism was a full-fledged religion from the very beginning as it was basically 'about our understanding of what life is about'. He tries to show how Buddha opposed the caste system and how the Buddhist dialectics were the anti-thesis of *Upaniṣadic* absolutism.

The third chapter deals with the medieval bhakti saints, whom the author prefers to term 'subaltern saint-poets'. The movement which started from about AD 500 peaked by the 15th and 16th century AD. It caught the imagination of the masses due to its simplicity and egalitarianism. The author tries to sketch a broad overview of this movement by discussing Kabir, Ravidas, Dadu Dayal, Nanak, Basava, Akka Mahadevi, Namdev, Chokhamela, Tukaram, Savata Mali, Mirabai, Gora, Sena, Tirumalar, Sivavakkiyar, Pamvati

Sittar and others. For the author, the movement was an extension of the earlier *śramanic* heterodoxies.

In the fourth chapter, the author depicts how colonialism and spread of modern education contributed to the emergence of 'Vedic Brahmanic nationalism'. Several social reformers emerged like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ramkrishna Paramhansa, Dayanand Saraswati, Vivekanand and others but for the author, they were all brahmanical agents.

The fifth chapter is devoted completely to Jyotirao Phule, 'the first man in modern India to launch movement for the liberation of caste-oppressed, toilers, men and women'. He dreamt of replacing 'Rama Rajya with Bali Rajya'. Although he had to face great hardships due to his chosen goal, he did not stray from his objective and laid the foundation for a strong Dalit movement in the years to come. He is often portrayed as British loyalist but he was a severe critic of the British, the author says.

In the sixth chapter, the author portrays how the work started by Phule was taken up in other parts of the country—Shahu Maharaj and Ambedkar in Maharashtra, Iyothee Thass and Periyar in Tamil Nadu, Narayan Guru, Kumara Asan and others in Kerala, Bhagyareddy Varma in Andhra, Mangoo Ram and Chotu Ram in Punjab, Acchutanand and Ram Charan in UP, Hari Chandra Thakur and others in Bengal, Sonadhar Senapati in Assam,

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besides several others. The strategies adopted by these lower caste leaders were different but they had a common aim—to fight caste oppressions.

Chapter seven deals with Gandhi's efforts to eradicate untouchability and his differences with Bhim Rao Ambedkar. For the author, Gandhi was the main brahmanical agent who snatched away the movement from the Dalit leaders through his Machiavelli practices. All his love for the Dalits was an eye-wash. His chief concern was to ensure that the Dalits stay within the Hindu fold. He virtually coerced Ambedkar to sign the Poona Pact, which finished all chances of the emergence of a genuine Dalit leadership. Ambedkar was systematically isolated by Gandhi and his team, the author says.

The author finally concludes with the comment that even after so many years of independence, not much has really changed for the depressed. The benefits of India being a welfare state, is being cornered by a few. There are in fact two India—one of the 'haves' and the other of the 'have nots'.

II

Every civilization has evolved in a particular way, by following a particular culture, i.e. a way of life. Indian civilization, being one of the oldest, too has evolved in a particular manner, which has given it a distinct identity and greatness. But in spite of all greatness there are some lacunae—atrocities committed on a large section of the society on the basis of caste being one of the prime ones.

It is now by and large an accepted fact that there has been continuity in the Indian culture and tradition all through the ages. This kind of continuity is probably matched only by the Chinese civilization. But within this continuity there have always been notes of dissent at regular intervals. The first note of dissent came in the sixth century AD

by the heterodox sects, Buddhism and Jainism being the major ones.

These notes of dissent were not necessarily from the lower section. Many of the founders of the heterodox sects were men from the upper castes. Both Māhāvira and Gautama Buddha were Kśatriya. In medieval period, Bāsava, who started the Lingāyat movement, was a Brahmin, while Guru Nanak was a Khatri, an upper caste. They vehemently came out against the rigidities of caste system and monopolizing of religion by the Brahmins. This has provided the Indian civilization with the much needed flexibility and the capacity to accommodate divergent viewpoints and manifesting and re-manifesting itself as per the requirement of a particular age. It is still manifesting itself—with the commitment of giving power to the deprived and subjugated. And all sections of the Indian society are contributing in this endeavour.

Institutionalization of religious sect is a natural process. The prophet, messiah or the one who is seen to be the founder of a religion gives the message of moral precepts to the people during his lifetime. Most of them including Buddha did not want to start a new religion¹ (mentioned by the author, p. 104). In *Angutara Nikaya* it is mentioned: 'Buddha neither claimed himself to be a divine incarnation nor a prophet; but claimed himself to be an awakened person, who by his own effort and insight, attained the state of purification of which human kind is capable.'² The messiah develops a following and some of his ardent followers become his disciples. After the messiah departs, the followers give his thoughts a shape. His sayings and teachings are compiled in the form of a scripture. Some buildings are constructed where they meet and pray, which eventually becomes their place of worship. To maintain the place of worship and to conduct prayers, priests come into existence. Besides, some kind

of trust or mechanism is formulated with office bearers to run these places. The priests and the followers of a religion start worshipping in a particular manner, which becomes the style particular to that sect and thus the process of ritualization starts. This has been the pattern for almost all religions. Ritualization is thus inevitable in the course of evolution and growth of a religion. However, the problem comes when those who manage the religious activities start giving more emphasis to rituals and stray from the essence of religion. It is then that voices of dissent are raised by those who oppose this excessive ritualization. This leads to division in religion and emergence of new sects.

Although Hindu religion is an evolved one, it too has gone through these phases. It is an established fact that during the Vedic times the people worshipped natural forces and there was no concept of idol worship. The caste rigidities too emerged slowly. There are several examples to prove this point. One of the verses of *Kaṭhak Sāmhita* of *Yajurveda* says, 'kim brahmaṃsye pitram, kim pracasi mātṛam, śrutam chet asmin vedyam, sapitāha sapitā-maha', which means: Why do you ask who is the father or mother of the Brahmin? If he has learning then that is the father and grandfather. The story of Satyakāma in *Chandogya Upaniṣad* may also be cited here.³ Even during the Buddha's time, only by *karma* could one become a Brahmin. In fact the author writes, 'While the Brahmins had started asserting . . . had not yet accepted birth based status group' (p. 104). The rigidities occurred in the caste system mainly from the Gupta period. But even in the late ancient and early medieval period, several religious scriptures were composed by men from the lower castes or 'lowered' caste, as the author terms them. Vālmiki who composed *Rāmāyaṇa* was a *dasyu* and was surely not from the upper caste. The

Māhābhārata in Oriya was written by Sūdrāmuni Sarla Das during the reign of Kapilendra Deva (AD 1435-1466)⁴. Sridhara Swami, whom Caitanya has referred to as his guru had said, '*janmana jāyate śūdra sanskārayi dwija ucchate*' meaning that a Śūdra by birth can be changed into a *dwija* (twice born) with his meritorious work. Thus, even if the caste system had become rigid by the Gupta period, there was scope of some kind of accommodation for the lower castes to climb up the ladder of caste hierarchy. However, this was not that easy practically and the lower castes did have to face considerable hardships.

The author interestingly emphasizes on the concept of 'lowered' caste. He refuses to term the castes in the lower rung of the caste hierarchy as lower castes and instead calls them 'lowered' castes. He contends that some of the castes were lowered over a period of time and hence they should be termed as 'lowered' castes. This is an interesting and logical contention. However, instead of saying that some castes were lowered over a period of time, we may also say that few castes were 'raised' and caste distinction emerged in the Indian society.

There seems to be an opposition from the author for the reformers who quoted ancient scriptures for advocating reforms instead of pleading for the same on moral ground. He sees all such reformers to be brahmanical agents. However, the point is that when these social evils were not prevalent in the ancient times and none of the scriptures advocate them, why demand for abolition of social evils should not be made by citing these scriptures. It is more effective as these scriptures are revered by the people at large. The author's terming of reformers like Dayanand Saraswati, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vivekanand, Gandhi, etc. as brahmanical agents is just like Anil Seal's branding of Gandhi as a 'dalal' or 'broker'.⁵

There is a fundamental difference between the lower caste movements of northern and eastern India and that of the southern and western India. In northern and eastern India, there were powerful castes between the Brahmins and the lower castes. For example, Rajputs and Kayasthas in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and Kayasthas and Baidyas in Bengal were powerful and influential and served as the buffers. Hence, mobilization along caste lines was a later phenomenon here and it was not Brahmin versus rest of the castes affair. The situation in southern India was completely different. Here the Brahmin domination was complete and although the Brahmins were less in number, they occupied 90 per cent of government jobs. Hence all castes other than Brahmins came together and demanded corrective measures. It is in this way that reservations in jobs were first introduced in the Madras presidency. This helped several of the castes—which otherwise owned land and were economically powerful—to emerge as the dominant caste. Even Gail Omvedt accepts that the early non-Brahmin movement in Tamil Nadu was elitist.⁶

Several of the men from the lower castes who took up the cudgels of reform movement were from what is today termed as the Other Backward Caste. In fact, it were the OBCs who demanded reservations in the jobs. Although these castes were backward socially and culturally, they owned lands and were economically powerful. Once they got the benefits of reservations, it did not take time for them to emerge as dominant castes. Sociologist MN Srinivas commented after his path-breaking fieldwork of Rampura village, 'The dominant castes, who are generally non-Brahmins and owners of the land, are among the worst practitioners of inequality and exploitation, their victims being the local poor, particularly the landless members of the Scheduled Castes.'⁷ He also found that 'the dominant caste of peasants in Rampura

is plainly opposed to the emancipation of untouchables. Government efforts to improve the position of untouchables are often frustrated by the leaders of the locally dominant caste.'⁸ Besides, he also found that even the SCs who moved up the ladder of caste hierarchy started practicing the same kind of discrimination against those of the fellowmen below them. To quote him, '... the dominant castes are not the only practitioners of inequality. It occurs at lower levels inclusive of the Scheduled Castes who form a hierarchy among themselves. One of the commonest—and rather cynical features of the present movement towards equality is that each caste regards itself as the equal of castes superior to it while simultaneously denying similar claims from those inferior to it. The rhetoric that is used by the new egalitarians frequently hides this unpleasant truth.'⁹ In the present times, it is the dominant OBCs who are the main exploiters of the Dalits. To cite a recent example, last year the Dalits of Kandadevi, a southern hamlet in Shivganga district of Tamil Nadu were finally allowed to pull a 300-year-old ornate chariot having an idol of Lord Shiva—that too symbolically—after court intervened in the matter. They were being opposed by Thevars, one of the OBCs and the dominant caste of that area.¹⁰

The debate on the question of including social reforms on the Congress agenda had started soon after its formation. But its leaders did not want to take it up as they thought that it would dilute their struggle against the British. The Congress, however, changed its stance in 1917 and even Balgangadhar Tilak denounced caste system. In 1923, the Congress finally decided to take active steps for removal of untouchability. This was mainly due to the initiative of Gandhi, who by now was the unquestionable leader of the Congress. Temple entry movements were launched, which, even the upper castes supported.¹¹ Besides, Gandhi also

started calling them 'Harijan' meaning the children of god and took other ameliorative measures. But he was not ready to go beyond and did not condemn the varṇa system. This was the difference between him and Dalit leaders like Ambedkar.

Gandhi's stand on caste system cannot be seen in isolation. A leader is a product of his age. He should have the vision of looking beyond his times but he should also have the understanding to know as to how far he should look and how much is practically achievable. Gandhi had mastered this art. For him, India's independence was the most important goal. Pragmatic that he was, he could not afford to take up issues that would prove to be divisive. He was, however, convinced that untouchability was the greatest bane of the Hindu society and it had to go. But he knew that the time was not ripe to talk of its complete eradication immediately. The upper caste Hindus had to be prepared mentally for the inevitable. He, however, also understood the role of the masses in the freedom movement. For the movement to gain teeth, it was essential that the masses were involved and so the depressed classes, the minorities and the women had to be included in the freedom movement. To attract them, it was essential to improve their lot and thus, inclusion of social reforms in the Congress agenda was a must. But he knew how much the upper caste Hindu was ready to accept and stopped right there. After all he was Mahatma, the undisputed leader of the country and had to carry all sections of the people with him.

Egalitarian society is a utopia, an ideal. There has never been a society in the world which has been ideally egalitarian. There were differences among people on the bases of race, wealth, sex, colour, etc. Even in the modern times, the African Americans were discriminated in a liberal society like the United States, which claims to be the champion of civil liberties. It took

quite a struggle for the African Americans to force the white rulers to treat them at par. However, the fact remains that they are still discriminated upon in the US. Similarly, casteless society is a utopia. But this does not mean that we should not strive for such a society. The ideal should always be to work for a society which does not discriminate one from the other on the bases of caste, creed, religion. It would, in some way or the other, definitely reduce discrimination and exploitation from our society. But are we working for such a society? Will there be a non-discriminatory society in near future? The answer is an obvious 'no'.

With the advent of British and spread of English education, while the spirit of liberty, equality and fraternity spread on the one hand, the consciousness about one's identity, clan and community also grew stronger, on the other. Thus, the educated Indians started forming caste associations. Yogendra Singh writes, 'Horizontal mobilization of caste on vertical lines into caste association used to take place long before independence.'¹² The caste association and mutual aid organizations on caste basis also acted as an impediment in the process of dissolution of the caste.¹³ After independence, the policy of positive discrimination for the weaker sections—although essential—is coming in the way of dissolution of the caste. Some scholars opine that this has increased caste consciousness. It is thus a challenge for all of us to devise ways to reduce caste consciousness without in anyway reducing our commitment to social justice.

III

The production of the book is good. There are, however, some typographical errors. A glaring factual error occurs on page 252 where the year of publication of *Communist Manifesto* is mentioned as 1948 instead of 1848. The language of the book is very smooth and free-

flowing. It has been presented in a very lucid manner, making the book a very easy and interesting reading. The author has written the book from the heart and it shows his concern about the bane of the caste system that has so completely engulfed the Indian society. Of course, he has made his intentions clear in the preface itself—it is with a point of view that he is writing the book. However, while writing a book of academic nature, one should try to be balanced even while contending one's own viewpoint. The author has not fully succeeded on this front. He has not taken a complete view and has used material selectively. This makes the work polemical which dilutes the strength of the arguments that the author wants to make. Besides, even a polemical work requires that we analyze the counter arguments seriously and effectively, lest the academic work suffers from a new form of 'proselytization'. Moreover, in his bid to be extra critical, the author's choices of words seem to be out of place in a serious text (eg. ransacking the brahmanical text, p. 204).

On the whole it is a good work. Unconventional work of this kind provides the much needed 'cutting edge' which leads to debates of a new kind that may give an entirely new twist to the direction of research. The book is a welcome step as an alternate historical viewpoint and writing 'history from below'.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. This phenomenon is known as Apotheosis in philosophy of religion. The propounder of a religion is revered as a hero and it is hero-worship which ultimately ends up as the hero becoming God.
2. *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, A Review by B. Kar in JICPR, Vol. XIX, No. 1, 2002
3. The fourth section of the fourth chapter of *Chandogya Upaniṣad* has the story of Satyakāma, the son of Jabālā, a maid servant. Satyakāma wanted to get education. He asked Jabālā his gotra. His

mother said that in her youth, she worked as a maid and moved from place to place. It was during this period that she conceived him and hence she did not know his gotra. When Satyakāma approached Gautama, son of Haridrumata and requested him to accept the former as his student, the latter asked him his gotra. Satyakāma said what his mother had told him. Gautama was impressed by the frankness and truthfulness of Satyakāma. He was convinced that the way Satyakāma had spoken the truth, was more than enough to prove that he was a Brahmin. Mahadevan, T.M.P. *The Upanishads Selection*, Madras: G.A. Natesan and Co., pp. 180-81.

4. Eschmann, Anncharlott et. al. (ed.) (2005), *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional*

Tradition of Orissa, New Delhi: Manohar, p. 166.

5. Chandra, Bipan et. al. (1992), *India's Struggle for Independence*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, pp.17-18
6. Omvedt, Gail (1995), *Dalit Visions*, Delhi: Orient Longman, p. 55
7. Srinivas, M.N. (1994), *The Dominant Caste and Other Essays*, Delhi: OUP, p.100
8. Ibid., p. 100
9. Ibid., p. 100
10. *The Hindu*, 22nd June 2005. Even this was cosmetic. After court orders to the district administration to ensure the participation of the Dalits only 25 Dalits were allowed to take part in the procession after an agreement with the Thevars. Although the state government had put up posters asking

the Dalits to come forward and take part in the ritual, this was only an eyewash. In reality, the administration was hand-in-glove with the Thevars in ensuring that the Dalits did not participate in the ritual.

11. Chandra, Bipan et. al. (1992), *Op.cit.*, pp. 230-31. The Vaikom Satyagraha was supported by many upper caste organizations like the Nair Service Society, Nair Samajam, Kerala Hindu Sabha, Yogakshema Sabha, the leading organization of the Nambuduris.
12. Singh, Yogendra (1993), *Social Change in India: Crisis and Resilience*, New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, p. 172
13. Desai, A.R. (1976), *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Bombay: Popular Prakashan, p. 257

Forthcoming
from IIAS

Employment Role of Micro Enterprises in Himachal Pradesh *Theoretical and Qualitative Assessment*

Vinod K Anand

This research-based study focuses on the state of Himachal Pradesh. A purely qualitative (rather indicative) assessment has been undertaken of the micro enterprise sector in the state on the basis of a survey of the units falling within a highly limited, but reasonably representative, sample frame. The study makes an effort to link the profile of this sector to what obtains in other areas, regions, and countries, and tests, once again qualitatively, the applicability of existing theory to the micro enterprises active in Himachal Pradesh. In essence, the study focuses on a number of basic economic and other characteristics of the micro enterprises, such as ownership, geographical dispersal, cost structure, income and output patterns, potential for generating self- and wage-employment, their role in the migration and urbanization process, and their effectiveness in meeting the legitimate requirements of the local community. It also analyses both, the exogenous and endogenous constraints and problems as faced by this sector, especially in terms of risk aversion, additional demand, lack of innovation, bureaucratic red tape, and the policy of globalization, opening up, and liberalization as reflected particularly in the context of the WTO (World Trade Organization) regime. And finally, it offers a comprehensive and feasible policy package, which includes basically a support strategy, restructuring, reward system, strategic partnering, and merger possibilities.

It is hoped that the study will help the researchers and policy makers to have an insight into the theoretical and qualitative assessment of the existing situation of micro enterprises in Himachal Pradesh, and will enable the concerned Government Bodies, Support Agencies, and Non-governmental Organizations to improve their assistance strategies to these businesses. In fact, the research output will have immense policy implications for the concerned authorities as they seek to devise programmes to promote the operation of micro enterprises, either independently, or as a larger strategy of employment generation and technological efficiency. In this context the crucial parameters are: sources of finance, accessibility of commercial credit, entrepreneurial and technical development, on-the-job training, and infrastructure requirements.

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Book Reviews

Religion, Philosophy and Science: A Sketch of a Global View by DP Chattopadhyaya, IAS, Shimla, 2006, ix + 253, Rs. 500

Like its predecessor, *Interdisciplinary Studies in Science, Society, Value and Civilizational Dialogue* (IAS, Shimla, 2004) the book under review is a veritable tome of erudition, insight and inspiration. One is left to wonder how the author gathers a rich harvest, gleans from diverse fields, and stores them with care and concern, and invites his readers to travel along with him into corridors of human history. As one reaches the Epilogue, journeying from the Prologue through the chapters, one would feel as having participated in a choral symphony of language, culture, wisdom and enlightenment. The author has put his readers under a debt of eye-opening.

I

The author, Professor DP Chattopadhyaya (hence forth DPC) is a cartographer of a continuous cultural space, and the authored piece *Religion, Philosophy and Science: A Sketch of a Global View (RPS)* is something that is expected from the Chairman of the Project of Civilizational Studies, and he has taken in his stride history, philosophy and science not only with ease but grace as well. In the present climate of piecemeal studies and specializations, *RPS* is an open window to let in fresh air and encourage newer

modes of awareness. What has sustained DPC through his strenuous endeavour and remarkable achievement? What has been his inspiration or philosophical faith (to borrow the phrase from Karl Jaspers)? In the Epilogue part of the book DPC gives an idea about the conceptual underpinnings and theoretical nexus of the basic themes of the book. He follows both synchronic and diachronic, sociological and historical approaches to the items in the domain of inquiry. He breaks through rigid typologies, and holds on to the thesis that the human and the natural are interdependent; and that *dogma, myth* and *theology* could have non-pejorative employment, if they are situated in their socio-historical contexts; that denominational religions have both hegemonic and harmonic phases, *RPS* is a meta-historical account of human civilization taken as a whole. His meta-history includes different academic disciplines—some related, some widely apart.

DPC is in favour of trying to understand human civilization in an integral manner. The integral approach is distinguished from holistic mode of approach in recognizing 'the importance of *individuality* of the *parts* within the scope of the concerned *whole*'. The concerned whole, for DPC, is informed of the individuality of its parts. Parts are not lost in the whole but do retain their individual identity. Enlightenment is DPC's acceptable sense of knowledge. He describes himself as a 'gradualist', i.e., he recognizes degrees of truth. The formulation of epistemic gradualism is

interesting. Taking truth as 1 or unity and 0 as nullity or what is false, knowledge would lie and move between the two extremes. No knowledge is absolute, and hence it cannot command universal assent. Accordingly, there would be nothing that could be said as absolutely false. DPC says that neither knowledge-as-realization nor knowledge-as-enlightenment is available to us in its absoluteness. From the point of view of the non-absolute sense of truth, absoluteness can at best be *regulative* but hardly ever *constitutive*. The elusiveness of the epistemic ideal helps DPC in his discovering the non-linear curve and character of man's cognitive enterprises.

Further, DPC understands knowledge having a praxiological implication. In this context he puts into use the concept of *Yoga* to say that human action emanates from truth-consciousness, and reminds us that ratio lies between extremes of number or degree, and appropriately, the evaluative-descriptive words *rational* and *reasonable* are to be so understood.

DPC takes *human consciousness* as paradigmatic form of consciousness. He recognizes the presence of others in the past, present, and in the future. The *RPS* is significantly dedicated to the future of humanity. The implication of the position is remarkable. It spells toleration: 'I believe that other lives . . . are also *like* my own life.' To quote DPC: 'Denial of this position makes one historically skeptical and takes away the ground for believing in other's existence

and experience. Also it rules out the ground not only of our hope for the future but also of possible objects of future—artistic, scientific, institutional . . .’ (p. 210). For DPC, the ontology of hope is grounded in the ontology of consciousness.

II

In his search for the scientific and philosophical basis DPC has preceded by studying such civilizations as the Hellenic, the Mesopotamian, the Iranian-Indian, and the Chinese. The human quest for knowledge moves about in a triangle formed by man himself, his environment and nature. The proper study, as Alexander Pope’s famous phrase goes, cannot be without reference to man’s immediate situation. In this context DPC mentions the civilizational dichotomy between *self* and *other*, and he has veritably shown that mutual interactions and vibrations between the two had never stopped.

The chapters, entitled ‘Spread of Islam and Sufism in India’ and ‘The Genesis of Science in the Islamic Civilization’, followed by the one titled ‘Interaction between Islam, Judaism and Christendom’ are worth one’s attention and consideration. The story of the Sufi *silsilas* and their influence and growth is itself a fascinating one, and in spite of the Sufi’s role in proselytizing, the Sufis could be said to have won the hearts of the people by their songs. Panjab was partitioned, not the songs of the Sufis.

One point that DPC notes in the context of Sufism is important. And it is that without appropriate social, political and economic qualifications neither the history of Sufism nor mysticism can be generalized, for they sometime have developed under the patronage of political sustenance, and grown under adverse or oppressive socio-political conditions. What about the Bauls in Bengal?

As for Islam, DPC’s chapters would go a long way in removing many a misconception about it. We tend to forget that the career of a new religion is shaped by the doctrines and arguments of the existing and changing older religions. And Islam was no exception. Its original form was plastic, symbolic and seminal. Scriptural literalism was a later and historically conditioned phenomenon. Islamic philosophers of the later days have been skeptics in the Hellenic fashion and made the religion less supernatural and earth-bond. More importantly, Islamic philosophy had always an intimate relation with science, and the Quran expects Muslims to investigate natural phenomena and their causes not only for the sake of knowledge but also for coming close to God. Has not this message gone abegging in India?

In passing DPC touches upon the issue of fundamentalism. St. Paul had remarked that literalism Killeth. But the modern version of fundamentalism has another dimension, i.e., the terrible economic exploitation of the Islamic countries in general, and in particular those having the natural resource of oil. In DPC’s words: ‘The modern politics of fundamentalism cannot be understood in isolation without reference to extremely unfair economic exploitation and suppression’ (p. 58). Was there exploitation and oppression when the basics of fundamentalism were formulated?

Along with it, the idea of false Gods has been responsible for quite an undesirable turn of events in history. The distinction between *self* and *other*, reformulated later as that between *we* and *they*, is a ‘basic truth’ of all religions. DPC notes two possibilities of the distinction: either there could be the spirit of compassion and toleration, conciliation and accommodation, or indifference and intolerance to *other’s* views and values. Internecine conflicts have not been wanting in evidence. All

major world religions have the two possibilities built into them. The point, however, as DPC has rightly held, is to have the readiness to go beyond one’s religious consciousness or the framework of the prevalent religion.

III

The chapter ‘History and Geography of Science’ sustains the observations made in the earlier chapters, though it focuses primarily on the manifestation of the religious phenomena in the Indian sub-continent. The pluralism and catholicity that marks Hinduism is accounted for by its diverse origins and capacity to incorporate and assimilate the elements borrowed from other religions. At this point, DPC brings in the issue of language, in respect of the role it plays in indigenizing assimilated ideas with the local ideas and local practices. But could it be said that Hinduism too underwent or experienced a similar interaction as it had between Islam, Judaism and Christianity? Can we construe the interface of Buddhism and Jainism with Hinduism (or shall we say Brahmanism?) was on a similar line?

The civilizational dialogue between India, China and some neighbouring countries is a remarkable phenomenon. The cultural interaction between the countries and the ideas and ideals of the people may have been continuous, but their resilience and capacity to suck in foreign cultural values and institutions have not been equally perceptible everywhere. However, now the time has come when we will be required to look for the continuity. DPC supports his thesis of the continuous cultural space by what he calls ‘Auxiliary Linguistic Hypothesis’. He refers to the language of the ancient civilizations spoken around a geographic background. Taking into account the languages across continents DPC maps a cultural continuum along with his programme of mapping the history of religion,

science and philosophy in the old world. He finds that neither language families nor cultural areas have any well-defined and permanent boundaries. Boundaries drawn by historical polity have been shifting, but culture is ubiquitous. Many surprises surface in course of DPC's investigations into the striking familial lexical and structural affinities between the languages, dialects and the forms of life of the people speaking it. If the form of life mattered, the Arab world would have been one. Is it language or religion that ushers in unity? Perhaps none. It is the will to be one that does the miracle, if at all it does.

The reason given by DPC is that when people experience different environments and encounter diverse forces of nature and culture, they seek suitable words and expressions for their experiences and encounters. Language travels with its speakers, and syntactical and semantic changes occur as and when it may be needed.

IV

One remarkable feature of the *RPS* is the richness of the notes and references at the end of the chapters. They open further horizons of reflection, and call for a closer reading. A perusal of the *RPS* is a rewarding experience. Coming as it does from a senior philosopher of our times, the *RPS* teaches us the lesson to look for higher generalities in religion, philosophy and science, and attune ourselves to the task of responsibilities to the future of mankind. As a reader, one thing that the present reviewer has missed is a couple of maps illustrating the continuity of the cultural space into which our ancestors moved and lived and had their being.

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Reservation and Private Sector: Quest for Equal Opportunity and Growth, Sukhadeo Thorat, Aryama and Prashant Negi, (eds), Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2006, pp. 424, Rs. 475

The philosophical question often asked is if all Men (Anthropological Men including Women) are born equal, then why do they act differently? The answer to this complex question, perhaps lies in analyzing the factors that have been responsible in differentiating individuals, groups and nations and assigning ranks to them on the basis of evaluation standards set by the group, community or society. We do know that all human groups are stratified on one or the other basis and all societies in their development process or growth have generated inequalities between individuals and groups. A host of factors such as ownership of property or assets, biological and economic inheritance, mental abilities, knowledge, skill, talents, physical strength, age and sex differentials, religion, political ideologies and conformity or non-conformity to norms etc., have been identified by scholars as causing inequalities in different societies.

No doubt, the poor constitute the lower rung of the stratification ladder, yet in the context of the Indian society, poverty is also associated with certain socio-religious conglomerations propagating ritualistic conformity, practice of endogamy and social distancing on the basis of purity-pollution dimensions. Further, India is a democratic country and her aim is to move towards a Civil Society. But as a developing nation, she has yet to acquire the basic expressions of a democracy such as lack of exploitation, equality, popular participation of people, the dignity of employment, adequate income for a minimum decent living, individual and group creativity. However, the Constitution of India, in its preamble, has prescribed social justice, equality

and fraternity as basic goals to be accomplished through democratic means. Over the years, a large number of political systems are showing commitment to democracy and seeking various combinations of political, social, economic and cultural democracy but in reality, they do not have a satisfactory arrangement. There are variations observed within a democratic system, often influenced by varying social and political structures. In some democratic systems, health and education may be considered as functions of human rights but in others, these may be treated as functions of income. Further, in the case of certain social systems, extreme poverty situations may co-exist with the concentration of wealth in a few hands without affecting the fabric of democracy while for others, democracy would mean elimination of extreme wealth and poverty.

In the above backdrop, India is still an imperfect democracy. It augurs well with the fact that despite nearly six decades of democratic governance based on an individual's freedom, rights, equality and justice, we have failed to break down the social solidarities like caste, kinship, linguistics, religious and other primordial ties entrenched in our traditional social structure. In fact, the traditional Indian society based on the pillars of varna-caste system, joint family and autonomous village organization as group based structures, in interaction with the democratic induced individualism, has thrown up a number of contradictions which need to be resolved through good governance by having a fool proof accountability and an effective transparency mechanism built into it.

Caste has been and is still cardinal to the Indian social structure. The hierarchical divisions based on varna-caste system excluded a bulk of our population, from the mainstream socio-cultural life of the people in our society.

The varna system provided an opportunity to an individual to move up the ladder of social hierarchy in the event, he or she performed good deeds (karma) in his or her life time but the caste system based on birth, codified by *Manu Smriti* about 2000 years ago, gave death blow to the varna system. The advent of Buddhism diluted the precincts of caste system by promoting equality and compassion for all but subsequently, the conversions of the Hindus into Islam. (practically from all caste groups but more so from the Shudra and *ati*-Shudras categories) during the Afghan and Mughal rules followed by British Raj, entrenched the caste system much more deep-rootedly into our social and economic life. The British Act of 1935, classified the Shudras and *ati*-Shudras as Scheduled Castes (SCs) and later on the indigenous people or tribal groups were also enlisted. These persons were discriminated, exploited and oppressed by the upper caste Hindus to such a large extent that they were reduced to the status of marginalized groups, who found it not only difficult but impossible to eke out their existence. Their condition was pitiable, as apart from economic deprivation or poverty situation, they were socially stigmatized because of their defiling occupations such as scavenging, leather shoemaking etc. Besides, they were culturally disdained and not allowed to participate in religious fairs or festivals of the upper caste groups because of the purity – pollution dimensions Gandhi gave them the name of Harijans (People of the God) and appealed to the upper caste Hindus to change their hearts towards them and accept them as their brethren. But his appeal turned deaf on their ears. Later, it was Ambedkar (BR) who championed their cause and sought equal opportunity for them to raise their status by having proportionate representation for them in education, employment and after independence of the country, even in elections. They

were nomenclatured by him as Dalits. The term Dalit has got currency in the last few decades as it is no longer now a social or economic category but has embraced within it the Other Backward Castes (OBCs) and has acquired a political denomination in independent India. The Constitution of India was framed and made operative in 1950. Keeping in view the appalling and destitute condition of living of the Dalits, provisions were made in the Constitution to safeguard the social and economic interests of them by granting reservations (in education, employment and election) to uplift them and reduce inbuilt social inequities in our social structure. These provisions continued for four decades in the public sector and through advances made by Dalits (SCs and STs) in the educational sphere, they could secure employment in public sector on the basis of quota reserved for them. The State intervention of that sort diversified their educational base and many of them moved up in the social scale and enlarged the cake of the middle class stratum.

This middle class further got expanded by inclusion of OBCs on the basis of reservations made for them in education and employment on quota basis. However, this command economy benefitted a small segment of these deprived groups who were termed as 'creamy layer' while the majority of them got further marginalized, mainly because, they had no access to resources or were lacking social and psychological capacities to avail of the opportunities offered. The command economy pursued for nearly for four decades, due to political follies committed by some of the leaders, led us to a situation of crisis of economic management and compelled our political masters to opt for a New Economic Policy, focusing on privatization, liberalization and market economy. As a consequence of this liberalized policy, there was expansion of private sector and many of jobs hitherto reserved for

Dalits got shrunk. A voice is now being raised for reservation of employment opportunities for them in the private sector.

In the wake of the above, the present book under review by Thorat and his associates is a timely edition brought out by them under the aegis of the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies. The editors have done a good job, after a detailed write up on 'Debate on Reservation in Private Sector', in classifying as many as 43 articles, papers and essays included in the book to focus thrust on different aspects of the reservation issue. These are (1) Caste and Market Discrimination: Theory and Evidences; (2) Reservation and Equal Opportunity Perspective, (3) Reservation: Merit and Efficiency, (4) Globalization, Liberalization and Reservation (5) Reservation and Politics of Caste and (6) Remedies against Discrimination.

The introductory chapter by the editors throws up a debate on reservation in private sector by highlighting the exclusion model and consequent caste untouchability based discrimination in the Indian society leading to social, economic, cultural and political deprivation of the discriminated groups. It has been rightly argued that to tackle the prevailing discrimination in labour, capital, input, product, consumer markets and social needs like education, health and housing in respect of Dalits, a judicious mix of legal and fair access policy is the need of the hour. This is followed by five papers in the first section. Deshpande is forthright in his saying in the essay, 'Do Markets Discriminates', that contrary to the thinking of corporate sector that affirmative action will lower efficiency. This will, instead, increase productivity and improve the lot of the Dalits. Thorat, in his comprehensive treatise on caste system and economic deprivation has argued well that as a consequence of imperfect market situation, Dalits have to face economic discrimination because of their lowest position in the

caste system. As such, the State intervention in the form of affirmative action is required in various market situations such as land, labour, producer and consumer, and in social services to safeguard the interests of the Dalits. Aryamma's debate on 'Public-Private Divide', suggests an overlapping between the two because private prejudices seep into the public sphere. In view of the shrinkage of job opportunity for Dalits, in the public sector it is necessary that the job reservation for them is extended to the private sector. Papola discusses the case of Indian private industry to highlight social exclusion and discrimination in hiring practices. He suggests equal access to information and opportunity to all and preferential treatment measures to the disadvantaged and marginalized groups in the labour market without any loss in efficiency. Madheswaran, on the basis of his analysis of earning differentials by caste in terms of education, employment and earnings brings home to us that participation of SCs in labour market is quite low and even, the extent of unemployment among them is higher than the non SCs.

In the second section, there are six papers. Omvedt is right in suggesting that programmes of social justice especially universalization of education, access to property and resources and 'talent search' should not only catch the imagination of policy makers for Dalits and other deprived groups but also that of business leaders who as a part of programmes, should develop the capacities of the total population. Louis Prakash on the basis of the exclusion, deprivation and marginalization suffered by the Dalits, has called for the State intervention through special provisions and programmes as a part of 'Affirmative Action' for their inclusion in the mainstream social life by having an 'Employment Opportunity Commission'. Sachar, in his short article, opines that without initiating a

legislation, the private sector may be directed by the government to utilize 15 per cent of services or supplies from businesses, owned and controlled by Dalits and backward classes. The hue and cry raised regarding reservation in the private sector, regarding legislation in Maharashtra, has been well brought out by Jogdand. A need has been expressed to recognize the potential and skill of the Dalits and provide them with an opportunity. The potential of Dalits in the private sector should not be underrated, is what Prasad has to say in his article. He asserts that the Indian industry should free itself from its 'caste interests' and democratize its workforce. Negi's paper 'All Snakes, No Ladders', brings out in an illuminating manner, the substantial issues of equality and social justice as these need to be well conceptualized and operationalized for a people-centric and participatory model of development where the State can act as a mediator and safeguard the interest of all, including that of Dalits, for a space in the private sector.

In the third section, in the lead article, Thorat dismisses the myth of reservation and efficiency and advocates reservation and affirmative action for the excluded and discriminated groups like Dalits in the private sector to induce competitiveness and economic growth through elimination of caste discrimination in labour market. Parthasarthy vouches for affirmative action programme to promote substantive rather than formal equality to enlarge the gain of employment to the Dalits and OBCs by measures of the State for their inclusion in the broader socio-economic life. Omvedt discusses the 'Mythologies of Merit', by casting doubt on its conception and advocates affirmative action for the discriminated groups by the Indian industry to achieve true competitiveness and efficiency through a diversified approach. Mehta in his critical essay on 'Affirmation without Reservation', has touched upon a

number of issues pertaining to merit and marginalization of Dalits and is susceptible to the extension of reservation for them to the tune of 52 per cent in the private sector (SCs, STs and OBCs.). This kind of reservation will make a mockery of the status of 'private sector as the private sector'. He is diffident and opines that Malaysia is a racialized State and it is not to be emulated lest our efforts to modernize India, instead of transcending caste, may perpetuate it. Debroy, again is susceptible about reservation policy for Dalits in the private sector and makes a clarion call for a debate in Dharmashastra texts (Manu Smriti and others which are 2000 years or more old), before a debate on reservations. Beteille, in his essay on 'Quotas for Companies' speaks with inhibition about the desirability of numerical quotas and mandatory provisions by the State in the private sector for the inclusion of SCs, STs, and OBCs. He, instead, prefers enabling provisions as a sort of equality of opportunity. Ramachandran argues in his paper on reservation that in view of employment getting very costly in public sector, political parties are now seeking reservation for the weaker sections in India's private sector. Maira views that in case the quota system is not a good solution, then one needs to evolve really fair but efficient solution for the discriminated groups. Bhaumik voices for a working class revolution. His plea is that the majority of private enterprises are small and uncompetitive by global standards. Being financially weak, job reservations in them may prove to create complications than cures. Mitra is clear in his suggestion that a three pronged strategy of having partnership between private and public sectors for expansion of educational opportunities to SCs and STs; entrepreneurship development of the disadvantaged groups and loan programmes and guarantees with built-in accountability and transparency and substantive incentive such as tax breaks

and preference in government procurement to any enterprise having a minimum prescribed degree of representation of discriminated groups, would prove more useful than the reservation policy employment in the private sector. Jhunjhunwala is of the opinion that after a critical examination of reservation policy for the Dalits, in the public sector, we should make cautious march towards their reservation in the private sector. Bajaj is candid in his assertion that instead of reservations in the private sector, which are devoid of merit, we should raise the employability of the backward groups.

Again in the lead article, Thorat and Macwan, in section four, vouch for greater intervention by the State to help the caste based discriminated groups to have equal access to land, employment, capital markets and markets in goods and services and social needs like education, health and housing etc. Weisskopf citing the judgements of US Supreme Court in respect of the University of Michigan affirmative action cases for enlarging diversification in the admission policy from the other discriminated groups, advocates that India can take heart to such policies. Mehta, based on the 'Bhopal Document' for the future of Dalits, agrees that the market economy has a chance to prosper only if we could overcome the oppression of Dalits. Further Teltumbde, dismissing any connection of merit with reservation in the context of employment of Dalits in the business houses because of built-in prejudices against them by the upper castes, brings home to us that Dalit's reservations have done great damage to them by eclipsing in an effective manner their struggle for emancipations. But, paradoxically, the Dalit movement against the present situation is the only alternative for a just world order for them. Thimmaiah cautions the UPA government for not imposing the defective reservation policy on the private sector, without understanding its genuine economic

problems and organizational difficulties. However, Ilaiah, opines that Indian industrialists should come forward in India's development by supporting reservations to make functioning of their enterprises more human and competitive.

In the fifth section, Chaudhury talks of the 'Creamy Layer' in the context of the political economy of reservations. No doubt caste is considered as an index of deprivation but reservation in election to SCs, STs and OBCs etc., has politically made them conscious of having electoral alliances of various kinds to capture power. The 'go-getter' among them, have been the greatest beneficiaries of the political process. Besides, caste is now being employed as a legitimate criterion for seeking public policy oriented affirmative action. Chandoke's article on 'Reservations about Reservations' and Veeramani paper on 'Social Justice and Reservation Scheme' as a rejoinder to her arguments, need to be taken together. Chandoke is forthright in suggesting that the Indian State has inadequately conceptualized and implemented the reservation policy because it is not based on a justified criterion of egalitarianism but on some kind of unjustified rewards. This has led to resentment and hostility against the beneficiaries and we need to apply the protective discrimination sparingly to legitimize it and spare the beneficiaries from humiliation. Veeramani considers her criticism as invalid and thinks that the underprivileged groups started gaining self-respect after getting education and jobs by reservation, which were denied to them by the Brahmanical caste model. Radhakrishnan believes that affirmative action is a broader measure than reservation and the FICCI statement that the private sector can work for affirmative action for the deprived, should be appreciated with a salute.

In the last section, again the lead article by Thorat to suggest remedies

against market discrimination is exhaustive and comprehensive, touching upon market discrimination of Dalits and its implications on growth, equity and inter-group conflicts. He suggests remedies against discrimination in the interface of free market and interventionist policy. There is a need to provide legal safeguards in the context of reservation policy for Dalits in the private sector by enacting 'Employment Opportunity Act', having more proactive schemes for reservation in some categories of jobs, extending reservation policy for various types of markets and having one-time settlement to SCs through the distribution of the agricultural land. Further, Puri, wants us to draw lessons from the USA for reservations in the private sector. Jagannathan, suggests that the corporate sector should set a new agenda for affirmative action through internal audit to identify the number of persons employed from the poorer sections and in terms of improvement in their knowledge and skills, besides training them and giving them preferential treatment in contracts while outsourcing jobs. To enhance the economic and social status of the SCs/STs/OBCs, Vaidyanathan is of the opinion that instead of providing some limited job opportunities to them in listed companies, they should be encouraged to become 'vaishya like' and acquire entrepreneurship. Mehta is again up against reservations as such for Dalits and advocates affirmative action for them and other marginalized groups to have access to the benefits of the markets. Gupta, is also of considered opinion that instead of reservations for the marginalized groups, we should opt for the affirmative action, not based on American experience but based on qualitative judgements, institutional well-being and treating the issue at the individual, rather group level. Bhalla, in his write-up talks of 'legal' and by 'force of government' as two approaches to tackle the problem of social injustice and discrimination in the job

market place. The first one is perused in enlightened USA and the other in Malaysia perhaps as one of the 'best practices'. He advocates financial support to attend educational institutions till the post graduation level for all the bottom 40 per cent of the population and the 'guidance quotas' for minorities in the public sector for all the discriminated groups including women, Muslims and SC/STs and refraining such 'guidance' enforcement on the rest of the population. Aiyar, again, affirms that we should go in for affirmative action for Dalits in the private sector rather than reservations. The Indian industry should come forward to provide quality education to them on the pattern of Delhi Public School networks. Vundrn in his article takes stock of legal remedies against discrimination in USA, South Africa and India, to open new vistas to the Indian statute in order to provide equality and non-discrimination in employment and diversity in the country. In the last paper, Weisskopf, enumerates some aspects of reservation in higher education by drawing upon the findings of a number of studies done in the Indian context of Dalits pursuing higher studies especially in medicine, engineering etc., on the bases of careers followed by them to raise their socio-economic status and mobility. The snag is that the references of these studies as mentioned in the text of the paper, are missing at the end of the same.

Reviewing an edited book is a difficult task especially when a wide spectrum of articles, papers and essays forms part of it. Reservation in the private sector is not only the clarion call made by political leaders of different hues and shades, Dalit leaders, intellectuals, United Progressive Alliance (UPA) partners including its Chairperson and Prime Minister but even by the constituents of other Backward Castes (OBCs). The conscientization process thrown up by the election system in nearly last six decades or so

has politically motivated all of them to seek the State intervention for redressal of the caste based discriminated Untouchables, Schedules Tribes and OBCs because of shrinkage of employment opportunities in the public sector as a result of the 'New Economic Policy'. However, the moot question is whether or not, in an imperfect democracy and in an imperfect market economy, we can provide social justice and equality to all sections of our society irrespective of caste hierarchy, ethnicity and religious adherences either on individual or group basis.

As is observed in the articles contained in this book, the issue of reservation in general and that of it in the private sector is a polemical one. In many of the articles, the ideas pursued and actions suggested have a spill over across the pages. This is good to reinforce the necessity to have certain kind of corrective measures to be adopted by the State in order to reduce inequalities and extend social justice to the historically discriminated and disprivileged people. Some scholars have preferred to go in for 'Affirmative Action' rather than the policy of 'Reservation' in the employment of such groups in the private sector. A few have brought home to us the 'Affirmative Action' being practiced in other countries such as USA, Malaysia or South Africa. But, we need to adapt them to our situation because our historical circumstances, social structural and organizational arrangements and value orientations and value system, have been quite different from these nations. We need to learn lessons from our already prevailing reservation policy in the public sector before introducing any kind of policy (Affirmative Action or Reservations) in the private sector.

Effective land reforms are the basic prerequisites in an agricultural society like ours. This kind of structural change can affect a shift in power relations among landowners, tenants and wage

labourers while inequalities and injustices could be brought down to a minimum acceptable level. Taking industry as early and as close to rural areas, without encroachment on the fertile agricultural land, is another important structural change needed to enlarge the non-farm sector. A large population of Dalits, STs and OBCs who get marginalized in the private agricultural sector, need to be absorbed to develop technical skills and entrepreneurship for self development and employment. The occupational diversification, achieved as such may lead to breakdown of caste solidarities which are becoming political dynamite in the evolution of our democratic process. Greater involvement of youth especially from the disadvantaged groups (both boys and girls) in the Cooperative and Panchayat Raj Institutions, should foster better inclusion of them in our mainstream culture. Above all, we need to streamline our educational system by providing uniform opportunities to all as it is only through it that caste biases and prejudices entrenched in our social structure can be dissolved. Without strengthening the foundation of the primary educational level, the secondary and tertiary tiers of education would remain weak. Health, nutrition and a check on population growth in general and that of disprivileged groups in particular, can help people to get out of the state of destitution and poverty. Reservation, whether in Public or Private Sector is a symptomatic treatment but effective social structural changes along with 'Affirmative Action' measures, may cure the deep rooted entrenched social inequalities and injustices. In making the State move responsive to either 'Reservation' or 'Affirmative Action' policy, no scholar seems to be suggesting the role of 'Dalit' diaspora in uplifting the discriminated groups. They have acquired social mobility beyond our borders and can be instrumental in pressurising the State to help the Dalits

get out of the drudgery through the governments of their settlements abroad.

We, as sociologists, know that in the evolutionary framework, social change is slow and always follows the path of least resistance. The editors of this book, however, have done a good job in bringing out a meaningful compilation on a topic which is currently under severe debate. They need to be congratulated for being objective in including articles for and against the reservation issue in the private sector. It is hoped that this book will be of immense use to policy planners, administrators, economists, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists and the students of Dalit studies.

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A History of Early Vedānta Philosophy, Part II, by Hajime Nakamura (English trans. H. Nakamura, T. Leggett et. al.), Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004, pp. xxi + 842, Rs. 395

Late Professor Nakamura was a distinguished Japanese scholar on Indological studies including Indian philosophy. The present work was his doctorate thesis in Japanese language under the title: *Shoki no Vedānta Tetsugaku*, submitted to the University of Tokyo and he was awarded D. Litt. for it in 1943. The thesis was published in four volumes (of 2410 pages in total) in Tokyo in 1956 and it received the Imperial Award from the Japan Academy in 1957. The English translation of Part-I of the work (consisting of the first two volumes) was published in India by the Motilal Banarsidass (MLBD) in 1976 and, for a long period, the English translation of the rest two volumes: III & IV was not made possible. Shortly, before his death, Nakamura could complete the English translation with T Leggett and others.

It is good that MLBD has published the same recently for wider readers in 2004.

The important feature of Nakamura's work is that it has (perhaps for the first time) meticulously taken into account the relevant data from Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Tibetan and Chinese sources. Intensive studies on pre-Śankara Vedāntins-cum-Mīmāṃsakas like Upavarsa, Bodhāyana, Tanka, Dravida, Bhartṛprapanca, Sabarasvamin, Bhartṛmitra, Srivatsankamisra, Sundarapandya, Brahmadatta, Govinda and Mandanamisra are found to be nearly inadequate. Further, scholarly as well as critical evaluative account of the pre-Sankarite thinkers (as already mentioned) specially from the philosophical perspective has not been found available to a considerable extent. And, in that way at least, the present work of Nakamura is a substantial contribution.

While dealing with the early Vedānta thinkers, it has well brought into focus as to how some of them viewed the ritual Mīmāṃsa as a necessary pre-requisite for Uttara Mīmāṃsa (e.g. Upavarsa). Both the Mīmāṃsa, according to Bodhāyana, constitute 'one doctrinal system' (*sastraikatva*). But Tanka was found to be Advaitin, conceding only phenomenal significance of the world (*samvyavāharamatra*). Dravida never made a distinction between *Brāhmaṇ* and *Īśvara*, by way of treating *Brāhmaṇ* as 'the supreme divinity' and 'Lord of the world' (*pradevatalokeśvara*). Bhartṛprapanca held that the Vedāntic Atman is an objective thing (*vastu*). That led almost to a point of obliterating the difference between object and subject which appears to be basic to the Vedānta stand in general. Sabarasvamin, though the first commentator on Jaimini Mīmāṃsā, adopted the Vedānta stand insofar as his view on Ātman is concerned. He held the theory of plurality of selves. Bhartṛmitra is considered to be critical about the future rewards of the action performed in the present life and thus he is viewed as a heretic in

contrast to both Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta. Sundarapandya is considered to be another pre-Śankara thinker who opted for both Mīmāṃsā-rites and the Vedānta advocacy for knowledge. Brahmadatta was another early Vedāntin who held the theory of *jñāna-karma-samuccaya-vāda*. Govinda, is said to be the *guru* (mentor) of Śankara and disciple of Goudapada. He was one prominent early Vedāntin, paving the path for the emergence of Śankara Advaita. Mandanamisra is another important Vedāntin, contemporary of Śankara who was conversant with both Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta. There are references about some pre-Śankara commentators on the *Bhagavad Gītā* like Pisāca, Rantideva and Gupta. But, on account of non-availability of adequate source-materials, the specific views held by these thinkers cannot be rationally formulated.

However, the greater and substantial portion of the present work is devoted to the views of the two illustrious early Vedāntins, namely, Goudapada and Bhartṛhari (consisting of almost 460 pages). Goudapada's *Mandukya-Karika* (also known as *Goudapada-Karika*), consisting of 215 couplets (*Śloka*s) is inseparably bound to the *Mandukya Upaniṣad*. Nakamura holds the view that the first chapter of the *Karika* (*āgama prakarana*) is directly concerned with the *Mandukya-Upaniṣad*, being a commentary on it. He has taken care to focus on the philosophically relevant point, rightly flashed in the *Mandukya-Karika* (III. 23) that which ascertained (in the *śruti*) and also connected with reason and the other is to be accepted. Thus the deciding factor, as Nakamura holds, is reason (p. 315). There is a strong respect for 'reasonableness' (*yujyate*) (II, 27, 8). XX Truth must be stated on the basis of logical reason (*hetu*) (II, 1;5; III,26) and a wrong reason must not be used (IV, 20). All this reveals an apposite point that amidst the diverse interpretations of the texts with somewhat covert

theological coatings, in gradual phased manner, the recognition of the use, importance and validity of philosophical reflection based upon free and independent reason (*hetu*) is found to be well noticed among the seers since ancient times and on this, the Vedāntins and the Buddhists are found to be quite close to each other without disregarding the long-standing tradition.

The other great early Vedānta philosopher is Bhartrhari on whom Nakamura has devoted one detailed scholarly discussion (275 pages). Bhartrhari identifies himself as a monist (*ekatvadarsin*). Nakamura finds him (by way of his critical exposition of Bhartrhari's views) to be a Vedānta philosopher, despite his having some stray resemblance with some aspect of the Buddhist point of view. It is true that Bhartrhari started his intellectual exercise with the study of grammar like any normal linguist; but the striking point is that he never remained confined to that. He moved to metaphysical speculation in holding that word is the ontological primus, i.e. *Brāhmaṇ*. In this respect, he presented himself as belonging to the Vedāntic lineage. But, as is rightly held by Nakamura, Bhartrhari clearly opted for the supremacy of logical reasoning, despite his general adherence to tradition (p. 521). Of course, there are instances of incongruity in his presentation also. His metaphysical stand that the *Brāhmaṇ* consisting of words is ultimately based on the belief in the veracity of Vedic seer's (*ṛṣis*) intuitive experience. This is virtually due to dogmatic *ṛṣi*-bias and not on the basis of sound reason. The supremacy of free-flow of reason (*tarka*) over the testimony of sacred text (*āgama*) is not thereby vindicated. Rather, it is Punyaraja in his *Prakāśa* (commentary on the *Vakyapadiya*, II, 234) maintained boldly that the contents of the sacred books are explained for the benefit of the stupid and to explain truth itself is an impossibility ('*Sastrartha prakriyah kevalam*

abudhanam vyutpadanaya ato na sastrani tattvam vaktum partyanti').

However, Bhartrhari did not go so far with regard to reasoning (*tarka*). While stating his point that the essence of the word is *sphota* and it manifests its form when it is formed as a sentence, he moved on to suggest that it is the manifestation of *Brāhmaṇ* itself. To him, reasoning is the self-manifestation of the word which constitutes *Brāhmaṇ*. Nakamura has brought out Bhartrhari's point by stating that *Brāhmaṇ* is the basis on which logic can be established in the ordinary life, though *Brāhmaṇ* in itself is beyond logic.

This sounds somewhat obscure. Conceding that word or language is indispensable for any meaning-formulation, it has not been made clear as to why word must be made intelligible through a metaphysical construction of *sphota* and that again must point to one non-dual absolute, i.e. *Brāhmaṇ*. It is definitely a matter of reconsideration that *Brāhmaṇ* is the basis of reason and yet it completely transcends reason.

On the whole, Nakamura's work on the history of early Vedānta philosophy is quite exhaustive and it has presented detailed account of the thinkers of that period with their works and contributions. Nakamura's approach is not only aimed at a historical survey but it is also a critical exposition of diverse philosophical concepts with their theoretical background. It, thus, becomes a dependable reference for future research in the concerned area.

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Untouchable Saints: An Indian Phenomenon, Eleanor Zelliot and Rohini Mokashi-Punekar (eds), Delhi: Manohar, 2005, pp. 281, Rs. 750

A saintly lady at Ramanashram in Tiruvannamalai asked me: 'Why women and spirituality? Can spirituality be male or female?' when she came to

know that I am engaged in research into gendered spirituality. A similar question came to my mind when I saw the book under review. Are there 'touchable' and 'untouchable' saints? Does not saintliness transcend such categories? As I read the essays in this collection, an extremely complex picture was presented before me.

An excellent introduction by Eleanor Zelliot and Rohini Kokashi Punekar sets the tone for the essays by situating each of them within an ontological framework. The question of 'touchability' versus 'untouchability' is related largely to the Dalit movements across the country but more particularly to Maharashtra. The songs of these saints cover the entire trop of joyous transcendence to a deep awareness of their lowly station in life at the two ends of the spectrum with great faith and deep dejection following each other in rapid succession, rendering boundaries of caste consciousness fuzzy. Sometimes 'untouchability' figures as much in the problematic of the age and the hagiographies surrounding them as it does in the personal predicament of the saints themselves. A good example of this would be the various versions of the Nandanar legend depending on whether a Brahmin, an upper-caste non-Brahmin or a Dalit is doing the telling. Equally important is the audience which absorbs/uses these hagiographies. Thus, Nandanar and Chokkamela did not appear to be appropriate signifiers of the Dalit movement because of the seeming absence of protest in their voices. On the contrary Ambedkarites and other recent votaries of Dalit causes have seen Saint Raidas as being 'one of them'. What precisely accounts for the rejection of Nandanar and Chokkamela on the one hand and the appropriation of the 'dalit-hood' of Raidas on the other hand by the modern Dalit movements?

The first section of the book deals with the 'Tamil Saints' Tiruppana Alvar from the Vaishnavite tradition and Nandanar from the Saivite Nayanar

tradition. Vasudha Narayan's scholarly essay explores the many facets of the hagiography of Tiruppana Azhvar beginning from the *Divya Suri Charitam* written around the twelfth century and *Alavargal Vaibhavam* written by Vadivalakkiya Nambi Tachchar around the fifteenth century. To this hagiographical tradition she suffixes the Amar Chitra Katha's retelling of the Alvar's story. The following essay by Steven P Hopkins titled 'In Love with the Body of God' also explores the hagiographies of Tiruppana Alvar. Both grapple with the question whether the 'untouchability' of the Alvar was a factor in his attaining God or in his physical distancing from God. The ingenious narrative of hagiographers manages to keep Brahmin orthodoxy intact while giving the Alvar his due as a great devotee. The Alvar is believed to be the incarnation of 'Srivatsa', the auspicious mark on Vishnu's chest. His birth is believed to be a miraculous one since he was 'found'. Once born on earth he never cried unlike most mortal infants. This narrative technique instantly lifts the Alvar out of the 'Panar' caste which is believed to be lowly and divinises him.

In terms of historical reasoning, the reviewer must point out that the 'Panar' or Virali, both being bards and minstrels, do not really represent the 'untouchable' castes. This was certainly the situation in the Sangam age when the great woman bard Auvaiyar who belonged to the 'Viraliyar' jati, claims that she dined with the king on socially equal terms. It is however likely that 'untouchability' began to be associated with them during the medieval period. Or it is possible that the spiritual heights reached by Tiruppana Alvar could only be proved by emphasizing his lowly birth. Therefore some latter day hagiographies chose to emphasize his lowly birth. The *Divya Suri Charitam* clearly states that his caste fell below that of the four *varnas* (Narayan p. 58).

The other oral tradition which is associated with Tiruppana Azhvar undercuts the issue of untouchability in a different way. In essence, the narration is that Loka Saranga Muni, the Brahmin priest of Srirangam threw a stone at the meditating Tiruppana Azhvar since the latter was too deep in spiritual thoughts (this is one of the meaning of 'Alvar' i.e. sunk or lost) to move out of his way. However, he saw the wound received by the Alvar on the deity's forehead. The lore ends with Loka Saranga Muni himself carrying the Alvar on his shoulders into the sanctum sanctorum. Perhaps the Brahmins believed that caste norms had been sufficiently observed in that the feet of the low caste Azhvar did not touch the sacred precincts of the temple! (Narayan p. 60). But this observance of the norm is turned on its head by the conclusion of the tradition. The *Divya Suri Charitam* of Nathamuni clearly states that Tiruppana Azhvar disappeared into the Lord. This physical merging of the 'untouchable' saint into the supreme form of God Ranganatha is the theme of Steven P Hopkins' paper 'In Love with the Body of God'. It seems that the devotee's love for God's form is reciprocated by God's love for Tiruppana Azhvar. The essays on Tiruppana Alvar therefore reveal the inherent tensions in the hagiographical traditions which need to both emphasize his lowly birth in order to show the spiritual heights he reached and at the same time divinize his life sufficiently so that no social norms are transgressed.

The next two essays deal with the legend of Nandanar. Karen Pechilis Prentiss' essay is sub-titled 'Contesting the Order of Things'. Lynn Vincentnathan's is called 'Nandanar: Untouchable Saint and Caste Hindu Anomaly'. The twelfth century hagiographical work *Periyapuranam* narrates the life of the Paraia saint who served as agricultural labourer under a Brahmin landlord. The saint had the ardent desire

to have the darshan of Lord Siva at Chidambaram and struggle to please his lord and get his permission. In multiple versions the Brahmin is cruel or kind depending on whose version constitutes the narration. Once at Chidambaram, Nandanar stays on the borders of the holy town because of his own 'impure' status. The Lord appeared in his dream and pacified him saying that when he entered the sacred flames raised by the Brahmins, he would emerge from it as a Brahmin with tuft and sacred thread. The oracular voice of Siva commanded the Brahmins of Chidambaram to build a fire into which Nandanar would jump and emerge a Brahmin. Nandanar emerged from the flames as a luminous Brahmin and disappeared into the sanctum sanctorum, a threshold that even the Brahmins would not dare cross! The story seems to completely upset the apple cart of Brahminical orthodoxy. The 'untouchable' Nandanar becomes the sacred offering for the *vedi* raised by the Brahmins and succeeds in penetrating the sanctum sanctorum and merging bodily into the Lord (the only other instance of bodily merger being that of the Vaishnavite woman saint Andal). His metamorphosis into Brahminhood therefore undercuts all procedures such as initiation, physical service to the deity and penance etc. undertaken by pious Brahmins.

In the multiple readings of the myriad versions of the Nandanar story, a totally contradictory interpretation has also been voiced. Vincentnathan quotes the narration of a melakkarak (low caste probably untouchable) in which the first part of the story is retained but in the second part, Nandanar enters the fire in a sacred fire raised on the outskirts of Chidambaram and had a vision of Lord Nataraja, the God of Chidambaram at that spot. The place where Nandanar lived and died is today called Omalur, literally 'the place of the sacred fire'. In this version there is neither transgression nor transcendence. In a third

version Nandanar tried to enter the temple in the guise of Nandi but was stopped not only by the Brahmins but by the Lord himself from doing so. (Vincentnathan p. 113). Kamachi, a female agricultural labourer says that as Nandanar ran to his God to escape the wrath of the Brahmin priests, the deity swallowed him to save him. (Vincentnatan p. 116) If Nataraja could swallow (the word used is 'muzhangu') where then is the pollution? The Nandanar legends and their telling criss-cross through time as well as caste and gender lines.

The second major section of this book gives multiple accounts of the lives of the 'untouchable' Marathi saints—Chokkamela, Soyraibai, Karmamela, Nirmala and Banka. The most moving and sensitive essays in this collection belong to this section. Just as Nandanar belonged to the borders/margins of the sacred town of Chidambaram, Rohini locates Chokkamela 'On the Threshold'. Taken literally, this could mean the gates of the Pandarpur temple which he never crossed and where a shrine to him still exists. Economically, he lived on the threshold of poverty and died with other construction labourers when the wall they were building collapsed, crushing them. Socially, as a 'Mahar' involved with animal skins and death rituals, he obviously belonged to the margins of society. Chokka (as he calls himself) was poor, illiterate and out-caste. Yet he lived on terms of intimacy with his God, an intimacy that no Brahmin could dare to presume. Says Chokkamela:

'Filled with joy is the whole self,
I saw he himself within me.
Seeing ceased,
Looking was erased,
He filled my whole being. . .'
(Abhang: 80 vide Punekar p. 138)

According to hagiographical traditions, Vittal in an excessive display of love

put his necklace around the neck of Chokkamela. The saint was whipped and tortured as a thief and he describes this in an *abhang*:

'They thrash me, Vithu, . . .
The pandits whip, . . .
How did Vithoba's necklace come round
your throat:
They curse and strike
and say I polluted you. . . .
Chakrapani, yours is the deed,
With folded hands Chokka begs,
I revealed our secret,
Don't turn away.'
(Abhang: 82 vide Punekar: 130)

Chokkamela's logic would leave the custodians of orthodoxy gasping for breath. The agony of low birth and social oppression is overtaken by the ecstasy of unity with the divine, an intimacy that neither knows nor cares to know about Brahminhood and its taboos.

Moving into contemporary times, Punekar shows how the Mahar community to which BR Ambedkar belonged, had no desire to make Chokkamela its inspiration or symbol in the Dalit movements. Chokkamela's acceptance of his social status ruled him out as the signifier of powerful anti-caste movements. The Mahars traditionally were given the left overs of the upper caste kitchens and not paid in terms of wages. Chokka reflects this when he says:

'Johar, mai-baap, johar,
I am the Mahar of your Mahars . . .
The servant of your servants
Waits with hope.
I have brought, says Chokka,
My bowl for your leavings'.
(Abhang: 343 vide Punekar p. 139).

Ironically his radical overturning of social hierarchies through his spiritual empowerment, was and continues to be overlooked by the progressive dalits.

The entire family of Chokkamela—his son Karmamela, wife Soyraibai, sister Nirmala and brother-in-law Banka Mahar—were Warkaris and devotees of Vittal. Of the entire family, Karmamela alone seems to resent bitterly his social situation of untouchability. He laments:

'You have made us low caste: Why
don't you undertand the fact,
O god of gods? Our whole life
spent in scrounging for leavings.
Have you no sharme?
You ate rice and curd in our house:
Do you are to deny?
Says Chokka's Karmamela,
why have you given me this life?' (Abhang:
15 vide Punekar p. 147)

The incident about the Lord having partaken of rice and curds in Chokka's house is explicated in Eleanor Zelliot's essay 'The Story of Karmamela's Birth'. The childless household of Chokkamela and Soyraibai was blessed by Lord Vittala himself. He also came in the guise of Nirmala, the sister of Chokka and helped deliver Karmamela. Zelliot's next essay deals with the spiritual and domestic sharing between Nirmala and Soyraibai. Soyra describes herself as a Mahari but her poems reflect the celebration of a divine life rather than the miseries of untouchability. The section has a very good piece by Anil Sapkal on the 'Representations of Chokkamela in Marathi Film and Poetry'. VL Manjul's dramatic piece 'God in a Copper Pot' deals with Sane Guruji's fast unto death undertaken in 1947 in order to get the portals of Pandarpur opened for untouchable devotees.

The concluding section of the book is on Raidas or Ravidas who was a chamar by caste and a cobbler by profession. Anne Murphy has translated his poems while James G Lochtefeld and Joseph Schaller deal with the hagiographical details of the saint's life. Schaller looks in particular at the

account of Anantdas in the Raidas Parchai, the poems of Arjun Lal and the rhetoric of social reform. Lochtefeld covers a broader spectrum of hagiographies by beginning with Nabhadās's *Bhaktamal* and going on to the accounts of Anantdas and Priyadas which are replete with suffering, devotion, ecstasy and miracles as in the life of any other saint. The saint himself, as Schaller points out, had no agenda, either of proclaiming his religiosity or seeking social justice as a dalit. What is interesting is the appropriation of the life and poetry of Raidas by the progressive dalit movements of the north. Chandrabhan Prasad and Mahesh Dahiwalā in their joint essay 'Ravidas in the Contemporary World' deal specifically with this aspect. Why is it that Chokkamela is sidelined by the dalit movements while Raidas is found suitable as a signifier of the struggle against social injustice?

The book concludes with some poetic examples of the Bhakti voices on untouchability.

I would have liked that the multiple hagiographies of Chokkamela and Raidas and others had been reduced or conflated by which I mean that two essays in a briefer form could have been brought together. This space could have been given to Janabai and Kanhopatra from the Warkari tradition. The 'untouchables' saints from the Virasaivite/Lingayat tradition like Basavayya and his wife Kalevve, Lingamma, Haralayya (whose intermarriage with the Brahmin Madhavayya set off the great Kalyana massacre) and Guddavve (not to mention the many others Shaivasahranes) who is called a Chandala, surely deserved a place in a book on untouchable saints. The omission of the Virasaivite untouchable saints is the only major lacuna in this otherwise excellent book.

The book is of seminal importance because most of the essays do not have any neat closures. The tension between the voice of the saint and the dalit voice

which is sought to be recovered is apparent. What however comes through, in the opinion of this reviewer, is that the saint himself/herself whether it was Tiruppana Alvar, Chokkamela, Soyrabai, Nandanar or Raidas went beyond concerns of caste and social justice. In particular the essays of Puneekar on the Warkari saints, bring out this point. To talk of transcendence as social transgression would be an oxymoron. Therefore, to recover the logic of untouchability and its social fallout from the voice of these saints is no easy task. One must compliment the authors on their efforts to do so in a convincing manner.

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Rethinking Cultural Studies: A Study of Raymond Williams and Edward Said, by KW Christopher, New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2005, Rs. 450

This thoroughly researched and well-written revision of the author's doctoral dissertation makes a significant contribution to our understanding of cultural theories and cultural studies in relation to contemporary cultural processes. The book under review combines an interest in the analysis and theorizing of culture with an elucidation of contemporary culture and meaning-making processes. Christopher sketches the context in which Cultural Studies evolve and attempts to appraise the contribution of two foremost and prominent cultural theorists Raymond Williams and Edward Said, whose approaches constitute a distinct analytical paradigm.

The wonderful promises of the modern era—progress, science, truth, reason, plenty, comfort, security—looked very battered indeed in the years after the Second World War. Holocaust, cold war, mutually assured destruction, police states, Stalinism, Vietnam: no one was innocent, nothing was plain and simple, fear and desire infested reason and truth, progress created its own

terrorists. Cultural Studies was a symptom of the urgent and profound need to think seriously and in a sustained manner about such matters and their associations with unprecedented personal freedoms and affluence at least in the developed world. Whilst cultural studies cannot supply ultimate answers to the intellectual, cultural and philosophical questions of the day but it has established a lively field of debate and dialogue.

How to teach a new generation of students to engage them ethically with their own culture, without relying on the discredited master narratives of nationalism, racial supremacy, patriarchy or imperialism? The question was quite pressing by the fact that the students themselves were largely a new phenomenon, certainly in Britain and Australia, where higher education until the 1960s remained very much a minority pursuit. The idea that intellectual emancipation should be extended to the poor, to women, to every one, was novel and intimidating. Education, knowledge, ideas, critique, was all thought to be scarce—one simply could not share them out too widely, for the simple reason that more means worse. This was that 'if every one has an MA then nobody does' school of thought. It wanted to ration education, culture and power. Cultural Studies was in part a symptom of the efforts to oppose such arguments and to democratize higher education as well as the cultural domain itself.

Cultural Studies appeared as a field of study in Great Britain in the 1950s out of Leavisism, a form of literary studies named after FR Leavis, its most prominent member. Leavis wanted to use the educational system to disseminate literary knowledge and appreciation more widely. Cultural Studies develops out of Leavisism through the writings of Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams. The author of the book under review accentuates that

Cultural Studies as a distinct academic discipline began in the 1960s with Raymond Williams' announcement and the nascent work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham in England. The British cultural studies, especially as it became articulated and was practised at the university of Birmingham, sought to distinguish 'popular' culture as a mode of textual and everyday practice from 'mass' or 'consumerist' culture. This approach tends to treat the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham as the major progenitor of a discipline that has now penetrated the humanities and social sciences in all major universities across the globe. The author in the present book has perceived that the study of culture and meaning-making processes stretch well beyond the Birmingham moment, engaging various forms of philosophy, textual studies, Marxism and social theory.

Cultural Studies was from the very beginning interested in knowledge, ideas and culture as part of what Micheal Foucault later called the 'plenitude of the possible' in his *What is Enlightenment* (1984), the work overlooked by Christopher. Culture, knowledge, theory, ideas and—after Foucault—power itself, were not scarce at all, but plentiful, and cultural studies was to study and practise not just the traditional aesthetics and pursuits of the governors, but to include in and as culture as much as possible, indeed everything—the 'whole way of life' of a people (as Raymond Williams puts it). Cultural Studies was a philosophy of plenty, of inclusion, and of renewal. Cultural Studies was of necessity an interdisciplinary field of inquiry.

The author avers that the object of study in Cultural Studies changed over time and took different forms, depending on who was investigating it and why. This was not only a matter of deciding what was meant by culture in general and in specific instances, but

also a question of the analytical agenda—which shifted from class to gender and then to ethnicity and post-colonial matter, for instance. With the emergence of post-colonial and subaltern scholarship, which challenges the Eurocentric descriptions, the emphasis was now on specificity and difference. 'Culture emerge as the main frame of reference in postcolonial thought in the works of Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhaba,' Christopher says (p. 33). The author has very significantly described and simultaneously decentred the crucial position of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and focuses attention on the shifting of the centre of cultural studies from Birmingham to American academic world after a momentous detour through France. Cultural Studies has now acquired a number of characteristics, including a certain philosophical tone and obsession. In Birmingham, Cultural Studies was decisively ingrained in a strategy of political struggle, while in America cultural studies was sponsored by the scholars who rarely had any connection with existing political and cultural movements. Cultural Studies has become more theoretical, preoccupied with finer discussion of deconstruction, gender and post-Marxism. The author aptly sums up this section by noting that with the globalization of communications and the rise of the multi-national corporate hegemony over cultural production and the media, Cultural Studies has acquired a profound importance.

Having delineated and elucidated the intellectual lineage that led to the cultural theory and Cultural Studies in first chapter, the author gives succinct biographical sketches of the Marxist theorist Raymond Williams (1921-1988) and non-Marxist Edward Said (1935-2003). Whilst cultural studies departed from economics and politics, their works provide a valuable focus to rethink cultural studies. The remainder

of the book refreshingly confines itself to resonate closely the work of these two leading cultural theorists. Although they represent different intellectual and theoretical positions, Christopher has elucidated that 'their work has many common themes, shared values and concerns'. The author divulges that the foremost aspect that brought their work close was 'pronounced emphasis on history, on material past'. Both have emphasized the materiality of culture. Whilst Williams speaks of 'secular materialism' or Said of 'secular criticism', it was history and the political and economic contexts of culture that were stressed. Major points of convergence and divergence in their works are illustrated to provide significant background to the themes and ideas covered in densely descriptive the second and the third chapters. The book makes its object clear—'juxtaposes their (Williams and Said) work vis-à-vis cultural studies . . . focusing on the exchange, connections, continuities and opposition between the perspective offered by both and. . . a critical assessment of contemporary cultural studies'.

Chapter two, deals specifically with the cultural theory of Raymond Williams. Between 1946 and 1960 Williams' involvement with the adult education journal *Politics and Letter*, demonstrates an increasingly sophisticated interest in the whole idea of culture. The author states that in many respects Williams' *Culture and Society* (1958), one of the most important books in the development of British cultural studies, represents a flowering of this effort to understand the relationship between literature and politics (p. 45). Williams employs the technique of close textual reading, but he is most concerned to illuminate the context within which the literary text functions. The intellectual heritage of romanticism was reviewed by authors like Richard Hoggart, EP Thompson and Williams, which leads to the re-focusing and

hybridization of the Romantic approach of culture. Williams becomes now more interested in the meaning-making activities and texts of the working classes, which also leads to a broader study of 'popular' culture. The author has pinpointed that the chief value of Williams' cultural theory lies in its recognition of the materiality of culture. All through his career, Williams consistently argued about the materiality of culture. The term 'cultural materialism' was used by Williams to describe his mode of analysis.

Chapter three unfolds the work of America's foremost cultural theorist, Edward W Said. This is for the common knowledge that unlike in Britain, Cultural Studies in America is a recent phenomenon. The author observes that in spite of Said's problematic relationship with the many variants of post-structuralism, his theory is shaped by, and is a response to, the post-structuralist debates about history, identity and representation (p. 79). All major works of Said have been discussed in this book, and it is squabbled that out of these *Orientalism* (1978) gained the widest popularity. *Orientalism* traces the various phases of relationship between the Occident and the Orient and enables postcolonial criticism that calls into question the authority of Western scholarship on other societies.

The author also illustrates the 'travelling theory', a key concept that Said elaborated in his work *The World, the Text and the Critic* (1983). Said's main emphasis was on the context of theory that was decontextualized in its travels. He says, 'theory is a response to a specific social and historical situation of which an intellectual occasion is a part. Thus, what is insurrectionary consciousness in one instance becomes tragic vision in another'. An attempt is made within this paradigm of 'travelling theory' to describe the affinity between the work of Williams and Said.

Chapter four provides a comparative

overview of the work of Williams and Said, and pinpoints their major theoretical approaches of Cultural Studies. After going through the text, it is felt that the author is correct in saying that cultural theory that Said articulated was a product of his dialogue with Williams' work. Williams' emphasis on the materiality of culture, his foregrounding of its institutional bases and its relation to power and his persistent emphasis on seeing culture in term of production have greatly influenced Said's work. Williams' influence is more apparent in Said's key concepts: worldliness of texts and secular criticism.

The greatest strength of the book lies in that the author has judiciously analyzed the work of Williams and Said in conjunction with respect to Cultural Studies despite the fact that they occupy opposite positionalities. In juxtaposing their work, interesting patterns of overlap and divergence that emerged have been discussed in detail. Christopher concludes 'the work of Williams and Said, when read in conjunction, presents interesting patterns of overlap . . . , the centre and periphery are engaged in a contrapuntal relationship and, together, they have revolutionized cultural studies by offering alternatives protocols to the study of culture' (p. 150).

Despite the fact that the chapters are broad, no derailing outline/introduction is specified in each chapter to the principal ideas and issues, and the way in which discussion would proceed. Concurrently, each chapter concludes devoid of a substantive analysis of some of the more problematic and pertinent issues amplified in the course of the discussion. Endnotes are used merely for citing references not for elaboration of points, as preferred. Nevertheless, the author must be given credit for incorporating unambiguous examples throughout the book that illustrate and elucidate particular points of investigations. This slim volume has a flow

that is not interrupted despite hefty quotations. Written in an easily accessible style, this book will be a fascinating reading for everyone interested in cultural theories and Cultural Studies.

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Consciousness, Society and Values, AV Afonso (ed.), Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, 2006, pp. ix + 304, Rs. 375

Consciousness Studies as a trans-disciplinary programme finds its *bricoleur* representation in bringing together ideas from philosophers, social and natural scientists and literary critics in the volume under discussion. Although conceived in the form of what Professor Afonso calls a representation of 'fractal' kind, the volume goes beyond boundaries set up by disciplines of analytic, phenomenological and social sciences and portrays the depth of development by way of juxtaposition and debate. The thrust of this creative act of collation lies in 'consciousness as embodied in one's introspection and reflected in social and moral values'. The volume unfolds multiple ways of achieving this many layered objective, that is, how consciousness is related to society and human values, which makes it possible to explore some new and very exciting territory.

The volume is divided in four sections. Thematically, it runs through Consciousness as manifested in conscious experience, as embodied and as reflected in social and moral values, as collective, social and ideological entity and as the source of values like bioethics and perpetual peace. This diversity of facets and features of Consciousness are correlated in an emergent spectrum of criss-cross, which possibly is an Indian response by way of a critical assessment and synthesis in specific intellectual and cultural context. Such a contextualization is both reflective as well as

reflexive. The reflective aspect of the project is carried out by way of an interpretative novelty, while the reflexive aspect is embedded in an orientation towards values, which are humane and which have distinct contextual-practical relevance. This value orientation of the volume develops into a substantive programme of inquiry: rather than describing the knowledge organization in the field of Consciousness Studies, it turns into a virtuous enterprise of improving the efforts of all these extremely gifted and well trained scholar-contributors from India.

The first section include six papers by Sangeetha Menon, CA Tomy, Prasenjit Biswas, AV Afonso and TV Madhu that combine a wide array of methodological and critical approaches. Starting with S Paneerselvan's paper entitled, 'The Conscious Mind: Functionalism, Representational Theory and Biological Naturalism and their Compatibility', the section goes onto discovering the middle ground between analytic and phenomenological traditions by way of discussion on structures and forms of Consciousness. Especially it is very interesting to note that Sangeetha Menon, in her paper, identifies the very basics of consciousness in two categories like 'experiencer' and 'experience' and comes to an entangled, integrated and irreducible first person notion of self. This anti-naturalist notion of self sets the tone of discussion in this section. Conceivability of a self emerges out to be the major bone of contention in the neurosciences as well as in consciousness studies and it is echoed in various problematic forms in this section. Afonso in a well argued paper with an alluring title, part of which reads as 'Consciousness as a Subject-dependent Linguistic Process' makes a worth read for whatever it stands for. Afonso meticulously examines whether Popper's three worlds of constructivist epistemology can admit genetic

explanations of self and consciousness that turns out to be an expansive-reconstructive reading of Popper. In such an attempt, Popperian methodology of evolution from pre-reflective to reflective consciousness gets problematized in a genetic explanation such as Jean Piaget's, who in Afonso's extensive reading only partially jibes with Popper. Popper's three world epistemology and Piaget's developmental psychology meet at a distance, although both are evolutionary yet they both fall short of Subject-dependence, which is much more than a linguistic acquisition of concepts. Paneerselvan's essay on compatibility between representational theory and biological naturalism takes Searle to task for his naïve notion of consciousness that does not accommodate any notion of 'unconscious'. It is worth remembering that Searle was taken to task by Derrida' for determination of intentional or intensional contexts of consciousness in the same way as Paneerselvan does. The assumed compatibilism between conscious representations and causal interactions between brain and world, for Paneerselvan, makes Searle susceptible to property dualism. This minimalist critique of Searle as a theoretician of intentionality even in the case of 'unconscious' working as background of causal connection exposes Searle's impoverished theoretical moves and especially the fact that Searle's notion of context dependence does not allow a freeplay between intentionality and consciousness in a causal closure. Two papers of this section, one by CA Tomy on the feasibility of Sydney Shoemaker's arguments against absent qualia and the other by Prasenjit Biswas on aposteriori necessity of qualia sharpen the debate on self-world relationship. For CA Tomy, Shoemaker's argument fails to categorically separate mental state from representational content as they are phenomenologically and functionally inseparable. Tomy rather suggests that 'there are no

pure phenomenal states called qualia' (p. 57). In sharp contrast, Prasenjit Biswas argues that qualia are based on a phenomenological doubling of self-consciousness and the content of it is an aposteriori necessity based on counterfactual connection with a phenomenal state. But this connection is looped between doubled up consciousness and all its internal and external correlates, the identity of which could be understood by following what he called a 'non-form'. Once again, in contrast from such hackneyed abstractions, TV Madhu's paper appeals to the craft of constituting oneself as a Subject under certain objective and material conditions that make it possible for the author to establish a dialogue between Marx's notion of Subject of praxis with embodied and speaking Subject of Merleau Ponty. Madhu succeeds in a conceptual blending that produces a space for language as the mediating resource between kinds of embodiment. Such a position overcomes the confusion of qualia-absent qualia argument by highlighting that contexts are determined by language including the very context of production of language itself. Further, first person notions of self and consciousness are germane to this feature of linguistic determination of contexts, which certainly needs a genetic and inclusive domain of the material world, which is an interactive and interconnected Popperian world.

The second section of essays contains Phenomenological approaches to the problem of self-world connection by reinterpreting the notion of world and self in terms of two important constituents: society and time. It is noticeable that the first constituent, that is society, acts as the source of doing what is called 'Constitutive Phenomenology' through the life-world, that is how the experiential enters into the conceptual and vice versa. Sebastian Velassary's phenomenological topos of the social world talks of the I-Thou relationship that allows an ontological

space to remain responsible to the other without altering the consciousness of the self. This avoids the situation of becoming stray dogs of modernity or postmodern narcissist and instead paves way for qualitative sharing of universal values of humaneness in our common lived experience. Without discounting such a loaded phenomenology of the social world, Koshy Tharakan employs a Husserlian-Nietzschean notion of aesthetic that leads to value things of the world in a certain way and this is the way of meaning-giving, structuring and intervening in the world. Interestingly, Tharakan points out that all these features of consciousness in the social world discloses itself not as an actuality, but as 'potentiality',² a notion that Giorgio Agamben employs to describe 'suspension of being' under modern social conditions. In a similar vein, Tharakan mentions how values themselves are objects of valuing and hence they paradoxically manifest in thought and not so much in action. L Anthony Savari Raj continues with this paradoxical suspension of being in contemporary time consciousness in technological, sociological and historical realm. He gives the example of 'nanosecond' that denies any notion of persistence through tensed consciousness that matches with the notion of 'comptime' marking a complete separation of time from experience and human consciousness. In contrast to such 'temporalization of time', history provides a notion of human time that seeks to free itself from external and internal constraints of human condition. Raj, very poignantly commends Raimundo Panikkar's notion of combining temporality with eternity in a non-dualistic mode of experience. He further characterizes such a notion of time as transhistorical, which is an adventure of Being. Reading this essay at this point of time, I can see a very fruitful connection between Alain Badiou's just published magnum opus *Event and Being*³ that argues that event is a trans-

Being and that Being is fable about the event and not an event. Panikkar, in Raj's exposition seems to come very close to Badiou's notion of event as something that moves beyond a singular notion of being and truth.

The third section is much more illustrative of a critical notion of consciousness that presents a common feature of *ideologycritique*. Starting with PK Pokker's 'Conscious as an Ideological Construct', the section goes onto showing how forms of knowledge are situated within a certain ideological-discursive context. Pokker alludes to Lacan's celebrated formulation that the discourse of the unconscious is structured like a language in Althusser's notion of overdetermination of consciousness by ideology that not only structures the acts of linguistic representation, but also determines Subject's relation to the world through her unconscious. Such overdetermined consciousness, for Althusser partakes in ideas that rule the world, while it leaves open the possibility of interpellation of a different subjectivity that can break from the unconscious and reproduce the material relations at the level of the conscious. Essentially such reproduction of material relations would give rise to counter-ideological and counter-hegemonic ideologies that would mark a recovery of the agency from the structure. In a sharper vein Murzban Jal continues the critique by way of identifying the phenomenology of the reified mind. Jal posits the paradigm of reification as a deconstruction of Subjectivity that makes *aufhebung* inoperative in the world. This becomes the toehold for a critique of irreality of representation that dominant ideologies produce and that constitutes the realm of the mental by detaching itself from the real. In such a situation the mind is estranged from the materiality of social relations and body, it's an ephemera that becomes an 'alien object'. This brings forth a theory of reification propounded by Lukacs,

Benjamin and other post-Marxist thinkers, which commits a fundamental inversion of sorts: life is conferred on inanimate objects and humanity is erased. This produces an objectification of social relations of exchange or value and a subjectification of mind as a mere estranged and disembedded instrument of consciousness. The message that Jal purports to give is rather nuanced: commodification from social relations estranges the human being, it is not totalizable in human consciousness, because a self-critical unpacking of this process is but a necessary component of this whole process of reification. It sounds quite like Lukács' views on class consciousness that can overcome this pitfall of the estranged mind.⁴ K Gopinathan in his article on deterritorialization of consciousness exorcizes the Deleuzian notion of 'deterritorialization', which means 'construction of a plane of Gopinathan, is rather dehumanizing as it only marks 'a fractures space (that) invariably fragments the concepts, institutions and values located within it' (p. 205). He calls it a non-space that is everywhere and yet nowhere with its negative effect on society that contradictions co-exist without any possibility of transcendence, which Gopinathan characterizes as becoming-inhuman following Deleuze. Such a becoming is ontologically 'disembodied' and thereby annihilating the possibility of determination of value and meaning as they are encountered in moral practice. OL Snaitang's paper on tribal consciousness in India deals with the exclusionary practices of caste societies of India in committing cultural and epistemic violence on tribes. Neither their religions had been recognized nor had their culture been assigned a proper place. While it is ironically true that tribal culture and religion constitutes the substratum of developed cultures, tribes became strangers in their own homeland. Snaitang portrays the grim picture of victimhood of tribes in the

Indian context and paints how an important segment of achievements of human consciousness can be socially marginalized by erecting walls. Snaitang exemplifies within tribal collective consciousness the ramifications of deterritorialization and reification, to describe it in terms of the foregoing papers. S Lordunathan's paper on 'Phenomenological Inquiry on Structuring of Dalit Consciousness' argues about the thrownness of the broken being of the Dalits in India. In terms of consciousness, Dalits embody, according to the author, a continuous encounter with the closed self of the dominator that declares an ontological war against the face of the other, an other with an alterity. It is this ontological condition that keeps Dalit consciousness as a 'protest consciousness' that exist only as broken particular to provoke an ethic of justice for a co-human community and not for a community of others. V Sujatha in her paper interrogates the very conditions of dominant knowledge systems that derive their sustenance from the 'structuring dispositions' or the *techne* of first principles that 'disenfranchises' an outside. Indian system of medicine, practiced by Ayurveda system of medical practitioners, going by this logic of *techne* and such dispositions, was made to suffer as it was devalued. But as a saving grace, medicinal lores as it exists in the existential contexts of village communities within India could act as an inherited and incorporated knowledge within oral traditions and thereby creating an alternative space of consciousness. Diagnostics, care and other forms of practice combined in transmission of such an indigenous knowledge system very successfully, possibly by remaining excluded from the parlance of dominant knowledge systems.

In the penultimate section of the volume there are four essays by Francis Arakal, SE Bhelkey, SV Bokil and a co-

authored essay by IS Dua and Meenakshi Gupta. The essays focus on how values are an intrinsic part of forms of consciousness. Arakal posits that the Advaita hierarchy of consciousness provides an explanatory bridge between phenomenal consciousness and absolute consciousness by way of a progressive de-superimposition of the Self and the non-Self. This is a practical and synthesizing process of attaining the knowledge of Brahman that always acts as the basis for separating the real from the unreal. Advaita proposes an absolute absence of discontinuity between the phenomenal and the absolute as it transcends the sensible by arriving at the knowledge of the real, which is without contradiction and difference. SE Bhelkey's essay on Kashmiri Saivism (KS) is a worthwhile exposition of the some of the fundamental tenets of epistemic rendering of the relationship between consciousness and the human subject that attempts to functionally integrate three basic roles of human consciousness in the forms of knower, doer and enjoyer in reality, which is 'a united complex of infinitely multiple items' (p. 261). KS interprets the functioning of consciousness as a foreground-background relationship as Consciousness that foregrounds is an appearance of particularities of the world, while it pushes limitless and infinite consciousness without forms in the background. Such dialectic creates a unified agent who simultaneously knows, does and enjoys. This is a sublimation of various substrates of knowledge and values without an end in itself, but it develops into a perspective or a vision that act as the basis to create meaning and value in life and world. Therefore in KS, consciousness plays a foundational role in unifying objects and action in relation to the self-conscious agents who are engaged in knowledge enhancing activities. SV Bokil essay on 'Plato's Republic to Kant's concept of *Republic*' is an

exercise in understanding evolution of the notion of republic, from Plato's abstract domain of realization of truth to Kant's notion of individuated domain of the public. Bokil evaluates this transition as one from an abstract notion of good to public use of reason that justifies fraternity and peace. The last but not the least essay on biotechnology and consciousness argues that human consciousness must assume a voluntary role in the evolution of the species and hence an organic reproduction of species cannot ensure the transmission of consciousness. As they explain, 'Man, (sic) the flowering organism which has been empowered by millions of years of intelligence, will achieve a high moral culture when he recognizes that he ought to control his conscious and not wait for the eternity to make him a heap of earth' (p. 302). This optimism of will and pessimism of spirit is what, according to the authors, has brought about diversity in genetic copying of information that do not exactly become one between oneself and one's clone.

This collection of nineteen essays produces a fabulous gift of critical knowledge on the highly fuzzy and fast track terrain of consciousness studies. In all, the volume gives quite a few challenging riders to the gauntlet thrown by cognitive turn in Philosophy. The phenomenological thrust of essays compounded by analytic method of critique of cognitive reason goes onto establishing a humane connection with the realm of social, political and personal struggles of life. The volume wields a final criterion to evaluate the whole project of consciousness studies by placing it in the midst of valuing, which remains to be the foremost frontier of practice and knowledge in human society. The editorial in the beginning provides the right tips to provoke for and against the grain reading of the all these essays, lucidly written and compiled with a broadview of the emerging intellectual horizon.

NOTES

- 1 Derrida, Jacques (1986), *Limited Inc. a, b, c . . .*, (tr.) Samuel Weber, Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- 2 Agamben, Giorgio (2004), *The State of*

- Exception*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Agamben explains potentiality as 'potentiality-not-to', which is a paradoxical manifestation of human subjectivity.
- 3 Badiou, Alain (2006), *Being and Event*, (tr.)

- Oliver Feltham, London: Continuum Books.
- 4 Lukács, G. (1954), *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft*, Frankfurt, Suhramp.

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Latest
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Living with Diversity
Forestry Institutions in the Western Himalaya by SUDHA VASAN

Diversity of forestry institutions that emerges from and permeates practice of forestry in the Western Himalaya is at the center of this work. Thick ethnographic descriptions of a range of forestry institutions in Himachal Pradesh – forest department, colonial forest settlements, national parks and reserved forests, sacred groves, forest cooperatives, indigenous institutions, institutions created in Social Forestry, Joint Forest Management and several other state projects are found in these pages.

The central argument is about the diversity of practice that continuously confronts the synoptic vision of modern forestry. Practical diversity of institutions that clearly emerges in this narrative challenges, defies and transforms state simplifications that attempt to simplify, homogenize and standardize ecological and social landscape. On the one hand the historical perspective in this book highlights the persistence of a mosaic of forestry institutions that reflect multiple attempts at state simplification. However, it is also argued that this diversity is not merely residual diversity driven by pre-existing institutional remnants. Instead it is continuously created and recreated by mutually constituting interactions of structures, dispositions and actions that constitute the logic of practice. Since institutional diversity is an active product of practice, it is neither a chaotic nor structureless institutional environment. Forestry institutions in Himachal Pradesh form a tapestry of interwoven variations that are dynamically recreated within boundaries of structural constraints.

The author relates this theoretical understanding to suggestions for a practical forest policy framework in the region that recognizes and positively deals with the resilience of institutional diversity. Efforts to manage forests by obviating, circumventing, ignoring or assuming away the existence of diversity risk unsustainability. This disjuncture between assumptions and pragmatic reality fundamentally underlies the limited success of forest management efforts. The inevitability and importance of forest policy engaging with institutional diversity is emphasized and a framework for "living with diversity" is suggested.

The book will be of interest and use to those in the fields of environmental studies, forestry, sociology, regional studies of the Himalaya, history, politics, management, human geography, social anthropology and development studies as well as policy-makers, bureaucrats and non-governmental organizations.

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Writing Resistance
A Comparative Study of the Selected Novels by Women Writers by USHA BANDE

Resistance can be as esoteric as silence and silence can be as impenetrable as hegemonic power; conversely, both resistance and silence have the potential to challenge power. By its very nature, resistance is non-confrontational. It works subtly through seemingly small, innocuous everyday acts of non-compliance and achieves the desired results imperceptibly and slowly. As a socio-cultural-historical practice, resistance has been largely successful, the most obvious example being Gandhi's philosophy of 'passive resistance'; as a literary practice it poses challenge to the reader as well as the author.

Indian women writers have provided variegated pictures of resistance practices in the modern Indian context. In this study, Usha Bande examines the treatment of resistance in nine contemporary novels written in English. Through a close reading of the selected novels of Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Githa Hariharan, Manju Kapur, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy and Bapsi Sidhwa, she examines women's conditioning, their internalization of patriarchy and the reasons for their inability to subscribe to any oppositional action. Textual resistance functioning within the feminist, cultural and post-colonial milieu of the novels provides a platform to understand the theoretical debates and identify various resistant strategies deployed by the creative writers. She traces — drawing on the theories of feminist resistance, resistance operative during the anti-colonial/nationalist struggle, and subaltern resistance — the inter-connection between gender, cultural practices and the Western influence on India social system. Usha Bande observes that despite the influence of the Western ideologies, which cannot be avoided in the Third World context, and the present socio-economic changes, one cannot sidetrack the strong cultural leanings of the authors that provide unique ethos to the works. In her analysis, Bande focuses on issues such as resistance offered to patriarchy, to the matriarch as patriarchy's agent, rape and violence against women, childhood experiences as resistance and revisionist mythmaking as resistance. Recognition of resistance in these texts help us locate the implicit urges of women to re-define their 'self' and to survive not in abject passivity but with dignity.

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