



Studies in Indian and Asian Civilizations

S C Malik

**Understanding
Indian
Civilization**

A Framework of Enquiry

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Editor S C Malik

Understanding Indian Civilization

A Framework of Enquiry

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Understanding Indian Civilization

A Framework of Enquiry

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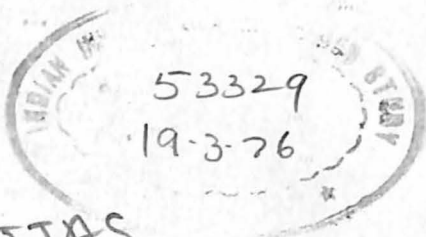


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Foreword

Over the last twenty-five years a serious debate has been going on over the approaches to conceptualizing and understanding civilizations. The classical method of identifying a civilization with its sacred texts, with its high achievements in the realms of philosophy, literature, and the arts, and with select features of social organization interpreted in abstract metaphysical terms, has come in for some just criticism. Such a view assumes and portrays highly idealized normative orders which have little bearing on contemporary social and cultural realities. It presents a static rather than a dynamic model of the society. It is elitist in conception and it often ignores the variations and diversities found in a civilization. On the other extreme, the micro sociological approach describes little communities in rich and minute ethnographic detail but has little to say about the historical roots of customs and organizational forms and about the historically shaped meanings of the operative symbol system. It is evident that ancient texts must be related to living social contexts and the interplay between the *great tradition* and the *little traditions* must be examined in depth. In a complex society featuring stabilized cultural pluralism the dominant view of the system often fails to represent adequately the position as well as the points of view of the ethnic, religious, and cultural minorities. The dynastic style of historical writing has paid little attention to recurrent dissent, protest, and reform movements although these contribute significantly to the redefinition of social goals and the cultural means for their attainment. The subtle but significant changes that are brought about in little traditions by such movements remain unexamined. It is clear that the conceptual frameworks and the methodological apparatus of a number of classical approaches to the study of civilizations will have to be pooled with those of modern social science to evolve balanced appraisals of contemporary civilizations which have adequate time depth and which relate to earlier prototypes of which they are modifications.

Dr S C Malik's *Understanding Indian Civilization* is essentially an essay in methodology. He critically examines a number of frameworks of enquiry which have been used in arriving at macro- and micro-profiles of Indian civilization. He then turns to a number of hitherto unused approaches that could be fruitfully employed in attempts to understand the complexity, the diversity, and the variety of cultural forms both in continuity and in change. He pleads for a synthesis of the approaches of a variety of disciplines including Indology, archaeology, history, philosophy, sociology, and social anthropology. Taking selected aspects of Indian civilization he illustrates how the approach developed by him can be used. Of necessity his treatment is complex, but many of his insights are extremely perceptive and are likely to provoke a stimulating dialogue.

This is the first volume in a new series "Studies in Indian and Asian Civilizations" launched by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study under its programme "Source Book of Indian and Asian Civilizations". Two more monographs—*Brahmanic Social Institutions* and *Transmission of the Mahabharata Traditions*—are in press. These will be followed by a series of studies on different aspects and dimensions of the tradition of dissent, protest, and reform in Indian civilization. Dr Malik's book provides the general framework in which studies due to appear later in the series have been done.

I commend Dr Malik's *Understanding Indian Civilization* to all who are interested in a cross- and trans-disciplinary methodology for understanding contemporary civilizations which have roots in ancient continuing traditions.

20 March 1975
Simla

S C Dube
Director

Preface

Civilization in India is well known both for its variety, change, and diversity as well as for its continuity and uniformity of structural processes and patterns. While both are significant, it is the variety that is striking, for it ranges from the types of foods grown, eating habits, cooking vessels, dresses, house types, agricultural implements, to kinship and marriage systems, modes of inheritance and of succession, literature and languages, folk-tales and folk-songs, and the pantheon of gods and their worship which change from group to group and from family to family. Through times immemorial these diversities, according to some, have been 'added', or 'agglomerated', to various stages of Indian history. The variety being represented by hundreds of different social groups, indicating the multiplicity of behavioural patterns. Apart from the indigenous growth of diversities, the various comings and goings of peoples into the subcontinent since pre-historic times, ranging from the Aryans, Hellenistic Greeks, Huns, Kushans, Scythians, Persians, Arabs and Turko-Afghans, has considerably influenced the socio-cultural and politico-economic patterns. This has increased the intricacy and complexity of Indian civilization, by processes such as that of gradual assimilation, acculturation, and change; all of which have been continuing.

In understanding the complexities of Indian civilization from an overall perspective a major school of historical and civilizational study considers the basic social, economic, religious, and political structures to have remained substantially the same since the foundations were laid during the period from 333 B.C. or perhaps a little earlier around the end of the first millennium B.C. to 300 A.D. But in describing the persistence and continuity of Indian traditions, most researchers have ignored to analyze, investigate, and assess the processes of change, discontinuities, and other aspects that have equally contributed to the formation of Indian civilization. But above all, most of these analyses tend to offer the concept of a

'static' Indian society. Possibly because several traditions have existed for over two thousand years, albeit with due modifications, despite continuous pressures from new influences, ideas, conquests and religions, the continuity aspect has overwhelmed research orientations. This is specially so in the context of seeking national identities through historical studies, whereby the continuity aspect is bound to be exaggerated. However, even here what we need to understand is the why and how of those processes which kept alive various diverse traditions. Is it the flexibility of the structure—not being monolithic—that has allowed this, since highly organized societies elsewhere have broken up under the onslaught of new political and religious denominations? Or perhaps, the structural "weaknesses" account for the inherent strength, i.e. the existence of relativistic attitudes which allow various patterns to persist without insisting on a final choice.

The processes of change have also been in keeping with this characteristic; namely, the rates and directions of change have differ from area to area, group to group, and from period to period. That is, changes have always been partial not only along spatio-temporal dimensions, but even socio-culturally these have tended to spread more slowly to strata other than where they started. In short, in most cases these changes never encompassed the entire system—civilization—more or less at the same time.

Thus, any understanding of the complex Indian patterns and processes cannot merely be in terms of co-existence, agglomeration or museum-like collections of the new and old, even if superficially this may seem obvious. Diversity becomes complex because, as in many other traditional societies, there is a process of incorporation of the new which has its impact more in one area than in another and leads to 'addition' rather than replacement. One may get an insight into these by understanding some forms of institutional interrelationships—structural-functional—which have allowed for these complexities of Indian civilization to continue and exist for such a long time. That is, we need to explain how, why, and by what means and modes of institutional articulation and information and communication systems, may one account for both separateness (diversity) and togetherness (unity), and change and continuity.

One of the ways to answer these problems is, as is done traditionally, by examining textual versions and their very elaborate philosophies that elucidate usually normative behavioural patterns.

While we disagree with this approach researchers even in this case have failed to note the differences that exist in various regional and sub-regional versions. Apart from this, traditional researchers ignore the fact that these texts themselves not only reflect but are products of contemporary socio-cultural and politico-economic features of the changing times. That is, traditional researchers fail to realize that philosophical and allied writings often represent both the contemporary ideological explanations as well as significant rationalizations of a given social order and its concomitant situations.

Again, traditions of Indian history have been investigated as ritual past, which is either related to the 'great' tradition (*Ramayana* or *Mahabharata*) providing sacred ties in order to justify or explain situations which people find themselves in, or a mythological past which is communicated during performances and rituals of different kinds.

Indian civilization has also been examined from the historiogeography and ecological perspective of understanding socio-economic organizations and political developments, and distribution of languages. That is, Indian civilization has been seen within the framework of historical and ecological factors which offer some explanations for continuing political, economic cultural, and social patterns.

Thus, there are various perspectives—historical, geographical, mythological-ritual, etc.—that have been brought in to explain the maintenance of Indian traditions, social systems, and cultural patterns. But, unfortunately, most research has not kept in view the multi-dimensional approaches. By these attempts scholars have tried to establish a single past, a single tradition, and a single cultural identity of a unique nation and people. It is because of this general orientation that attempts to understand various problems of Indian civilization have been incomplete, insufficient, and unsuccessful. Moreover, this method of presenting a total view of Indian culture, society, and tradition has tried to supplant all other previous and local views of the past. This is why persons often tend to speak of Indian civilization as though it were endowed with something in the nature of life and even of personality, without pausing to analyze the serious and far reaching consequences which ought to follow from such a claim. But even if this is true, a near harmony and cohesion or a unity of style of a civilization should be explained in

terms of politico-economic and socio-cultural interactions because otherwise any single statement that one makes is subject to a counter statement.

Consequently, in order to avoid further confusion our objectives of research need to change; we may have to examine whether successive systems—several states of Indian civilization—and subsystems can or cannot be described, measured and compared logically, by the same label throughout history. Unless we first examine this, it is meaningless to talk about unity, a 'golden age' or even of a decline and disintegration. This is because the history and civilization of a nation is vital to the extent that it is possible to recognize some patterns and styles whereby we are able to follow the development of various subsystems within the larger system. But in terms of a key or unifying principle, such as environment, geography, caste, family, philosophy, economics, religion, technology, etc., this is not possible.

Today, investigations of Indian history and civilization need to be carried out from the anthropological—social science—perspectives. For instance we have hinted here the general systems viewpoint and the structural and functional analyses to indicate the direction of future research. Needless to add, the results of these tasks remain to be substantiated, plausible and interesting these 'new ventures' may be. This is why a vindication of the claim of this approach should not be expected in this attempt, since it will mean a re-writing of the entire history of India, which is not our goal. For the present, our stand has been illustrated by choosing to discuss certain significant areas of Indian history and culture, and by merely touching some concepts and theories. The latter are neither so comprehensive nor precise as to give powerful explanations of civilizational processes, whereby we may claim to easily ignore unique phenomena. In this sense, our objectives are only partially fulfilled, for a general analysis that will indicate this approach will require a large interdisciplinary team. This is why this book is aimed only to provide certain social science guidelines for understanding the continuity and change of Indian civilization. By and large, the contents centre around problems of concepts and research methodology, without seeking to list the vast known 'factual' material. Hence, even the empirical details are given here chiefly to indicate our framework of enquiry, rather than for the sake of providing information.

It is our hope that this preliminary attempt will stimulate ideas with regard to some deeper and basic issues that have so far been swept under the academic carpet in favour of the more romantic and glorious aspects of Indian history and civilization. If followed properly, this approach may eventually involve considerable academic and administrative reorganization, to the dislike of many. At any rate, any academic discipline which claims to be intellectual must induct specific models and theories, even if this means at first borrowing terms, definitions and concepts from other disciplines. Of course, in this sense our approach might equally be applicable to all intellectual endeavours. But more than this, our aim in examining appropriate problems of theory construction as well as of its validation is not merely for the benefit of the profession, it is also to address those persons who have an intelligent interest in Indian culture and society because the non-academic intelligentsia, public men, and others who often invoke India's past to support their arguments, also need to have a clearer understanding of the formation, nature, and products of our heritage. We firmly believe that a reorientation of this understanding is essential in order to dispel some widely prevalent historical myths and misconceptions current in public life. This may lead to a relevant view of Indian history and civilization that is imperative for a proper understanding of the dynamics of a developing nation in terms of contemporary canons of knowledge.

1. 1990年12月29日，全国人大常委会通过了《关于修改〈中华人民共和国行政诉讼法〉的决定》，自1991年1月1日起正式施行。这是我国行政诉讼法自1989年颁布以来第一次大的修改。

2. 1997年9月，全国人大常委会通过了《关于修改〈中华人民共和国行政诉讼法〉的决定》，自1997年10月1日起正式施行。这是我国行政诉讼法自1989年颁布以来第二次大的修改。

3. 2014年11月1日，第十二届全国人大常委会第十一次会议审议通过了《关于修改〈中华人民共和国行政诉讼法〉的决定》，自2015年5月1日起正式施行。这是我国行政诉讼法自1989年颁布以来第三次大的修改。

4. 2015年5月1日

1. 2015年5月1日，第十二届全国人大常委会第十一次会议审议通过了《关于修改〈中华人民共和国行政诉讼法〉的决定》，自2015年5月1日起正式施行。这是我国行政诉讼法自1989年颁布以来第三次大的修改。

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Acknowledgements

In writing this monograph several scholars helped me by their invaluable comments and criticism of the first draft. I am grateful to all of them and in particular to S Naqvi, R N Misra, Mrinal Miri, and Romila Thapar. A number of discussions I had with Professor S C Dube, Director, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, have been of immense encouragement in formulating my ideas. I am thankful for the facilities, help, and co-operation which he provided both for my own work and for the functioning of the project, *Sourcebook of Ancient Indian and Asian Civilizations*.

To O P Nagpal and Prem Nath Arora for typing several drafts which have preceded the final manuscript, to N C Chatterjee, for expediting production of the book through various stages and to T Prem Kumar for providing editorial guidelines. I am very obliged.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

THE present work attempts to provide a social science—mainly anthropological—framework of enquiry for examining Indian history and civilization. This attempt will also emphasize the necessity for following a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of such problems. Today, research, whether it is subsumed under the arts, humanities or some social sciences, is carried out in a world of its own as if each discipline is separately aiming for the accumulation of some unique and exclusive knowledge. Perhaps, research becomes exclusive and isolated since it continues to be at the empirical level. It is the absence of common concepts, models, hypotheses—even defining terms and definitions—that has resulted in this lack of both inter and intra-disciplinary communication and understanding, i.e., the absence of a discussion of fundamental problems of one's discipline has prevented intellectual sophistication, specially in the case of those disciplines which deal with the subject of Indian history, philosophy, religion, culture, art, and archaeology. But not only do history, anthropology, and archaeology need to devise some broad principles separately, these disciplines ought to be covered together by a general concept of knowledge, specifically in the context of the study of Indian civilization.

In India, we have so far not really discussed basic issues because it is thought that the area of research in each subject ought to be limited in terms of the existing knowledge as defined by the 'facts'. This is why the existing literature on Indian history and civilization by and large appears no better than 'sophisticated' fiction. And, on the basis of this state of affairs the academic divisions that exist at present in our higher institutions of learning continue to be adhered to. Moreover in the formal training of a young research worker knowledge attained through books and/or field work is some-

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how considered enough, without any grounding in the philosophy, logic, and structure of the fundamentals of each discipline—leave aside a general approach to knowledge and problems of intellectual enquiry. Unfortunately there do not even exist elementary general books which deal with such problems, since few research workers have attempted to think and write along these lines, even if only for their own clarification.

In recent years there have been some efforts to discuss concepts and research methods in sociology, economics, and psychology. Similar developments are necessary if one wishes to systematically formulate politico-economic and socio-cultural generalizations about the past of India. These efforts may then hopefully serve as building blocks of both intra and inter disciplinary theoretical foundations. Moreover, the evolving of a common approach is necessary for both history and anthropology, because they face the same basic difficulties and problems, i.e., their aim is to recreate events that have once occurred—and continue to occur—and may not occur again, alongwith explaining processes and relationships of events. For this purpose, it is essential first to seek structures of procedures and transformation rules which allow us to sift information and organize it at different levels of abstraction. In this way research statements will be based on clear arguments, sound premises, intrinsic logic, and philosophy—thus justifying empirical knowledge. We need to pose, for instance, such questions as, how is it that we know what we know or reconstruct? Answers to such problems will involve us in a concern with words or concepts and their historical etymology, the means by which they are constructed, and the articulation of these concepts into a system. The absence of evolving formal procedures for various research operations has created today confusion and unnecessary controversies in the study of the past.

In the study of history, a chief reason for ignoring 'how' and 'why' problems has been due to an almost total involvement with empirical data. This is perhaps because research workers hope to leave a mark of their personal contribution with each new 'factual' discovery specially since a search for events is considered fundamental for history. It is little realized that in writing even about 'unique' events some generalizations have to be made and also one form or the other of abstraction. Of course, this is implicitly carried out. However, current research procedures should be based

on explicit models, concepts, and hypotheses. But the moment it is stated that one should explicitly and formally make clear our premises, empiricists erroneously think that this procedure may lead to a distortion of 'reality'. In any case, ignoring to state our theoretical frameworks explicitly and to avoid discussing wider generalizations is to stay at a stage of narrow empiricism, which believes that by simply observing the 'objective' world, by a process of induction, it will become possible to give somehow a coherent account of facts. Superficially 'factual' knowledge appears somehow to be more solid, 'safer', and basic than theoretical knowledge. Nevertheless, we know that all observation is selective, and every description always has a meaning, i.e., every fact is inevitably seen from a particular viewpoint since every investigator has to indicate how all his facts hang together—be it classifications, typologies, or what have you. The framework of factual knowledge emerges only as a solution to problems raised because 'facts' have neither an independent existence nor does the mere organization of facts amount to theory. This is why a distinction between theory, quasi- or semi-theories, models, and other generalizations has to be clearly made. At any rate, the one thing that is common with all theoretical research is that their frames of reference answer the 'why' and 'how' question. *

The reader may legitimately ask, why should one be preoccupied with models and theories? An obvious answer is that frames of reference which function as heuristic devices are valuable and necessary in the context of discovery. For example, in the context of a developing nation, a model of 'change-conflict-tension' may help us to give newer insights for bringing about change, rather than remaining static—for which an 'equilibrium' model has been found to be useful. Again, as recently as in the early 1950s, an Indian village—'microcosm'—studied in isolation was somehow expected to reflect the 'macrocosm'—the Indian civilization. Today, newer concepts and models make us realize that the village as a self-sufficient unit is a simplistic concept, so that, the Indian village may now be studied both for some general theoretical problems and also for some practical purposes, because we know that it functions in a wider spatio-temporal context, and that socio-cultural variation at the village level is enormous. Consequently, in civilizational research we have to move beyond description into the level of concepts and organizing principles as are currently available about

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human behaviour, and thereby contribute to general theoretical knowledge.

In the context of evolving a framework of enquiry, a related problem is that of social 'relevance'. Many researchers perhaps feel that both historical and cultural studies need not normally concern themselves with immediate problems. Nevertheless, these seemingly 'remote' academic subjects play a crucial role in everyday political, economic, and social life. This is very obvious today, from the viewpoint of a developing nation since it exists in a dynamic epoch it requires radical socio-economic changes by planning in order to modernize itself. In carrying out this programme, serious changes in the structure of values in the social, political, and economic spheres cause 'conflict-tension' and other problems. Therefore, in order to cope with these, any successful implementation of planned radical change requires imperatively an understanding of the past, not in the traditional sense but within a social science framework, which gives insights into the processes and conditioning influences which the past exercises upon the present. We have hinted elsewhere that in the hands of shrewd political parties, public men, and statesmen cultural heritage and history—these supposedly remote 'irrelevant' topics—are often used in strengthening selfish and/or 'status quo' goals that deny the specific interest of different sections, notwithstanding their undeniable, obvious differences due to historical and geographical factors. Therefore, discussing 'relevance' is a direct responsibility of the historian, anthropologist, and archaeologist, for, they must decide what to plan, and what they must abstain from in academic research. Moreover, in the name of 'objectivity', most researchers claim independence from this problem of 'relevance'. But since each one of us is an outcome of social environment and subject to ideological impact—conscious or unconscious—'objectivity' in research and its justification, 'purpose' of investigations, etc., gain significance only in the spatio-temporal context. Besides, in countries like India, with uneven developments and varying conditions and experience, different units assert their own specific identity and evoke past history and cultural traditions as arguments for buttressing their claims to autonomy or even independence. To be able to resolve the resulting tensions and conflicts, the history and cultural patterns of each unit have to be studied so that the requisite adjustments are made and national unity evolved as a voluntary agreement between different

units, for the benefit of all.

Today, we have a broader view of the past knowing fully well that mere narration of kings, and their successions, conquests, etc., is no longer the goal of historical research. The purpose of understanding history and civilization is also not any more a tradition of writing epic works, or of exalting certain heroes and denigrating others in order to give political and moral lessons. Historical disciplines, in line with other contemporary disciplines, are trying to understand the totality of phenomena, such as interrelating the past to the present, both in terms of the upper and also of all other social classes. But this effort is being made both for reasons of a wide coverage in order to have detailed quantitative data, and as a consequence of newer perspectives which have arisen due to a questioning, in a real sense, of what we are doing and why we are doing it, i.e., whether all our research objectives are worth exploring—even if it is because such research interests us as a genuine case of curiosity, having nothing to do with relevance.

Similar developments have taken place in anthropology which until recently had mainly investigated out-of-the-way non-European 'small' societies. It was thought that such micro-examinations would enable one to understand larger problems of the 'whole' as well as cultural evolution. There were two other main reasons: (1) the non-industrial tribal societies were expected to disclose the stages through which the advanced industrial society must have passed and (2) to identify motivations which kept these societies 'stagnant' and whose replacement would take them forward along the lines followed by the advanced societies. A later derived reason was to assert the congenital character of backwardness and the opposition of such societies to any effort at the introduction of modern institutions. However, now we know that the issue is not so simple. Moreover methodological difficulties of dealing with non-literate societies are relatively 'minor' as compared to studies of large aggregates of sub-cultures and sub-societies called civilizations. In any case, a proper perspective was brought about by challenging the classical universalistic, unique, and absolutistic assumptions and beliefs. Thus, modern anthropology has gone beyond descriptive analyses to develop explicit techniques and systematic theories, albeit it continues to use such descriptive accounts as are available in historical documents, evidences from archaeological field work, ethonographic details, etc. This vast information is then analyzed

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to explain processes and to focus attention on various dimensions of research methodology and theoretical problems. It is in this direction that various aspects will be discussed, indicating that the objectives of academic research have to be both meaningful and feasible at the same time.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

THE complexities involved in studying a civilization such as that of India are fairly clear, not only because of the diversity of topics involved but also because these cover periods of many hundreds of years. To characterize these various developments in space and time, whether under a single unitary label or one dominant theme (this approach not being valid any longer) such as religion, economics and caste, or even from a multidimensional perspective is not a simple task. For instance, even if we take up specific regions or subsystems there is a great variation and diversity in them. But the difficulty is not of mere quantitative coverage which is stupendous, it is also one of evolving a minimal common frame of reference, acceptable to different specialists. The question is, therefore, how do we describe the numerous—almost infinite—varieties of practices and beliefs, social structures, land-owning patterns, personal law and kinship systems, etc., and still communicate the essential common elements which interrelate with each other, making them typical of that civilization? Answers have been given in many ways, for civilizations have been studied for many generations. Here, we may briefly give a background of these studies.

Under the immediate impact of Darwinism, human societies began to be classified in terms of natural selection, being one of the biological principles of evolution. It resulted in a quest for discovering such non-European societies which would be indicative of the various 'natural' stages in the evolution of mankind. While, on the one hand, it led to the systematic investigation of 'small' societies (ethnography), on the other examination of Greek, Egyptian, and Chinese civilizations was also carried out intensively. There came to be formulated theories about civilizational evolution, e.g., such approaches as that of Gibbon, Spengler, and more recently Toynbee (1947), presumed that civilizations have a definite life-course and

death—similar to that of an individual organism. There were other explanations based on universal histories. In short, since the history of such studies is a long one, without going into many details some of the relevant conceptual assumptions may be summarized (Elder 1970 a,b), as follows:

(1) *Evolutionist and 'Progress' Assumptions.* (i) The stress here was predominantly on the technological and economic criteria of 'material' progress, specially as formulated by Lewis H. Morgan in 1877 and Engels in 1884 (1954). Following in their footsteps was Gordon Childe (1964) who characterized the beginnings of civilization by the presence of cities, large monuments, agricultural surpluses and writing. (ii) Such organic viewpoints which consider civilization in terms of life cycles—of youth, manhood, old age and death—may be included. These evolutionary views have been enunciated by Gibbon, Spengler, and Toynbee.

(2) *Non-evolutionist Definitions.* These viewpoints consider truth, beauty, adventure, art, and peace as chief characteristics—qualities—of a civilized society, including such views which see civilized India in terms of spirituality or other moral judgements.

(3) *Levels of Integration.* (i) Sorokin (1962) and Cowell (1952), who has expounded on the former's views, do not consider civilization as integrated. Sorokin has viewed within it various cultural systems at high levels of integration (such as of science, philosophy, art, etc.), dividing them into the sensate, the ideational, and the idealistic—each depending upon the respective viewpoints of ultimate reality. The subsystems may clash with each other.

(ii) Robert Redfield (1956, 1960) views civilization in terms of the integration of folk and urban cultures, and the interaction of high and low traditions.

(iii) Kroeber (1963a,b) views civilization as a 'super style' or a 'way of life', in many areas. For example, the culmination of Indian civilization in terms of art and intellectual activities is indicated by two such periods; from the *Upanishadic* period to the development of Buddhist and other heretical religions around 500 B.C., and the Gupta period (traditional 'Golden Period') from A.D. 400 to 600. In this way culture and civilization correspond closely to periodization, because for him history is an end product of learning and of judgement by conscious choice. This is how the almost endless continuum of culture and of past happenings is organized.

(4) *Literate Civilizational Studies*. In literate civilizations, for purposes of 'total' studies, as contrasted with non-literate societies, there is possibility of greater abstraction because of the presence of historical or philosophical sources. Literate civilizations are those which have accumulated a wealth of written documents of different kinds and have a rich intellectual tradition—religious, historical, legal, scientific, and the like. The word civilization has been chosen because in contrast to society or culture, it implies an extra increment of scope and elaborations. But anthropologists have also studied plural societies by elaborate techniques of field investigations, in a manner similar to studying traditional small societies. However, it has been found that these attempts often result in a patchwork of elements without revealing any apparent overall pattern. Of course, there are those who argue that it is seldom possible to comprehend an overall pattern. Nevertheless, studies of literate civilizations have been usually based with emphasis on one or the other of the following: (i) Investigation of a single aspect, e.g., art, mythology, etc.; (ii) examination of a single village or a community; and (iii) a psychological approach based on broad personality generalizations or on other underlying unitary characteristics. The first approach concerns itself with religion, politics, art and literature, and economics. The second deals with what people of a local community think and do, ignoring traditional literature. The third group emphasizes shared patterns between written literature, fiction, myths, folk-tales, sacred books, traditional philosophies; and the values, feelings, and preoccupations of the common people as expressed through their activities, problems, and utterances, or national character studies (Hsu 1969 : 1-3).

Today, it is realized that the examination of such subsystems as villages and castes, is a necessity, in order to place them within the wider setting of a civilization. In other words, micro-studies give us points of reference against which different aspects of a 'total' society and culture may be examined. Historians may similarly investigate structural relationships of sub-societies and sub-cultures (subsystems), both spatially and temporally. For example, an examination of the repeatedly emerging forms of 'protest', 'dissent', 'reformist' mass movements against any existing orthodox tradition will prove to be very useful not only from the processual viewpoint but also how in the general socio-cultural structure of India this characteristic of long standing has made significant contributions

to the 'totality', or the overall structural pattern. In this manner the sequences of facts and events, from historical to the modern, may be examined comparatively by seeking out the repetitive social and cultural processes.

With this brief introduction, we may now turn to an historical background of the general studies about India, which are also related to civilizational studies as such.

HISTORICAL STUDIES

Written records of Indian society, as observed by outsiders, go back to atleast the 3rd century B.C. The subsequent historical details are well known and need not be mentioned here (Cohn 1968; Malik 1971a,b). An interest in Indian society began to develop rapidly from 1760 onwards, when British officials showed a keen interest, for administrative purposes, to learn classical languages and about various aspects of Indian society. During this early period, there were three major approaches to the study of Indian society: the orientalist, the administrative, and the missionary.

The orientalist had uncritically accepted the textual view of Indian society, which was considered to be timeless and static; the statements from the texts of the 3rd century were as good for the 18th century Indian society. Thus, there was no regional variation in this view, so that no questions were asked about the relationships between prescriptive-normative statements derived from the texts and the actual behaviour of individuals and groups.

The missionary view was at polar ends to the orientalists', because it condemned outright Indian society, specially in order to destroy the social basis of religion. But, indirectly, it contributed a great deal to the initiation of empirical studies of Indian society. Nevertheless, it firmly believed that Indian society had always been corrupt, degraded, and filled with absurdities.

There was the third official view of Indian society, which was based on each administrator's collected information on caste, village, family, etc. (Baden-Powell 1892; 1958). It suggested that unchanging India lay in the villages and in its social organization. This view was later incorporated by the nationalists of the early 20th century to suggest that prior to the coming of the British, India was well-off, and was reasonably democratically governed at the village

level. In a way, this is similar to the view of the orientalist who had admired India's religion and civilization as mentioned in the texts and thought that India had fallen from a 'golden age'.

The above three characteristic views were tied to the kinds of role which each group was to play in India. These problems have been discussed by many and we need not go into them here. But the 19th century Indians had acquired a new outlook and new consciousness about themselves which transcended the limited outlook of the British, to highlight the identity and image of the motherland. In the context of emerging nationalism and a new political awareness which was accompanied by complementary economic processes, the search of an identity led to an interpretation of Indian heritage. But this amounted to an idealization of the past. In many ways this nostalgia, preserved in the new intelligentsia, reflected many of the old feudalistic attitudes, revivalism, etc., which boosted the vested interests rather than help to underscore the general misery of the masses. The view of a reformed future also existed among the new Western educated intellectual class, who welcomed European science and technology. But this future continued to be associated with a mystical faith in the past and a 'spiritual' future. Perhaps, these 19th century writings by Indians idealized the past since interpretations almost entirely relied on textual sources. This partial view continues to have a hold on our research even today, along with the persistence of stereotypes, such as a rigid stratification of society, spirituality, golden age—views not tenable any longer in general.

Despite the drawback of the 19th century viewpoints, the discipline of 'Indology' found a pride of place in academic research. By the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century professional historians, properly trained, began to emerge. Needless to add, most of these researches were based on 'equilibrium' models since they helped specially to maintain the 'status quo' of upper classes, rather than give interpretations which would bring about change in terms of egalitarian and democratic ideas. Today, since independence, a scientific re-interpretation and recovery of India's traditional culture has certainly received an impetus. Following this, current historical research seeks to understand various processes by analyzing political, social, and economic institutions. Thus, for example, attempts to understand caste or *jati* are made by its interactions with reference to guilds, village councils, etc., rather than

merely in isolation; or in the context of dynastic powers political authority is viewed not merely in its routine functions but within its wider framework of socio-economics.

We thus see that despite new trends in research, many stereotypes have come to stay; all these have inhibited a deeper understanding of Indian society. As a consequence of following these outdated approaches Indian history continues to be divided into three major periods, like European history, associating each of these with a particular religious emphasis. But religion is only one of the factors which has shaped or motivated stability or change in Indian history. It is in view of all this that we need to reorient civilizational research within a social science perspective. We will thereby remove earlier inadequacies of interpretations and incorporate research methodologies which are in line with this day and age.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES

In the early years anthropological research in India was closely interlinked to historical research. In summary, the main trends of Indian anthropological research until the end of the First World War were: (1) A humanist tradition which emphasized relationships between textual studies and normative-behavioural patterns of contemporary Indian society; (2) a segmented view of Indian civilization in which the traditions of different subsystems were classified and studied separately, such as of caste, rituals, village, art and crafts (for example, villages were regarded as self-sufficient, stable and unchanging, with caste as the central institution that governed behaviour and values); (3) the economics of villages and its interrelationship with social structure; and (4) tribal studies.

By the end of the Second World War, the entire orientation of anthropology, its methods, theories, and even subject-matter was transformed by a conscious research effort throughout the world. The beginnings of this change may be seen during the 1930s and 1940s, specially in the works of Rivers and Radcliffe-Brown (Dube 1971). Similarly, in India, beginning from 1906 until 1952, the bulk of anthropological research consisted of descriptive accounts and speculative ethnology. However, there were also many exceptions to this trend. But it was only after 1952 that conceptually and methodologically sound models, such as of Redfield, Kroeber, and

Levi-Strauss, were fruitfully utilized. Attempts were made to rectify earlier views through scientific field work and other studies. Today, no one takes the basic social units of family, caste, and village as structural or cultural isolates. Rather, they see them as networks of various kinds, and even the caste system has been related to the great traditional structures, as represented in *Dharma-Shastras* and other historical texts. The structural-functional relationships of religion and politics to social structure, and of economics and language to social structure have also been examined. Social change as an organization of structural and cultural traditions, as well as the concept of social mobility in terms of social hierarchy, ritual purity, and pollution, etc., has been accepted and made use of in various studies. However, the use of equilibrium-adjustment models continues to predominate explanations of various processes. At the same time others, rejecting linear transformations have used such concepts as universalization and parochialization (Marriot 1963). Nevertheless, emphasis on 'conflict-tension' models, or structuralist approaches, in terms of function-dysfunction, are being used relatively less today (Mathur 1972).

All these historical and anthropological approaches suggest not only the interests of scholars but also the diversity of Indian civilization. Cohn (1971 : 2ff) has summed up the four directions, towards which researchers have constantly been drawn into intellectually, in relation to the underlying contemporary theories about nature, society, culture, and civilization. These four are: (1) cataloguing, (2) cultural essence, (3) cultural communication or ways to understand the enduring content of the civilizational system and how it is transmitted, and (4) Indian civilization as a type based on worldwide structural and cultural processes that illustrate cultural, historical, or sociological principles. The first, and even the second approach is simple to understand for the former deals with description while the latter deals with content. The third approach seeks out the underlying system of communication and structural integration. In this, less emphasis is given to the specific content of traditions or customs, since it approaches India as a civilization related to other civilizations. The last approach states that there are distinct and unique values, life styles, and aspects of social structuring in

India. But this approach does not interest many scholars as a framework since their concern is not with such generalizations which may be helpful from the multi-disciplinary viewpoint; it is considered to be an extreme position. However, we feel that it is a very valid one since civilizational studies have to be based on concepts, organizing principles, and theories of human behaviour.

In any attempt to put together some coherent picture of continuity and change in India, our concern has to be not only for selecting specific symbols of social and cultural tradition in order to seek an identity for a new concept of 'nationality'—including a concern with national integration—but also for finding a frame of reference in order to understand what this national identity is. This should not be construed to imply that a biased ideological orientation is being suggested. Our very attempt to seek a structural pattern of Indian civilization is the result of a self-consciousness, of a reflection of changing concepts of national identity that is specifically associated with future planning. In fact, it is in this existential manner that the past, present, and the future are interwoven into each other, that is, a civilization is both a process of becoming, as well as a state of being, rather than a tradition or traditions that have been handed down to us by our ancestors (Singer 1959: ix-xiv). In any case, whatever this Indian heritage and tradition be, it cannot be taken for granted since new traditions are always created by an interaction of culture and society.

In short, since the role of self-consciousness in building traditions is important, we cannot ignore it in terms of the growth of a nation. It is better that we clearly state this new consciousness in conceptual terms and seek out enduring traditions in historic depth. The problem is not of doubting the unity and continuity of traditions in diversity, but of devising methods which give proof of this unity in a demonstrable manner, by looking at various clues for the interactional structure of the 'whole'. It is doubtful if the current orientation of selecting and studying intensively a part, sub-areas, or subsystems and normative texts in order to illustrate with them the total structure, will help us in this endeavour. We should not be concerned deeply if national unity in the past is not seen in the contemporary sense of a nation-state, since a federal structure of multiple identities seems more likely to have existed.

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CHAPTER THREE

SCIENCE, SOCIAL SCIENCE, AND HISTORY

COMPLEX socio-cultural systems—whether modern or ancient—and their products cannot be satisfactorily reconstructed in terms of information obtained from any single area, specially in isolation from the integral context. But it may not always be possible to specify all the networks involved. Therefore, a systematic analysis of civilizational research material has to be with reference to some general theory. These are of two types. According to Duverger (1964: 67) :

The first is an explanation of the sequences of the various civilizations through history. This is the traditional concern of the philosophy of history which can pass from the philosophical to the sociological plane. The second corresponds in the social field to the general theory of relativity in the field of physics: it is concerned with the definitions of a general system of transposition enabling transfer of laws from one social universe to those of another. The first has not been separated from the philosophy of history; research has scarcely commenced on the second.

General systematic theories, thus, enable us to explain interrelationships, consistencies, and processes of socio-cultural institutions that coalesce into larger configurations. This approach goes beyond mere super-structural values, attitudes, and other like elements by which Indian Civilization has been so often explained. Such subsystems as philosophy, art, religion, law may have, from a short run perspective, a considerable degree of autonomy in civilizational totality. Nevertheless, from the long term view their growth and development is dependent upon social, political, and economic factors. For instance, religion may be interrelated with economics and other subsystems. Again, a minimum statement of society and

culture at the normative level does not help us. Hence, because complex systems such as civilizations are made up of heterogenous entities, to even look for a national 'Indian' culture is to pose a false problem. There are national institutions which arise out of intricate interrelationships. But these have to be distinguished from socio-cultural segments that are independent at certain levels of integration. Consequently, schemes of levels of socio-cultural integration have to be developed. It is this manner of systematic analyses which may help to explain different processes, laws and regularities; these may then be valid for cross-cultural purposes. Beyond this, general explanations offer us the scope of seeing certain principles as operative in all human groups. But these research goals are only possible at the multi-disciplinary level, i.e., while the sociologist/anthropologist may develop historical dimensions of his work, the historian needs to involve himself with socio-anthropological dimensions. Thus, from the multi-disciplinary viewpoint, a brief discussion of the interrelationship between science, social science, and history will be useful.

SCIENCE AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

In a nutshell, scientific research is a problem-oriented system of observation, description, and classification, which involves the building up and use of models, defining concepts, formulating explicit hypotheses, and then moving on to theory and laws, by further testing. There are thus two elements in all scientific work; (1) Research and observation of facts and (2) systematic analysis of the evidence. Without the second element, observation and research remain merely empirical; without the first, systematic analysis stays at the level of philosophical reasoning. But it must be remembered that these are not different or successive stages of research. Facts are not first observed and then analyzed, since systematization is essential at the observation stage, in the formulation of hypotheses, in the establishment of a typology, and so on. The distinction between the two is only made for the sake of clarity and logic (Duverger 1964 : 69). Nevertheless, in science there are different degrees of theoretical research. At the highest level general theories are formulated, while at intermediate and lower levels partial theories attempt to synthesise results by means of models

constructed as a deliberate over-simplification of complex situations.

Systematic analysis is also carried out in the social sciences at three levels: Formulation of conceptual frameworks; experimentation; and use of comparative methodology. In the formulation of conceptual frameworks, there are three stages of research; description, classification, and explanation. Today, in India, we are at the level of description, which includes classifications, typologies, etc. that are then fitted into unchanging and implicit frames of reference and models. Many scholars continue to believe that these levels of research are to be followed successively. But this need not be so. Therefore, the question whether frameworks come before or after empirical research is irrelevant, for theoretical formulations come both before and after. Research, thus, is a perpetual movement, which also involves the use imagination, invention and intuition. The role of wild hunches does not imply any deliberate distortion, unless our insights and intuitions are not organized systematically, i.e., all explanations have to be self-consciously worked out, reasoned by logical properties and internal logic, which enables us to understand sets of phenomena.

Researchers differ a great deal about the extent to which they organize research in terms of explicit statements. But since we forget that some generalized meta-theory underlies all descriptive research, we see that in India implicit explanations are always being mixed with liberal doses of personal prejudice, biases, etc. It is these unrecognized and unknown personal 'theories' that pose problems and have caused so many gaps in knowledge. The best way to eliminate these lacunae is to follow procedures of (1) definition of fundamental entities, their elements, structures and patterns the processes that operate on them, the effects of processes on entities in the dimensions of space and time; (2) a search for repeated similarities or regularities in form, function, association, to develop sequences among particular entities from any area, period and environment; and (3) to synthesize and correlate the evidence at a high level of abstraction, to develop increasingly comprehensive and informative general models and hypotheses (Pelto 1970 : 19, 34-5).

Thus, it is apparent that science and social science disciplines function simultaneously on two distinct but related levels. The first is of an explanation (through a rationale), modes of conceptua-

lization of phenomena and relations between concepts. The second is of empirical establishment, within some kind of an operational system, and this is empirical validation. But it is the formal system (the theoretical structure of relations), which is isomorphic to both the operational system and the model, that provides the most important connection between these levels. It must also be remembered that general theories are never subject to confirmation or disconfirmation by simple and direct observations; they are not summaries of factual data for they bring together, systematically, relationships of discreet and disconnected phenomena making them understandable and intelligible. Moreover, while subjectivity can never be totally eliminated, the theoretical maturity of a discipline is in part measured by the degree to which it has reduced the subjective aspect (Manners and Kaplan 1969 : 7). Nevertheless, even today, in order to get out of the complications of theoretical discussions, many Indian researchers wish to eliminate altogether goals of seeking relations and explanation; these problems are for them 'excess baggage'. It is conveniently forgotten that intellectual understanding is gained by appropriate research designs, sampling control, and validation within conceptual frameworks. It is in the absence of any discussion at this level that each worker speaks a different language.

Definitions of certain basic terms essential in the development of systematization and general theory may now be pertinently stated as below.

DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION

Before making classifications and establishing typologies, a distinction between definition and description must be made. This distinction is seldom made since often the description of an object—or an event—is considered to be a definition itself. But a description of an object is not the same as defining the qualities of that object. This is why those forms of description, which ignore the abstract qualities of classifications, fail in situations which require the definition of those objects that are not apparently identifiable in common. Therefore, classifications have to be made by abstract notions in terms of specific sets of features which the objects, whether known or unknown, must display in order to be considered as referents to a given classification. Thus, definitions should convey

such meanings which are satisfactory, in the sense of providing the necessary set of attributes or qualities that can cover all objects described under it. These are what are called intentional definitions, which have predictive and heuristic values (Dunnell 1971 : 15-18).

CONCEPT AND DEFINITION

Concepts and definitions which are the basic elements of all research cannot be used by implication, for this will cause confusion. Since concepts are arbitrary selections that change with frames of reference in terms of different phenomena and the data of shared experiences, these must be clearly stated. Definitions and typologies reflect these basic assumptions, viz., significant distinctions about human types, civilizations, and societies.

METHOD AND TECHNIQUE

A method is the model against which phenomena under consideration may be compared in order to produce the desired explanation. It is a subsystem of the larger theory, which is directed towards the solution of a particular kind of problem. Techniques are the means of implementing theories and methods, and explanations of phenomena have no utility without them because these cannot be made operational.

HYPOTHESIS

If the goal of intellectual inquiry is to explain phenomena, then explanations vary with the hypothesis. A hypothesis is the putting together of probabilistic statements about the relationships between phenomena. It is seldom provided. But one hypothesis may be replaced by another of greater utility either due to empirical data or by its credibility in terms of probability. But the ultimate evaluation of a hypothesis lies in its power of explanation which, of course, must be treated against facts. Therefore, logical consistency rather than empirical testing is a valid test for a good hypothesis.

MODEL

A model is constructed by means of a rationale where the ultimate purpose is to furnish terms, relations, and propositions. Statements

of interrelated concepts then emerge as a formal system which, if validated, becomes theory. Again, a theory as a formal system gains meaning if its operational definitions are made clear through a model. Thus, these two are dependent upon each other, so that successful models are those which project valid formal systems and represent, isomorphically, certain abstracted factors of a set of empirical phenomena. Isomorphism does not mean that models are identical with phenomena under consideration. But models for this reason are also not fiction, because they are metaphoric expressions of phenomena which cannot be directly apprehended. Therefore, models are at best methodological tools for purposes of explanation, and are mainly heuristic devices (Willer 1967: 9ff).

Major discoveries have often been based on a novel method of representation, i.e., by means of models. For example, in India, evolutionary models have helped to explain why and how some institutions change; whether the change is continuous or discontinuous; and the different directions of change. Similarly, equilibrium models in the context of functionalism have shown us how there exist specific interrelated relationships between various indispensable components whereby despite changes in one or the other parts of the system, the system returns to its original form. This was thought to be true for India because the indispensable characteristics of society were considered throughout to dominate the dysfunctional components of change. Today, these functional explanations, and other 19th century formulations of the evolutionist and diffusionist continue to be applied to Indian studies, even though these are now outmoded.

There are two types of models; general and theoretical. The first cover a wide range of data, while the second cover a limited area of information. For our purpose, different kinds of theoretical models may be, in brief, defined as below.

(i) *Iconic Model*. It is constructed in terms of a direct resemblance to empirical phenomena. But it is selective in its abstraction, in the sense that certain characteristics of such phenomena are considered crucial to the problem at hand. Thus, the general rationale of an iconic model is one of direct similarity. For instance, in schemes of sociology, concepts which centre around the ideas of institutions, roles, social action, symbolic interaction, etc., are all characterized

by the iconic rationale of the representation of phenomena (Willer 1967).

(ii) *Symbolic Model*. The general rationale of a symbolic model is in allowing a set of connected concepts to symbolise a set of phenomena, but neither by direct abstractions nor from other models. These connections have to be developed within the meaning of the model. This may be arrived at through consistent theoretical or nominal definitions of concepts. As a result, while for some models definitional connection may be sufficient, for others it is necessary to introduce explicit assumptions in order to complete the meaning of the network.

(iii) *Analogue Model*. When one transforms models from one discipline to another then the models are termed analogue models. But they have to be reintroduced into the iconic and symbolic forms. A major use of analogue models is their potentiality for assisting in the construction of theoretical models. Examples of the analogue models are the use of organic or cyclical models, and concepts from biology, physics, and so on, in civilizational studies.

A symbolic model is thus the most advanced of the three types, since it is the most formal in its construction. An iconic model requires little more than a consistent nominal definition, and is therefore relatively easy to construct because data, and not relationships, are apprehended by it. Ultimately, the usefulness of a theoretical model may be traced back to its rationale, which in no sense is given in the data but is a consequence of imaginative thinking on the part of the theorist. In any case, models are constructed through constant trial and error, reconceptualizations, and in direct contact with data. This model-building, as an exercise, gives meaning to phenomena by seeking factors that must be taken into account, their relation and the direction of such relations; and suggests appropriate controls.

To conclude this section, the paradigm of research methodology discussed here is only one aspect of a much larger area of scholarship that is of central importance. This is true for both social sciences and science because, while science may mean many different things to different persons, for us it is one of the ways of organizing knowledge, i.e., a particular methodology of research. By this definition science becomes a particular mode, rather than a body of knowledge, and classed as a means of knowledge in a search for generalizations. Therefore, scientific method is an objective, logical

and systematic procedure of analyzing phenomena, devised to provide a framework for the accumulation of reliable knowledge. It is in this sense that history, anthropology, and archaeology are sciences, but not in terms of a narrow empiricist definition of using scientific techniques. Science is a broad spectrum of intellectual activity, nomothetically oriented, which is a search for laws by speculating and discovering a whole set of activities. No doubt it is debatable whether research of human societies can be termed as scientific. Nevertheless, apart from the philosophical issue, students of the past today do attempt to be 'scientific'. But they do so not in terms of our definition, i.e., they do not present systematic and reliable information which is derived from empirical observation, setting forth propositions within general unified hypotheses. Instead, investigations are carried out often without explicit systematization or frames of reference. Perhaps, this is because researchers believe that quantification, statistics, and the like reflect a 'scientific' approach.

HISTORICAL ENQUIRY

A search for philosophical explanations of history and civilization has been of a broad concern for academics and intellectuals of each age. (This is not the same as seeking explanations in history with which we are not concerned.) Indian scholars, by and large, do not feel that the discipline of history has anything to do with philosophical explanations; since it is governed by empirical knowledge they view it with scepticism. But a glance at historical research shows that historians always use such explanatory expressions as 'since', 'therefore', and 'because'. If some historians do attempt to explain, their statements are devoid of any logical conceptual premises. For example, historians' common way of explaining events (which may come close to a form of generalization) is the notion of continuity as a criteria of understanding history. But they use causal explanations as kinds of 'natural' explanations, i.e., they claim that in a series of events the preceding event *A* gives us an adequate understanding of the event *B* that follows. But we know that event *A* may not be the cause of event *B* even if some relationship may be shown to exist between the two, for, several extraneous causes may be visualized. Another advocated common

method of reconstruction and explanation of historical events is one of 'rethinking' or 'recreating' in one's mind another time period; i.e., by some kind of a temporal empathetic projection. But such a re-enactment implies a personal projection of historical understanding which has psychological proportions rather than being based on any general principles (Dray 1964).

Again, if historians seek any structures in facts and events, the framework is derived from certain 'grand' notions. For example, history is seen as a linear or a cyclic pattern that repeats itself endlessly, or history is even chaotic for some, while for others it is a mixture of all the three patterns. But it should be apparent that these notions which seek historical patterns in terms of some inherent tendency of history are a result of asking such questions as, has history a meaning? Answers to this often suggest some religious or pre-determined destiny of a particular philosophy; these problems have been dealt with by Marx, Hegel, Toynbee, and others. While it is interesting to read them, we cannot go into the question of the purposes of history, since we are not concerned with a search for metaphysical processes and generalizations about such structural patterns and their mechanisms. But even if we must ask whether history really has a theme, then we ought to justify this thinking logically through a sound methodology.

The above examples are sufficient to show that all historians attempt some form of explanation and generalization. Nevertheless, in India, there continues to be a strong research tradition which suggests that a historian should restrict himself to sheer physical description of events or objects. They feel that perhaps in this way value judgements or preferences will be avoided. But this only reduces selectivity to a minimum level. Value judgements of various kinds are unavoidable since the importance of events whereby a select description is made has to be taken into account. Therefore, no matter what, 'biases' are bound to creep in. But to reduce these to the minimum is possible chiefly by means of a proper control through concepts and definitions that are clearly formulated. Hence, the problem of objectivity in history may be governed by research methodology, rather than asking such a question as, what makes history objective?

It is thus clear that much confusion and many controversies arise because no concern with any kind of theoretical enquiry has been shown. Therefore, historical enquiry requires that we seek social

scientific processes and patterns within history rather than seek explanations of history as such. From this viewpoint historical and anthropological disciplines have similar objectives, unless one continues to believe that knowledge is a kind of wisdom which one acquires merely by experience in the field rather than through a process of intense intellectual endeavour.

SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HISTORY

The notion of an autonomous social science though formed in the 18th century, crystallized only in the 19th century as a result of the contributions made by Auguste Comte and Karl Marx. Later Durkheim along with the other 20th century sociologists made important contributions. Marxist theory was the first complete system of a general theory which has had considerable influence in serving as a basic framework in social sciences. Today, a singular social science notion has developed into a plural one because the complexity and diversity of social facts have become evident. In turn, this has led to the diversity of specialized techniques used for observing them. Many of the new research methods of social sciences were first developed in the United States, primarily as means of improving social relationships. Two motivating factors served as a framework. For the conservatives it was to preserve the existing general social structure. In India, for instance, a similar orientation may be seen in research which desires to justify the caste system and its concomitant socio-economic inequalities. However, on the other side, social science investigations have also assisted in human liberation. This is of greater significance because it has helped in the removal of large-scale ignorance, such as by eradicating various myths and prejudices in the prevalent obscurantist system of learning. In extreme cases, this can also be vulgarized and become a propaganda machine whereby its influence tends to diminish (Duverger 1964: 26-7ff).

However, sociology has not given much attention to the study of complex national and supernational groups as such. There do exist several specialized fields which intensively study economics, politics, religion, law, art, demography, history, etc., of large groups. But, generally speaking, in the total study of nations or civilizations the emphasis has been two-fold; each reflecting different levels

rather than branches of research in these approaches, signifying the dichotomy which exists between historians and anthropologists. The first is the relativist or historical view which attempts to examine basic civilizational epochs in order to seek the general validity of sociological laws and typology. The second is a concern with general systematics, attempting to define the framework for research, typologies, theories, etc., as may be applicable to the different eras of civilizations.

At any rate, it would be true to say that social sciences have not really concerned themselves with investigating the past of civilizations albeit a great deal of reference is made to past phenomena and the philosophy of history. In the same way, historical studies have ignored sociological and anthropological implications of their data, even though there is a great deal of implicit discussion about the relationship and interaction between culture and society, such as whether culture is coincident with society.

Thus, we note that both in history and social sciences the multi-disciplinary approaches are absent. As we have said earlier, socio-cultural patterns of larger groups are explained by the prevalence of sub-cultures and sub-societies that function at various levels of socio-cultural integration and so on. This is why historical research continues to suffer in the absence of adequate conceptual guidelines. For instance, it is presumed, on the basis of normative patterns, that various subsystems in India share identical behavioural codes. Or historians often deal with the social roles without any explicit concepts, i.e., judgements are passed about a period in history on the basis of the ability of a king or of a leader, giving a complete exposition of that era. But historians would be on surer grounds if they examined this in terms of role-theories—'role' or 'sets of roles' and interaction between individuals. Similarly, we may utilize concepts that seek interrelations between cultures and society at the level of the social position held by an individual—a leader. Again, it may prove useful to distinguish between beliefs and knowledge, between myth and reality, i.e., there is a need to treat myths as real because from the actor's point of view this may be reality. Finally, many socio-anthropological insights help us to view some of our recurring complex contemporary problems, such as of nationalism, regionalism, religion, politics, in the historical perspective. By such a reorientation, historians have everything to gain and little to lose.

When we come to deal with problems of complex civilizations, anthropologists and sociologists also face the same difficulties as faced by historians. The chief problem being that, just as chronological listing of events is inadequate, neither a cataloguing of the enormous cultural data nor the division of society into artifacts, sociofacts, mentifacts, etc., gives insights about the form of a particular civilizational configuration. It is necessary therefore to seek levels of social and cultural integration in the many categories of subsystems. This is because civilizations range from relatively homogenous entities to a mixture of varied sub-cultures and sub-societies that are bound together through several interactional spheres and institutions. For example, as in the case of India, the less this integration, the more difficult it is to see a national character or a basic personality, since only some people have an idea of nationhood. But as the Indian nation gradually approaches greater socio-cultural integration by modernization processes, the emergence of a national character and basic Indian personality may be visualized.

Thus, a total view of a civilizational configuration may be seen within a framework of a hierarchy of different evaluations and levels of integration. This is why characterizations of civilizations, as attempted by many historians in terms of 'genius', 'spirit' or 'ethos' is inadequate, because configurational unity is indicated by means of a few pervasive dominating symbols or basic value-orientations. If difficulties could be handled so simply, then the paucity of documentation and evidence would not be an obstacle, since we could easily explain a civilization by relatively few principles or indicators. Again, some scholars attribute civilizations with values of good and evil, just and unjust, agreeable and disagreeable, beautiful and ugly. But this represents a hierarchy of a moralist who draws up value-scales for different social groups and for different periods of a civilization. Nevertheless, our pursuit of these research objectives would be valid, provided we utilized greater systematics in our studies, i.e., if we clearly differentiate the normative aspects of ethics and law from the analysis of social life which is—or has been—the actual practice. Therefore, one may examine, independently, such conceptions as justice and injustice, beauty and ugliness, during various periods, but not as judgements of a civilization.

A historian may now legitimately question whether research by him within the social science framework is possible since his subjects cannot be studied first hand. Moreover, many would have us believe that the nature of historical evidence precludes the use of these concepts. But it is fairly clear that, essentially, anthropology and history have similar basic problems to solve, since both have to list all the things that a number of people did or do, were expected to do or ought to do; and their various interactions. Thinking along these lines, for instance, the historian like the anthropologist, may divide certain civilizational behavioural regularities (evidences) into the actual, the expected, and the ideal; rather than simply dividing them into the real and the normative (Berkhofer 1969: 117-19, ff). This procedure will help him to decide how far the normative, which represents a blue print for social interaction, is actually practised in a civilization. A further lead towards historical analyses will be given by examining how far behaviour—individual and collective—conforms to prescribed rules, viz., as in the case of caste in contemporary society.

And, yet, a historian may avoid all these approaches by stating that this is not possible because he deals with a series of unique events. But one cannot write histories about unique events without comparisons and making generalizations. Therefore, even to show differences or uniqueness and present history in comprehensible terms we must generalize and compare a sufficient number of events to decide difference or uniqueness. Moreover, since historians do have to study continuity and change, it demands a framework of general theory which is more important than the establishment of uniqueness.

Academically, the aims of history and anthropology do differ in the existing setup, perhaps as a 'division of labour'. For instance, social scientists use comparative history to formulate theories of culture, of social change, of political and economic development, and of evolutionary levels of socio-cultural integration. On the other hand, historians do not profess to produce theories and laws of generalizations. But on this pretext, they often absolve themselves of analytical precision. Nonetheless, we know clearly that the goal of historical analyses is also the synthesis of derived facts, specially in the interpretation of the whole. Synthesis is carried out at various levels in a total study of past human behaviour and this may be sorted out into four basic classes, namely: (1) General

laws of behaviour; (2) social and cultural arrangements; (3) statements of singular causation; and (4) specific statements of facts. How does a historian's job relate to these four basic classes? To answer this a conscious model of explanation will be of great help (Berkhofer 1969: 213).

Hence, apart from the questions of how, what, when and where, which produce one level of explanations, the other of 'why' produces important 'neglected' level of historical explanation. But all this demands a new attitude towards our data. It will not surprise us if a critic says that it is an academic fashion to bring all disciplines under either science or social science. But the fact is that we do not have enough debates over theoretical problems. Social sciences do not of course have some ready made theories or concepts that we may borrow straightway. But new avenues of interpretation and presentation are likely to emerge because of viewing differently the very nature and explanation of cultural, historical, and social phenomena. For instance, when we debate such problems as to whether history is a science or social science, is it objective or subjective, and is it an intellectually sophisticated discipline that analyzes socio-cultural themes or is it merely story-telling. Moreover, such debates are valid because all histories must be written constantly anew in terms of the historian's own times, for models continue to change in terms of the changing concepts of man and society. In view of this we have to update and revitalize historical disciplines, because the study of the past must be related to the rest of our understanding of contemporary knowledge.

Finally, if historical disciplines wish to go beyond the level of story-telling they must move towards a common research 'paradigm' for analyses. And, the more incomplete and fragmentary the evidence, the greater responsibility there is to be theoretically and logically sound. Consequently, an historian has to be even clearer than the social scientist about his theoretical premises. But even more importantly, since explanations of human behaviour and societies of the past rely on the deeper collective processes as represented by the surviving remains, it is extremely crucial to utilize explicit assumptions about the nature of culture, society, and so on. In fact, what the historian researches in the temporal context, the anthropologist does in space.

To sum up, if our aim is to comprehend the history and civilization of India as an intellectual enterprise, and examine it in relationship to the Indian nation, then we will have to move beyond the narrative-descriptive approach. Here, the social science framework is relevant if one recognises the limitations in the interpretation of the past; that what we consider as having happened is always a judgement which is relative to the time, place, position, and ideas of the writer. Moreover, since history as a form of knowledge tends to become literature of permanence it occupies a prominent place in all studies. Every age has its own criteria for distinguishing between the usual and the unusual, of what is remarkable and worthy of record. All this is a function of the entire framework of ideas current in any generation, which are not merely statements of what-has-taken-place-in-the-past. We have to critically examine the manner in which we may justify our research and its conclusions. But more than this we have to be in search of common principles which may equally be applicable to mankind as such, without the limitations of time or place. This does not mean that we want to view Indian history as a part of world history, or have universal generalizations—like unilinear evolutionary theories—derived from one area and applied to another region. Admittedly, our goals to orient the study of history as a part of social scientific endeavour do have some *a priori* interest (Teggart 1967: 64).

Finally, marked divisions between science, social science, and humanities, as justified by historians, on the grounds that the natural sciences and even anthropology are separate disciplines with separate methodologies than what is normally considered to be historical knowledge are no longer tenable. Historical knowledge today has to be part of the science of man. Consequently, historical investigations must be freed from their subordination to the 'art' or mere humanities. But this is not to suggest that it only remain a social science. In short, if we are to overcome the difficulties mentioned above, then, we must face the fact that in India we are still adhering to methodological conceptions which had their beginnings in the 17th, 18th and the 19th centuries, chiefly in Europe and the Western world. The continued sharp separation which exists between the disciplines of history, economics, sociology, and anthropology is not valid any longer specially from the methodological viewpoint. In fact, for us, the problems of anthropology are the same as that of history.

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CHAPTER FOUR

GENERAL SYSTEMS APPROACH

SCIENCE is characterized now by the development of complex techniques and various theoretical structures in different sub-fields due to narrow specialization. These developments have, on the one hand, created many different viewpoints, concepts, and theories about the enormous amount of diverse data; extreme specialization on the other hand has also resulted in research in a closed private universe of each specialization, which ignores problems of wholeness of knowledge, its totality, and integration. Only recently it has been realized that it is equally imperative to understand problems of total organization, of wholeness, and of dynamic interactions of phenomena. One consequence of these ideas has been the postulation of the theory of general systems, whereby universal models, principles and laws may be derived from or applied to generalizations about total groups or their sub-classes. This line of thinking has had a significant impact on inter-disciplinary research since it has helped to promote unitary concepts and isomorphic laws in different areas of science, i.e., a common application of structurally uniform and quantifiable analytical schemes to total observable phenomena of the universe has become possible.

The general systems approach has also been applied to social science disciplines. But by doing this it neither claims to reduce various levels of human reality in terms of non-human phenomena as is the case in the physical and natural sciences; nor is it possible to reduce it to pure mathematics. Moreover, systems research does not seek superficial analyses between physical, biological and social systems. The isomorphisms referred to here are as a consequence of corresponding abstractions and conceptual models that can be applied to different phenomena. For instance, while applying any basic laws in dealing with problems of change, these propositions—actual or otherwise—ought to hold true whether we are dealing

with physio-chemical, psychological, biological or social phenomena. If this becomes possible, then an integration of physical, natural, and human sciences moves nearer in bringing about the unity of knowledge. This may eventually lead to some much needed integration in general education (Bertalanffy 1967).

Today, structural similarities or isomorphisms have appeared in different disciplines because of the general systems approach. Researchers now see correspondences in principle—not by vague analyses—which govern the behaviour of entities that are intrinsically the same yet apparently widely different. As it is, similar concepts, models, and laws have often appeared independently in many disciplines. This is why the general systems theory has helped immensely in avoiding the unnecessary duplication of labour. For our purposes, the question to be posed is, can civilization—society and culture—be viewed within the framework of the systems theory? We may now seek answers to this within the multi-disciplinary approach.

SYSTEMS THEORY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

The systems theory in anthropology was originally applied to a set of linguistic entities, and somewhat later to many types of, mostly, non-European and 'primitive' societies. In recent years, it has considerably influenced structural-functional concepts that seek regularities, specially within a mass of randomness, contradiction, and change. The systems theory follows a simple procedure which has become an intrinsic part of scientific analyses, and includes at least three stages: (1) An identification of the components or elements of the system; (2) a specification of the characteristics of the components; and (3) in a diachronic sense, a specification of the set of laws in conformity of which one state of a system succeeds or precedes another, or with which elements of the system interact with regard to the characteristics specified in the first two (Rudner 1966: 89).

For our purpose, an apparent gross simplification is obviously necessary in order to make the basic methodological arguments relevant. For instance, in dealing with complex socio-cultural systems as civilizations we will have to search out hierarchic levels of integration, by arranging different subsystems at different levels—

the latter again being organized because of some unifying principle (Kuhn 1966 : 48-9). In other words, the behaviour of a civilization will be governed by various interactions of components and elements of each subsystem, such as between culture, social structure, and value-structure. The latter form major motivational components that act as reinforcers (gate-watchers)—both primary and secondary—in terms of power structure as well as the superstructure of values and ideas; and also interact with the environment and outside influences. No doubt all these variables make the problem extremely complex in systemizing civilizational studies.

COMPONENTS

A given system is composed of elements and components. These may be overlapping, sharing, and interacting with one another, or even have nothing in common. In a large system, depending upon the problem, subsystems generally overlap because they share at least some components—words, ideas, or artifacts—if not people. The common example is the interaction of religion with social, cultural, economic, or other ways of life. For example, in religion, at a particular time, if several gods are worshipped this fact may be correlated with the existence of political heterogeneity. On the other hand, later, if 'high rank' gods emerge in the form of 'national' deities it will indicate a trend towards political unification; and, when political power is finally centralized into one rule, one god may become supreme. There are examples like these from many parts of the world (Egypt), and we may explore similar situations in the Indian context (Monac 1967).

A component's identity is strongly dependent upon the system (system determinism—systemness) to which it belongs. It also often attracts and encourages the entrance of similar components (peoples and things). It is because of system-determinism that a system's parts move towards greater similarity. It is in this sense that the Indian family, caste, and other subsystems have a quality or style of 'Indianness', i.e., there exist such components which are most frequently and intimately involved. Newer systems or subsystems arise if there are changes in the components, such as in following norms that are different from those of the system's. The various nonconformist, reformist, 'protest', and 'dissent' movements in Indian traditions may be of this type. But since the power of past

socialization is strong, as an inherent tendency old system's norms persist; perhaps, that is why nonconformist, etc. movements were often reabsorbed either to become part of orthodoxy, or to become orthodox themselves.

NUMBER OF COMPONENTS

In a small system or subsystem (such as in a village), the number of components strongly determine its actions because there is considerable homogeneity. On the other hand, diversity marks larger systems such as metropolitan urban areas rather than small towns. A large system such as a civilization is even more markedly differentiated ethnically, occupationally, politically, religiously, and so on. Consequently, it is harder to maintain the separateness— isolation—of subsystems as such, since social, political, and economic interactions also cut across and overlap various subsystems. To illustrate, while a subsystem like caste flourishes best as a highly organized group in small villages which have frequent internal communications, today in large cities its internal organization breaks down because of different types of organizations, specially secular ones. Similarly, because of the presence of these interacting components and communication systems, the upper classes or castes in India are significantly identifiable with major civilizational traits, rather than with either the middle or lower levels.

SOME FEATURES OF COMPONENTS' ACTION

In India, there is often subsystem anthropocentrism, i.e., rating one's own system—subsystem—higher and superior to 'outsiders' because of being culture-bound. This is true at the social (family, *jati*, caste, etc.) level as well at the national upper class level, in terms of components' action. This is one way to raise the morale and to maintain the system's or subsystem's unique identity. But there is also often a tendency to overestimate this, in an attempt to allay anxiety about nonconformity, such as by minimising the actual deviations from group standards. For instance, in a *jati* or class, a person's self-evaluation appears strongly influenced by the ranking of his class so that upper class people tend to feel individually superior while lower class people tend to feel individually inferior. Therefore, a significant fact of consistency of components is

to endow the system with distinctive identity and tone. In such cases myths, epics and other such areas of culture act as meaningful items of social control, rather than direct control. This holds specially true for different ethnic (minority) or religious groups and protest groups, whereby they may be able to maintain solidarity.

COMPONENTS' INTERNAL MOVEMENT

The internal movement of components is determined by the system of energy/information which is governed both physically as well as by social power points of ruling elite. For instance, in the context of language, in many nations, before any single standard form arose, local dialects tended to be of equal prestige, until a particular section's language gained a special prestige over the others; standard French came into existence because Paris became the capital of France, standard Spanish became prominent because Madrid became the capital of Spain; and, the English of London and Middlesex became standard English because of London's rise to capital power. On the other hand, perhaps, it is for this reason that Hindi has not become a national language, since its prestige is equal so far to the other regional languages. Moreover, the status of English, continues to be of prestige value among the elite, especially in the capital of India.

Thus, in the spread of civilizational traits, in India, the movement of literature at the upper level, and of myths and oral literature at lower social levels, as well as technological and economic traits, energy/information spreads at various levels by distinct normative pathways. But the actual amount and direction of components' movements (even though these are not random), are not always normatively ordered. This is why the internal flow takes place along informal pathways also. For instance, in the case of members of a family while behaviour is very informal internally, towards outsiders very formal behaviour exists in order to maintain a distinctive identity, because of the importance of concern about image, status, and honour. Similarly, while everybody talks about honesty and the ideals of the brotherhood of man, these are incongruent with contradictory business and commercial codes and the existence of various castes and social inequalities. Therefore, a general head-on confrontation of these incongruent elements is avoided, by strict and rigid rules of internal confinement and a blocking of communi-

cations between them, by those who are the upholders of social-conscience and traditions.

Hence, in order to maintain the identity of subsystems, many incongruities exist in India. The inflow and outflow is controlled by gate-watchers, who enforce tight compartments of energy/information flow, so that certain norms of ideal behaviour create less guilt and confusion in the operational sphere, i.e., by a kind of closed-door policy between the information system of components as well as distinguishing between 'ideal' and 'real'. This is one way to characterize a feature of 'Indianness' or 'style' of life; this is how inequalities are not only maintained but justified by a value structure that legitimizes the claim of the upper class to retain its privileges. Rigid social stratification does not block communication between the various differentiated and unequal components. Contact exists, but it neither increases familiarity nor creates tensions because both lower and higher social groups, under the existing normative behaviour, do not want to bring about any such change. Or, if deviant components are allowed to exist, this is so long as they are no threat to the power structure, i.e., they act as negative feedbacks. This is how individuals are allowed to opt out of society. However, what would create tension is a dislocation of the position of the components, rather than communication and interaction, i.e., when different norms and values encourage contact in a social system and advocate a decrease in social differentiation.

Nevertheless, we know that various changes have taken place at different levels in the subsystems of Indian civilization. We may examine how this was allowed by the 'watchdogs' in the social system. A general observation here is that determiners have been more permissive of artifact entry—technological items—than items of a non-material nature, such as religious ideas or new forms of social organizations. Because of this, often, unless new forms of non-material, socio-cultural and economic elements are changed, no profound change in existing structure will be brought about. For example, one way of maintaining social differentiation is to have generally very strict marriage rules, since any deviation here will lead to disintegrative processes. However, large-scale technological-economic changes as are possible today have caused widespread changes, since these subsystems, on the surface, are quite autonomous. This is unlike religion, arts, and literature which often preserve characteristic independence and variability within their

own limits by being highly organized. Consequently, in cases such as family or caste any change in one of the components of a system—social or economic—causes widespread disturbances in the subsystem as a whole.

We may note that throughout history, whenever there have been large-scale social or religious disturbances, brahmins, pandits, political elite, etc., (gate-watchers) have attempted to reevaluate, reinterpret, and reunite the old normative texts (*shastras*) in order somehow to maintain their own privileges, even by rationalizations of various 'deviances'. In such times of disturbances, norms have to be retained and adhered to at a very high level of organization in order to maintain the system or subsystem.

In short, a civilization may be treated as an energy/information system of communicating interacting components, such as in understanding family and caste. Each individual in the social group has to code or to symbolize his information and then put it in a category or classificatory system—better known as cultural symbols and language. Here, in such a study, we will also have to see its inputs (information received) and outputs (resultant behaviour), both of which are not random but are selected from among the various responses. This is because human beings engage in adaptive behaviour, by selecting from the information received and using it for their behaviour in interacting with environment and society around them. In a cultural group these responses are chosen from among possible alternatives and these are referred to as opportunities available or an 'opportunity-system'. But information alone does not determine behaviour, since behaviour consists of pursuing some opportunities and neglecting others. This is controlled by the motive system, or a 'preference system'. The former term being used in a psychological manner whereas the latter has to do with conscious decision aspects. These items of motive and information systems form the main elements of a cybernetic system. This concept has been utilized in understanding the individual in terms of the relationships and nature of the components of human behavioural systems (Kuhn 1966).

SYSTEMIC VIEW OF CIVILIZATION

Civilization as a system may be defined in terms of the recurrent patterns which emerge as a result of the interaction of cultural,

political, economic, social, and religious subsystems within a given area. Its boundaries are determined by spheres of interactions, at various vertical and horizontal levels, wherein several energy/information and communication pathways move to, from, with, in and through one another to intricately criss-cross into network systems. Similarly, within a subsystem, there are networks of interactions, say of the individual to the family system and other sub-groups in the social subsystem; the latter also interacting with ethical or other cultural subsystems. In this manner a civilization may also be said to be an action system, i.e., in terms of the basic ways whereby its subsystems interact and operate. It is for this reason that such a complex civilization as the Indian one cannot simply be characterized, as at present it is often done, by the dominance of one or two subsystemic identities, whether it be economic, value systems, culture, caste, etc. Nevertheless, the identity of the large system—civilization—for operational purposes has to be identified with some crucial core areas, components, and elements. Moreover, there are certain socio-cultural and politico-economic power units which control positive inputs and prevent negative action that may bring about any drastic change. This is how patterns are internally maintained, for instance by socio-cultural rules and norms of expulsion, confinement or conversion, and so on. Externally, this is enforced by resistance, by withdrawal or through a tightening of the gateways of inflows into the system or subsystems.

In detailed analyses, from the systems' view the boundaries of a civilization have to be limited, say in terms of the material and the non-material, or any other criteria depending upon the problem. This is how we will be able to designate its distinctive—'total'—identity, and, then, seek the interaction of ecological, technological, cultural, social, philosophical, political or economic subsystems and their components. During various periods of Indian history, this definition may help us to learn why and how a system disintegrated, or why and how a new system sprang up from the disintegration of the old, either through a re-systemization or a restructuring. Thus, various problems of change as well as of periodization may be fruitfully understood.

It is worth noting here that the concept of systems is the central element in functionalism. One of its most general propositions is that even if the 'total' concrete structure ('style' of a civilization) cannot be identified, it is still often possible to isolate types

of processes that are primary specialized functions of subsystems. In this way functionalism is able to produce a schematic formulation of the distinctive traits of any system, i.e., its aim is to produce a paradigm, identify as far as possible the distinctions which each item contains, and to indicate the ambiguities whereby a mutually adjusted equilibrium is formed. There are many critics of functionalism who state that it offers an ill-conceived utopia. But here we are not concerned with these various controversial aspects because functionalism may enable us to ask the following questions:

1. Can civilization be viewed as a system and, if so, systems of what sort and with what degree of integration and equilibrium?
2. To what extent is a basic assumption of conflict a more appropriate departure for our analysis?
3. What are the fundamental aspects of change, and the most fruitful one of analyzing them?
4. Can one speak meaningfully of a finite number of prerequisites for a civilization and in their absence, of its decline or death?
5. Which are the crucial socio-cultural institutions necessary for the maintenance of a system more than others; and if so, which are they? And, so on (Nagel 1967).

Thus, within a functional framework, the systemness of a civilization may be defined both in terms of maximal interdependence as well as a minimal one between its subsystems. In other words, if in a system its elements are highly interdependent, then each may be considered to possess low functional autonomy. Conversely, a system may be composed of parts which derive but little satisfaction of their needs from each other and that would suggest high functional autonomy. To illustrate by the political subsystem, historically, the strength of centripetal forces in India suggests low autonomy whereas the assertions of centrifugal or regional forces (such as in Kashmir, Tamil Nadu, Panjab, etc.) represent functional high autonomy. It is possible that a strong central system straining itself towards integration, may be seeking submission of its parts to the requirements of the position they occupy. But the greater the system (the nation today) strives to satisfy its subsystems (regional areas), it may generate further tensions since this impairs the

functional autonomy of subsystems. If this is so then the system itself may have to inhibit its own tendencies towards wholeness if it is to remain stable. But in the name of national integration, research analyses have ignored these tension problems and of the functional autonomy of subsystems, i.e., to treat Indian civilization as flexible, as one which seeks to strive towards a federalizing balance between totalitarian and anarchist limits. Hence, this kind of conceptualization, both in terms of autonomy and functional interdependence, enables us to deal with the problems of conflict-tension producing relationships—such as Centre-State relations—that have not been symmetrical, and have existed throughout the history of Indian political scene.

We may now briefly define certain specific subsystems which will help us to further understand civilization as a system.

CULTURE AS A SYSTEM

A general definition which holds true for all cultures at all times and places is, that culture is both a body of content and a set of relationships. As a set of contents culture is never precisely the same in any two places, or at any two times in the same place, albeit in certain technologically primitive societies, or for those in the early evolutionary phases, contents may not change perceptibly for centuries. At any rate, in our context, since no individual can possibly learn the total content of a culture partial exposure to different segments is more likely. These patterns acquired by the individual are reflected in his overt behaviour. However, the individual is also capable of influencing his culture. These various interactions which are part of culture make it a system whereby human beings create a society, pass accumulated learning from generation to generation by means of such cultural products as artifacts, sociofacts, various cultural performances, and skills,

In the context of an enduring civilization, while the contents of a system may change, its nature never changes because the contents of the operative subsystems establish and maintain norms or sense-values. That is why sociofacts and cultures are reproduced like artifacts, often in precisely the same way. For instance, even if men migrate to far away areas, such as when groups of Indian immigrants reach the shores of another nation, they tend to reproduce similar sociofacts in terms of the symbolization of the concepts and motives

held by its people. Thus, culture is both the product of a living society and its output, since the human environment offers opportunities and preferences of choice to its members. In the latter sense, the body of culture or symbols acts as inputs of society, being the set of parameters which each of its members adopt (Kuhn 1966 : 206-7).

SOCIETY AS A SYSTEM

A group of an interacting common body of people, having a system of culture, is a society. The boundary of this system is the same or different because of the way cultural symbols are used. Thus, two different social groups in India may have common culture (a common cultural set of external manifestations), and common motives which may make society and culture co-extensive. But if society is defined as a group of people who must interact with each other, then, despite the prevalence of common cultural elements, there exist several different social groups because they belong to widely separated non-communicating peoples (viz., linguistic regions, sub-regions, etc). Hence, since interaction within human groups is an indispensable attribute of a society, several sub-societies exist in India. Nevertheless, every individual participates in several sub-societies (and sub-cultures), each one of which has different sets of norms and values. It is because of this that Indian civilization—superficially—appears very contradictory to an outsider since he comes across individuals with varying views that are at times part of the subsystems and on other occasions are part of the large complex system. As stated above, the more complex and diverse a system, the less chances individuals have to be exposed to the totality of a civilization. Consequently, while this tends to produce a wide variety of personalities, there is also widespread participation (by different kinds of people in various subsystems) which also brings about some uniformity of cultural traits.

In India one of the characteristic features is the system of caste, which is practically equated with the social system. A study of its origin, structure, history, and function has engaged scholars and observers for generations. But an understanding of caste as a system will not come about by increasing available quantitative data with regard to the number of castes or sub-castes, and related problems. These are by themselves meaningless for there is no end to the

innumerable categories of sub-castes, which are internally partitioned very differently in the North and in the South. Again, in a given linguistic area, while there are an indefinite number of castes, there are equally infinite sub-divisions at the primary level that are functionally relevant only in that region, in terms of occupations, endogamy, etc. Moreover, it is the sub-caste, *jati*, which really bears the important characteristics ordinarily attributed to castes. For instance, one does not marry just anywhere within any *varna* category, one does so usually only within one's own *jati* or sub-caste which in fact is also a legal institution that deals with internal justice and other social problems.

Thus, caste as a system is understood not by the number of its constituent elements but the revealed principles that govern the arrangements of its various fluid and fluctuating 'elements'. To illustrate, the entire system, despite controversies, may be basically defined by the three principles of hierarchy specialization, and repulsion or separation—not antagonism. These three principles are found systematically related to each other in their fullest expression in India, though they are found in other societies also (Dumont 1970). The system is also understood by the various networks of specialization and interdependence between different castes. This is the network legally known as the *jajmani* system, which in operation is easiest to look at in multi-caste villages, and even towns and cities.

Therefore, an understanding of the social organization of caste as a system is a result of both the study of empirical data and the common principles. It is only thus that the caste system may be spoken of as a pan-Indian institution. At this level, the caste system is above all a system of ideas and values, and a formal comprehensible rational system. Internally, as a system of interaction it is characterized, in terms of division of labour, by specialization and interdependence that refer to an orientation towards the need of the whole. This is linked with its attribute of hierarchy which is to be understood by *jajmani* system (Dumont 1970 : 92-3). In short, the system's orientation is towards the whole, aiming to ensure the subsistence of everyone in accordance with his social function, almost to the extent of sharing out the produce of each piece of land. Consequently in terms of the *jajmani* system there are two kinds of castes, those who have land and those who do not. The former are obviously the dominant castes which enjoy economic power by which

they control the means of subsistence and political power, allowing for the subordinate positions of the economic power within larger territorial units (Dumont 1970: 92-8; 105-8). Thus, dominance and dependence—as structural polar situations—live under the same system and encompass the power and authority aspect as well, without which we cannot understand stratified structures. The four dimensions of social stratification which are intricately involved are occupation, class, status, and power. Once we have distinguished various strata on this basis, it becomes possible to accept certain parallel psychological traits occurring on the same principles of stratifications in the sub-groups, i.e., in terms of a similar mentality and ideology that helps them to act together, as homogenous groups with respect to class, occupation, and prestige. The task is to seek out these dimensions of stratification separately and in relation to each other. For instance, it is clear that power cannot be explained in terms of the classical theory of the *varnas* which is nothing but a survival of the past social order, having no relation to social and economic reality. But there is often a confusion between *varna* and *jati* by Indologists since they rely on classical literature which is almost always concerned with *varna*.

It is worth noting here that the concept of hierarchy and status ranking as representing the dominant ideology of Indian social system has been overemphasized. Other egalitarian ideas (of equality) have frequently influenced Indian society. Dumont has been criticized by many. But Parry's (1974) criticism of Louis Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus*, wherein the Indian social structure has been framed in terms of the hierarchical opposition between the pure and the impure, purity-pollution, etc., is important. Parry says that this model relies on oversimplifications, which obscure some persistently egalitarian features of the Indian scheme of values, and Dumont gives a rather one sided picture. The basic conception of Dumont's is that the caste system is in sharp contrast to the Western conception of man as an individual, specially the concept of liberty and equality. On the other hand, an essentially collective conception of man is made out for Indian social structure in which the individual has to subordinate to the rules and goals of the social units of which he is a member. He also suggests that the individual—individuality exists in Indian society once one becomes a world renouncer—achieves individual liberty by repudiating all ties which bind him to the world of caste and kin (this in a very wide sense

also forms part of the social system). While he suggests that these ideological concepts of religious status to be foremost, political and economic factors also play an important role in maintaining the hierarchy. Nevertheless, Dumont maintains that this ideology or religious system encompasses the entire society. For example, the *Lingayat* and other egalitarian movements, these are explained in terms of a close connection with the institution of renunciation, whereby the sect does not reject caste out of hand but rather claims to transcend it.

But Dumont's critics are not convinced of his models, for his conclusions are broad generalizations on the basis of considering radical differences in kind between traditional and modern society. We know that, in practice, the ideal models are imperfectly realized if we focus at the concrete manifestations and direct more of our attention to actual behaviour and less to values. In this way the gulf which separates the two types of societies will appear to be rather less wide. Parry discusses several examples to criticize this somewhat one sided concentration of Indian value system. For example, he says, that it is the *brahmins* who are more concerned with purity rather than the other groups and this is more conspicuous in the South rather than in the North. But in the North as well as in western India, the influence of the *kshatriyas* is particularly marked; that is, the dominant model is as much royal as the priestly one—the former being associated with notions of honour and status, just as prominently as the values of purity and pollution. In the same way, there are other values of equality in India which may be fruitfully examined. Thus, social structure can be investigated in terms of the dual principles of equality and hierarchy. A case for example is the egalitarian theory which underlies certain land tenure systems; the land is assigned on typical egalitarian principles—*bhaichara*—as opposed to the *pattidari* system. In such a system rights are not in terms of a particular set of fields, but according to a share in the total estate. In short, equality then would seem to be a central basis of land tenure arrangements; not mere economic equity but also an equality of status and of political rights. Parry further augments his argument by dealing with the *Mitakshar* and the *Dayabhaga* systems of inheritance.

The views presented above do not imply that equality as a value existed in the total society; for inequality between castes, of separateness, etc., did exist. But it is important to note that the idea

of equality has been explicitly recognized in India, just as much as the hierarchical viewpoint. Egalitarian rules even exist beyond caste boundaries, in the loose sense of equality between castes, such as between the twice-born castes who have common status in relation to other groups. Several examples of this kind of brotherhood may be seen. It is in this context that Parry also discusses the movements of 'dissent', 'protest', and nonconformism, which represent other examples of egalitarian values expressed in Indian society. This has been specially the case in the low castes. But until now there have been few studies and little available empirical data on these movements. We know that low castes have adopted the strategy of Sanskritization in order to enhance their status, albeit accepting this system even though repudiating their position in it. These movements have continuously occurred and several have totally rejected the values of hierarchy, to turn to a system of egalitarian religion. For example, by appealing to the theory of *Bhakti Yoga*. This is the *Bhakti* movement of which the *Bhagwat Puran* is the most influential text, proclaiming *Bhakti* as the only path of salvation and refuting the idea that a person's birth, social status, and caste membership to be of little significance in this path of salvation.

Dumont and others see these egalitarian movements merely in terms of the revolutionary element in religious teaching, rather than as social movements. There are others who think that the *Bhakti* movement was not concerned with social implications; yet the rejection of the social order is of considerable influence in this movement and we cannot ignore their chief path of salvation, amongst their followers were those low in the traditional social order. Similarly, *Vira Shainism* was certainly a social upheaval by and for the poor, against the rich and privileged upper castes. Again, we may gain insights into other antihierarchical values such as the medieval *Bhakti* or *Sufi* movements that have repeatedly occurred, and from which we may make certain broad generalizations. There are also those movements that have been largely confined to the untouchable castes, to tribal groups, and others which have been pulled into the folds of caste society. Similarly in the examination of Muslim communities we note once again stereotype studies which characterize the Muslim communities as a single undifferentiated unit parallel to the orthodox Hindu traditions; and so also is the case with Indian Christianity (Parry 1974).

To conclude, in scientific and social science analyses, the systems approach is relatively new. Its application ranges from all kinds of mechanical devices to physical systems and human groups. The boundary lines delimit the system, for a series of systems can appear in a hierarchy ranging from a neutron that is a subsystem of the atom, which in turn is a subsystem of a molecule and so on, until the earth and the moon form subsystems of the solar system, that again is a subsystem within the galaxy. Similar kinds of relationships occur in the social, cultural, and biological systems. Moreover, a system is a set of interrelated and interacting components in which a given component may be a part of two given systems at the same time. For example, a human being is a part of the natural system as well as of a socio-cultural system. But this is determined by the problem at hand and is not inherent in the characteristics of things. This is why, depending on these boundary definitions, the functional or behavioural limits of the system have to be understood. For example, a segment of Indian civilization or it by itself may form a boundary in relationship to something else which may be another civilization and/or it may be the environment or, in relation to the past or even in relation to the future, etc. Thus, Indian civilization will no longer be discussed merely as an agglomeration of many components or as a static entity, but rather as states of being or existence at a point of time.

There are debates over the very definitions of the words system and model which we may use. For example, in structural-functionalism, there is a debate between those who favour the 'equilibrium' theory of societies and those who believe in the 'conflict' model of society. But without concerning ourselves with these developments and debates, we may point out that in history and anthropology, the very use of such terms as social system, economic system, political system, even if these have different connotations—is the consequence of the general systems approach. It remains for a student of past societies to decide which concept or model he may use. But whatever concepts and models are used, generalizations about the type of system defined will have to be clarified by historians themselves. But in deciding this, we will have to bear in mind some basic concepts like (1) the definition of the unit and its purposes in the operation of the process; (2) the factors that set the most general limitations on the type-unit; (3) the general types of conditions which must be made if the unit is to persist as defined

within these limits, and (4) the patterns of connections which must be present if the functional requisities and the structural patterns are to persist (Berkhofer 1969: 211ff). Thus, various anthropological varieties of systems analyses are very relevant to the traditional concern of the historian. Some of these explicit notions of systems analyses and of behavioural systems, will benefit an historian in all his tasks.

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CHAPTER FIVE

STRUCTURALIST APPROACH

THE perspective of structuralism is holistic-integrative, systematic, comparative, and generalizing; and is complementary to the close-range view. It has been embodied in the social sciences for the last ten years, and every school of thought possesses something of it. In anthropology, holistic approaches were made by evolutionists and diffusionists. Following them, historians and archaeologists borrowed these concepts to formulate technological-economic stages of cultural evolution. But while anthropologists now seek to analyze the dynamics of diffusion, explaining continuity and change in terms of adaptation, modification, and invention; and have evolved neo-evolutionary theories such as multilineal evolution, historical disciplines in India continue to follow the classical approaches.

In the beginning structuralism, with functionalism, was involved with micro-examination of other cultures, specially by the British schools. It was only later on that wider problems of explanation and process were considered, such as by Malinowski. He offered functional explanations of society primarily in terms of biological and psychological factors. Somewhat later, Radcliffe-Brown emphasized the importance of social life and structure in the maintenance of social solidarity. For both the key concepts were stability, equilibrium, and integration; while change was a minor concept in the structure and function of societies. Karl Marx had earlier attempted to describe social life both in terms of structure and evolution, and explanations were seen as the difference between the appearance of things and their essence, i.e., explanations are not evident if we only investigate visible social life; for example, economic systems rest on the prior identification of the internal elements and their relationships, because the determining role of the economy has to be explained at the same time by the dominant role of non-economic structures (Codelier 1970). Today, one of the

recurring problems posed in a structuralist approach, not the empirical type, is to analyze the relationship between an event and a structure and to account for its origins and development.

Thus, by means of structuralism, societies distinct both in space and time, yet belonging to the same type may provide us with comparable overall structures. It may appear that this approach distorts the perspective of concrete social relationships. But this is not so, for it only aims to account for them more satisfactorily by seeking invisible structures, in terms of relationships among phenomena themselves and the system into which these relationships have entered, rather than events. Actually, it was only after the Second World War with economic development and nation-building problems, that structural-functionalism widened its horizons. Today, there exist schools of consensus and conflict, both making conscious efforts to handle the phenomenon of change. In examining the processes of modernization and its social dimensions, such concepts as functional-dysfunctional, and integration-disintegration have also been introduced (Dube 1971: 93ff).

Levi-Strauss's structuralism, during the last ten years, has been the most influential one in anthropological theory. For him, if certain general properties of social life are the thesis and the particularizing ones of social anthropology the anti-thesis, then structuralism is the synthesis which contains as well as transcends them. In this way, he says, we may uncover patterns which underly various manifestations in the study of man, both past and present. Here, a basic reason why social life is characterized by a quality of systematic organization is that social structures are products of an innate reasoning in all men, which operates unconsciously. This unconscious activity holds true for both ancient and modern, as well as primitive and civilized man. This is why we must seek the hidden structures that exist both in individual and collective experience; and we must do so by means of certain analytical principles whereby we may provide universally valid conclusions for complex social forms that are integrated into civilizations. Levi-Strauss demonstrated this by examining some of the major aspects of culture, language, history, kinship, social organization, magic, religion, and art (Lane 1970).

Thus, structuralism provides common goals for anthropologists, ethnographers, and historians since they all aim to reconstruct and examine societies other than their own, i.e., societies that are remote

either temporally or in space due to cultural heterogeneity. Today, academic history organizes its data in relation to conscious expressions of social life. But we cannot rely on mere rational overt explanations for any event, tradition, custom or any institution, unless we have with us social science—structuralist—insights for explanations of patterns and processes in Indian history and civilization.

STRUCTURALISM IN GENERAL

The aim of structuralism in general is to have a corpus of knowledge which provides explanatory laws, hopefully comparable with the outstanding theories in the natural sciences, as well as to evolve unanimity about some notions commonly given about society and culture. However, the concept of structure characteristics in social sciences is quite different to the notion of a structure in mathematics and other sciences. Moreover, structures of socio-cultural phenomena are deductively constituted and cannot directly be observed; and, structures have to be seen below or behind empirical reality in terms of relationships which exist between the parts, i.e., complex networks which link and unite various elements. This is why any society itself is seldom aware of the structure, for it is only aware of the products of this structure. This is like people who are fluent in the use of language are not aware of the grammar or its syntax. Thus, an important assumption of structuralism is that nothing is completely amorphous, and no matter what it has a structure, in terms of wholes or totalities. As stated above, fundamental belief here being that in man there is an innate, genetically transmitted, and determined mechanism that acts as a structuring force and which functions at various hierarchical level in terms of various human activities. Consequently, there is an essential indivisibility of all social (human) phenomena, and it is logical to expect homologies or correspondences in structures between one aspect of a society and the other (Lane 1970: 14-17).

A major series of questions asked specially by Levi-Strauss's (1968) school of structuralism are also the ones which have been traditionally asked. Briefly, these are: (1) How may the behaviour of any human group be most exactly, meaningfully, and intelligibly be discussed? (2) How can the phenomena be accounted for or

explained? (3) How do the different sets of phenomena within a single group—such as myths, kinship, marriage—relate to one another, and to the totality? (4) What are the interrelations, if any, that exist between social groups as a whole—whether they be primitive tribes, feudal states, or advanced industrial societies? (5) What have they in common, that might provide a basis for a meaningful comparison?

However, in structuralism there is essentially a different methodology of ordering the raw material which handles these questions. For instance, its basic premise is that all manifestations of human—socio-cultural—activities and various regularities may be reduced to the same set of abstract rules that define and govern what we normally think of as language. Structuralism of Levi-Strauss then reduces its terminological confusion by using the word 'code' to cover all types of systems of communication, i.e., patterns of social behaviour are codes with the characteristics of language, because of the innate structuring capacity whereby relations may be reduced to binary oppositions. But this is possible because its central concern is with synchronic, as opposed to diachronic, structures in which the relationships exist across time rather than through time. For example, history is seen as a specific mode of development of a particular system whose synchronic nature must be fully known before any account of its diachronic nature is given. In other words, structuralism is atemporal or anti-causal and it does not use the notion of cause and effect but laws of transformation. Hence, when a comparison is made of two patterns of social relations, separated by time or space, the differences in their respective structural configuration, the order, and the nature of patterning of relations may be observed and analyzed, not mere relationships that exist synchronically.

In sum, then, structuralism attempts a whole inventory of social relations, covering both the conscious and unconscious, as well as rejecting atomistic tendencies. Its central concern being a search for general properties of social life, by revealing underlying formal relations of any given structure, and by deducing laws of transformation of structures as a whole for comparative purposes. In part this is also the aim of conventional sociology and anthropology. But while, traditionally, comparisons are made by removing differences, structuralism begins when it is recognized that various structures can be brought together not despite but in virtue of differences in which an order is sought.

STRUCTURALISM AND HISTORY

From the structuralist viewpoint, the goals and orientation of the historian and the anthropologist are analogous, because both study societies other than those in which they live in, examining continuity, change and diversity. In fact, history remains purely conjectural for Levi-Strauss, since the genetic relationships which it tries to establish among societies are not really based on any concrete evidence or documents. It relies instead on selectivity, editorial interests, and socio-political climate of the times which dictate a certain kind of a view of the past. Therefore, the sequences of any history are guaranteed by a series of concepts, not facts, unless documentation and evidence are fully present to the last detail. But this, as we know, is seldom possible. In essence, then systemization for historians ought also to imply attaining a certain system of relationships, i.e., make history express itself as the unity of diversity in time.

Historians may well ask, will these goals not lead to the making of several histories, in terms of as many concepts? But this is not possible if, following Levi-Strauss, we seek unity at a more radical level; that is, when all articulations in a system are analyzed in terms of certain number of logical laws, which provide a unity through certain spatio-temporal constants (Gaboriau 1970). But the historian might ask again, in this kind of approach what position his discipline would occupy? This question need not be posed, since we do explicitly state that history is based upon anthropology. This is why it means evolving afresh a number of basic philosophical presuppositions for historical studies, which may seem as yet unacceptable to many. For example, an examination of historical societies may be carried out simultaneously, at different time levels, so that particular histories will be understood only in terms of probability, and transformation laws—both in time and space—without assuming any meaning or direction from the beginning. This will arise out of such a question as, a society during a given period of time passes through a series of states, how can we analyze these changes and explain them? The answer will have to be found in what Levi-Strauss calls structural history, that does not contradict or threaten traditional history. It is high time that these problems of analyses, which are necessary for history, are brought in if we wish to seek explanations beyond descriptive levels. Never-

theless, we must remember that structural explanations are not conclusive answers, specially when we apply structuralism to a whole society—'totality'—or a civilization. In this case, several intricate problems will have to be faced, such as those of diachrony and internal contradictions which may or may not lead to transformation but also to disequilibrium. For example, while external factors may be responsible for change, it is within the internal lack of harmony that one may have to look into, in order to locate the crux of change, or what prevents society from remaining stable. Again, it may be questioned, what is the merit of such structural comparisons, even if we concede that there is a similarity of patterns? The answer cannot be given in terms of mere utility, since it is a scientific exercise which has its own logic. But the discovery of consistent structural patterns helps us to compare otherwise incomparable ones—events and things. For instance, the selective mode of historical events, as a result of complex combinations, need not be a sheer accident nor due to an arbitrary interest of scholars. A case in point is the structural analysis of Dumczil's 'The Mythical Structures of the Ancient Indo-Aryan' (Haugen 1970). Dumczil's comparative reconstruction of Indo-European methodology is based on the doctrine of tripartite ideology, which is repeated in a number of mythologies preserved in the Indo-European daughter languages. Basing these primarily on Indic and Iranian mythology it was found that the prevalent social structures were embodied in terms of the functions which one or more gods were specialized to perform. These have been summed up in the words of sovereignty, force, and fecundity. Consequently, the three Scandinavian gods *Comin*, *Thor*, and *Frey* are respectively comparable to the Indian gods *Varuna*, *Indra*, the twin *Nasatyas*. Each god or group of gods 'performs a function which is useful to society and its preservation and is complementary to the other functions'. For example, their functions are related to the brahmanic, the *kshatriya*, and *vaishya* classes respectively. This is reflected even in the mythology which is characteristic of Indo-Europeans. Thus, a structuralist comparison helps us to see historical transformation, apart from the fact that such structural comparisons need not always lead to any useful result, they help to clarify certain unconscious operations of the human mind.

Various writers on Indian history and civilization give ample proof of random selection, and personal orientation and interests that do not allow any rational control over the structure of history.

History, thus, ordinarily written is a partial truth of what happened, if one not only ignores the seemingly insignificant unrecorded evidence but also the concepts and principles of organization. But since the writing of history is certainly intricate, it is for professional scholars to seek what actually happened in terms of a patterned structure, within the notions of structural anthropology.

Indian civilizational studies would make considerable progress if agreement existed about the definition of structure, common both to history and anthropology, especially at the level of methodological principles that may be applicable to different stages of research. This will allow historical studies to utilize a variety of models, and history perhaps itself could be ordered into a total model that may enable us to make valid generalizations about the nature of human society, i.e., if we characterize civilization by the entire networks of different types and orders in terms of various interactional relationships both at the synchronic as well as the diachronic levels. Although it is not our aim to challenge history with anthropology or anthropology with history, yet we believe that the traditional dichotomy between anthropology and history in our academic institutions has contributed to a great deal of confusion both at the theoretical and the empirical levels. One way to close the gap between them is to seek unconscious structures and the necessary relationships. It is the introduction and creation of new categories, such as some 'new' notions of space and time, of opposition and contradiction in man's unconscious activities, which will give us guidelines to certain objective principles of interpretations. As it is, historians are not satisfied with mere political history which chronologically strings together dynasties, or other simplistic interpretations. Consequently, it is necessary to encourage such research methodologies that are saturated with anthropology and other social science generalizations. The time has also come when the vast assorted mass of information of Indian civilization is seen not only in terms of what should be done systematically, but also what we should not do. The interpretation of our data has to be in terms of the techniques of observation and theoretical framework which belong to the latter half of the 20th century. In this way we will be able to discover total phenomena from various angles of ethnography, history, archaeology, and mythology along with

regional and local historical situations and circumstances mentioned in documentary evidences. Thus, there are available today different routes of understanding particular civilizational developments, of which the structuralist approach is important. But this should not be construed to mean that an attempt is being made to artificially systemize knowledge for the sake of 'fashion'.

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CHAPTER SIX

PROBLEMS OF CHANGE

APPROACHES to problems of change differ because there are differences in the theoretical frameworks between humanities and social sciences. However, an examination of change could form a common area of inter-disciplinary study, provided relationships and processes rather than narration are investigated. We can no longer continue to use the notions of the 18th and 19th centuries, when it was believed that society was fundamentally characterized by rationality, and change towards progress was considered natural. Other classical evolutionary schools tended to point out general causes or trends of change (economic, technological, spiritual, etc.). But this orientation precluded the study of change as such, since most societal change was considered to be 'deviant', a pathological disorder or a dysfunctional element. But these views caused confusion since general tendencies were unable to explain concrete instances. Today, evolutionary theories of the 19th and early 20th centuries have given way to neo-evolutionary ones, on the basis of comparative studies. The breakdown of older models has been on the following grounds: (1) There was a simplistic concern with unilinear and universal stages of development and (2) they failed to specify systematic characteristics as well as the mechanism and processes of change from one stage to another (Dube 1971: 17-21).

Formally speaking, there have been two types of theories of social and historical change. First, change is examined by reducing various institutional orders into one major order, say by giving a metaphysical accent (Indian spiritualism) in terms of cycles and linear patterns; and due to technology, scientific enlightenment, and efficiency values or other superstructure of values. All these are seen as prime movers that bring about a change since these govern everything that goes to make up a civilization. Second, an overemphatic or exaggerated use of theories, based on economic

(Marxian) or psychological (Freudian) concepts; geographical factors, and racial characteristics, etc. The characteristics of the prevalent scheme of the first type are popular with many; suggesting that symbolic spheres and normative ideas of civilizations are self-determined, whereby actual operations of values—historically and sociologically—are irrelevant, as if there is something dynamic, self-conscious or autonomous about symbolic spheres and normative ideas. For instance, once the ideas of normative order, say the socio-legal texts of *Dharamashastras* or *Manusmritis* had been set, the harmony of interests became a natural feature. But this view totally ignores problems of conflict-tension, structural-antagonism, dissent-protest movements, and revolts. Thus, it is that problems of change have not been considered seriously, so that little noticeable change in Indian civilization is seen, or seems to have taken place. However, a given society—civilization—is 'static' or unchanging only if (1) it is closed to the environment; (2) it has no contact with other cultures; and (3) there is an exhaustion of natural resources, etc. (Kuhn 1966: 228-30). But seldom is a human system closed, except from the viewpoint of a particular problem. Therefore, in practice, there are no static societies because continuous change takes place through discovery, invention and certain psychological processes. This holds good even of primitive societies, where, since information is transmitted by word of mouth, change arises over the years through faulty memory and communication. Of course change is most marked in complex civilizations or 'open' cultures wherein culture-contact with other societies—primitive or advanced—is very frequent due to merger, fusion or assimilation and by a continuous and systematic exchange of ideas in the realm of arts, literature, music and science.

Socio-cultural change may also be attributed to individuals, such as the Buddha. However, any understanding of social roles in bringing about change has to be explained in the context of organizational structures. One question may be, how do individuals become responsible for bringing about significant changes within an existing system? For instance, while an individual within the caste system is expected to strictly conform to its norms, how do we explain such process wherein individuals challenge the system, as has been the case of many nonconformist, 'protest', and 'dissent' movements? How is it that the same system creates just the opposite kinds of personalities who do not conform to group pressures? What socio-economic

or value changes are responsible for this? Is it an individual or a collective phenomena? The fact is that, generally, past patterns continue into the future, and a substantial core of similarity does perpetuate in the course of time. But it is easier to examine this in smaller societies because conformity has a universal social-value on the basis of which social systems operate, since it reduces anxiety by eliciting group support. Therefore, for an individual, norm conformity goes with success in a social system. This is not true for creative individuals. In a variety of occupational fields, in the contemporary world, only 10 per cent of people are creative, yet who are also deviant, i.e., they learn non-creative norms poorly and their inflow involves a broad spectrum of energy/information that is contrary to the norms of the system to which they belong (Monac 1967: 120-5).

In a larger system there exist multiple norms, values, and prejudices in its various subsystems, which are learnt by groups quite unconsciously. Therefore, in a civilization, the direction and rates of change are differential, since the spheres of social interaction are generally limited in area except at certain levels only. But not enough work has been done in understanding these historical problems. However, today, there are available various insights for studying change—social, historical, and evolutionary—which enable us to use notions of differentiation and integration. For instance, under integration, both unity and disunity may be examined. Disunity of a system may be discussed in terms of contradictions, conflict, strain, tension, and stress; processes that may adequately give us causes for various changing phenomena. But notions of harmony and equilibrium or unity, ignore these issues in the study of wholes. Similarly, differentiation enables us to understand such changes that facilitate growing differentiation in evolutionary theory with the possibility of parallel systems developing within different societies (Eisenstadt 1967). For example, in history, it may be possible to locate new levels of structural differentiation by identifying an active group of special elite 'entrepreneurs' who offer solutions for a new range of problems; or, charismatic personalities who help in the adaptation and continuance of new institutionalised structures. Here the questions to ask are : Under what conditions do these new groups or charismatic leaders appear? What is the nature of their vision of proposed institutional solution to the problems attendant into growing differentiation? At what stage do

autonomous religious organisations break away, especially when prophets or mystics arise? How do we explain the formation of sectarian developments which compete with other-worldly ones, viz., the *Charvakas* along with the Buddhist and Jain movements? Why do competing elites and various wider segments of society, in this situation, accept the new elites' solutions of alternative socio-cultural orders? To further illustrate, problems related to the Buddhist, Jain, Bhakti, and other leaders may be taken for investigation. Indications may be given by examining certain familial, ideological, and educational orientations of individuals. This is because we know for example that the monastic institutions, the enclaves of the Buddhists and Jains, played an important role in the formation of such elites, i.e., an examination of the interactions between broad structural features and the new elites may help us to realise the great variety of structural and integrative forms that may be institutionalised at any given level of differentiation, at particular times. Moreover, the extent to which institutional patterns are crystallized, not through independent invention within a society, but through diffusion from other societies, also needs to be re-examined, viz., the coming of Islam and its ideas, especially of the *Sufis*, which gave an impetus to several later *Bhakti* movements.

SYSTEM IDENTITY AND STRUCTURAL CHANGE

In understanding larger institutional changes in a system, it is important first to know the system identity—the core of its uniqueness. This is because system-norm and identity are interwoven intimately, so that the clarity of the system and its action are determined by the power-structure on which the changes and their direction depend (Clarke 1968). Three major types of systems, from this viewpoint, have been identified: (1) *Monolithic* (2) *Vague* and (3) *Multiple*. Monolithic and vague identity types reflect high and low organization power structures respectively. In the latter case, power structure, internal lines of actions, gate-keepers, etc., are not clear about the norms, which are also indistinct and blurred. Such a system has a tendency to regulate inflow in such a manner as to move away from randomness and ambiguity towards organization and dictatorial tendencies that lead to monolithic types. In the multiple identity type there are subsystems—each with its own

identity, lines of action, power structure, etc. Large systems such as nations—civilizations—are marked by this sort of multiple identity, such as in India. Here, each system involves different kinds of changes, in terms of realignment of subsystematic power units which may in turn affect the larger system (Monane 1967: 113-18).

Thus, change in India may be examined in terms of the multiple system identity, wherein it takes place differentially. For example, change occurs initially in the subsystems by means of, very simply stated: (1) development within, (2) inflow and outflow, or (3) a combination of the two. If change involves sudden action, then the gate-keepers become acutely alert to the impact of new forces. However, historically, a great deal of social change took place because leaders themselves initiated change without disturbing the existing power structure. To illustrate, the Buddha brought about change with new ideas from within, and Buddhism was allowed to continue since it did not present an alternative social and economic programme. At another level, the caste system has survived for so long in its general patterns because social mobility was possible, and in this sense it was 'open'. But in another way, it is 'closed' because its class structure—traditional patterns of class stratification—has remained firm, even if caste or sub-caste changes and adjustments have been going on. It is for this reason that organizational changes but not structural changes are possible, i.e., the longer there is an association of components the longer a system takes to dissolve and change. In any case, the time rates of change in items, social, cultural, and economic values need to be examined in depth, since usually resystemization processes seem to have been taking place, rather than total disintegration of components.

Significantly, systems—subsystems—are neither conservative nor radical and there is no inherent tendency to be so. Change becomes relevant, only when it is considered in terms of its functional or dysfunctional nature, i.e., only if it succeeds in fitting with other components of a system. The problem becomes complex because historical data clearly indicate that no society ever abandons its traditional culture, and the old always leaves a significant mark upon the new. In fact, continuous change and adjustment are common processes, and in the case of gradual resystemization, the old can hold forth for quite some time before new patterns of order and systems are formed. Nevertheless, structural changes do

take place. Without going into details, we may indicate five different ways whereby the impact of change varies:

1. The magnitude of the disturbance, which is not an absolute quantity, but is judged from the previous rates.
2. The proportion of units in the system at the relevant levels that are affected.
3. The strategic character of the sub-unit's functional contribution to the system.
4. The incidence of the disturbance in analytically distinguishable components of the system's structure.
5. The degree of resistance by the relevant part of the system to the impact of forces of change, i.e., the level of affectiveness of the mechanisms of control (Parsons 1967).

The analytical problems in this area are by no means simple, because complex civilizations are composed of interpenetrating subsystems, in which both internal and external factors always impinge upon the roles, norms, and values. For example, internally, social change is generally brought about by upper classes who have a greater impact on the norms and values of the society than any change which may come from the lower strata. But this is not always so, since we know that the *Sufi*, mystic, and *Bhakti* movements—even Buddhism—were spread along and by lower orders. At any rate, structural changes involve a change in the system's normative culture, specially its socio-economic base. By this definition, it is clear that the occurrence of widespread symptoms of political or religious disturbances does not amount to structural change. Change must occur throughout, simultaneously at several levels, and be propagated through the various control systems if it is to bring about structural changes. Perhaps, this is why reform, nonconformist, and protest movements have not brought about radical changes in the social system, since the impetus to change did not go 'over the watershed'. We also know that during these times of socio-economic and value-system disturbances, individuals and groups in society go through symptoms of extreme irrationality and psychological disturbances; personalities vary between activity and passivity, between alienation and conformity, between rebelliousness and withdrawal, and between ritualism and compulsive performance. This is because deep seated disturbances of change lead

to fantasies or utopian-ideal-future states or of idealised past states, and of security in a status-quo from which sources of disturbances could conveniently be banished.

Thus, whenever the equilibrium of a society is disturbed (due to technological, economic or value changes), often, men with their normal life routine are alienated from their social roles in such a way as to open themselves up for new insights. At this time when deep-going transformations occur, some individuals—mystics or prophets—become pivotal in historic change, since they challenge one another's explanation of conduct, and human nature itself becomes problematic. There are attempts to give alternative definitions of the meaning of the universe and life for the individual. But if these new values have to be implanted, important motivational changes among the elite must take place, since it is they who exert the necessary leverage for extending the institutionalization of the values to all societal levels. This is because bearers of the new values must some how become established in such a way that they cannot be reabsorbed into the older order (Parson 1967).

It is therefore clear that in the study of Indian civilization, an understanding of historical change requires at first insights into the functioning of social and economic institutions, and their interrelations and roles, specially because each one of these may undergo differentially quantitative as well as qualitative changes. We have also to learn how change in the economic order is related to social roles at different levels of technology and degree of specialization, the general class structure, etc. Similarly, an understanding of political order requires a study of the distribution of power and prestige, of property rights, and the linking of power with economic affairs. Again, we may develop adequate models for the analysis of leadership which appeared at the significant turning points of history. For instance, we may have to ask, in what context does new leadership arise? Does a leader create new motivations in the already existing contexts or does he simply become a leader in it as it existed? In what social order and sphere does he lead others, his activities, and his salient roles as a leader or did he invent this role? How did this man come to be recruited for this role or did he have some character traits already relevant prior to his assuming the role and for continuing the role? And, so on. These are empirically 'open' questions in the context of India, since so far universalistic theories have been of no avail in providing answers (Mills 1965: 398-406).

In short, some important features favouring structural changes which need to be examined are:

1. Adequate mechanism for overcoming the inevitable resistance of vested interests either through force or political coercion.
2. Positive ways of combining the new with adequate constructive policies, i.e., new patterns are motivated so closely to each other, that they wish to be detached from older patterns; and this will lead to destructive behaviour or withdrawal.
3. A model from exogenous sources may be reproduced endogenously in a communal or an institutionalized manner, such as the introduction of primary democracy and other systems borrowed by India from Great Britain—it remains to be seen if these have been successful.
4. A gradual pattern of sanction evoked by the behaviour in the transitional phase which must be selectively rewarded over a sufficiently long period to coincide with the values of various components, before institutionalization. For example, one of the methods may be to 'consciously' change the socialization of a child through new family or mother-child institutional relationships. The socialization of the child actually constitutes a process of structural change in one set of the structural components of the social system (Parsons 1967).

The questions and observations made in this chapter represent a small sample of some of the various approaches that are available in the existing range of theory from which we may develop general explanatory models of social-historical change. The variety of considerations about processes of change presented here is only a very tentative sketch, suggesting future guidelines of research. It has not been possible to give detailed illustrations of organizing the complex problems of change. But historical models need not be restricted to one or the other disciplines. Just as sociology and anthropology have absorbed most of the older concerns of philosophy of history, we must be able to widen our spheres of social, cultural, and historical studies. These varieties of methodological problems must somehow enter into the analyses of Indian history and civilization, remembering that there are an indefinite plurality of legitimate positions and of questions from which may emerge various problems

whereby an accumulative development of analytical thinking becomes possible.

Finally, in brief, we may note the following observations in the context of social and historical change:

1. It is important to make an in-depth examination of the units we are observing—individual or institutional, the articulation of various units—and then see how they change.
2. Is the mechanism of change due to borrowings and diffusion; inventions and innovations; integration and disintegration; expansion and contraction; advance and retrogression; acculturation and deculturation; or what else?
3. The direction of change has to be indicated, not by terms such as progress, decadence, rise and fall, emergence or darkness, but by conceptual terms of social sciences.
4. Rates of change need to be understood against some parameters because change in terms of time-units vary according to the subsystem, i.e., while it may be slow for some areas, in another area one phase may follow another at a relatively greater speed. Thus, the rates of change have to be seen more in terms of a series, ranging from relatively constant—for nothing is absolutely static—through a drift and variety of breaks, discontinuity, and leaps to total crises and revolutions, or dynamic situations.
5. Reasons of why change is possible, i.e., seeking answers for sufficient causes of historical change where it has occurred.
6. How do 'objective' and 'subjective' factors in any given historical sequence balance each other, i.e., what is the 'causal' importance of ideas in history, linking these with social, economic, political, and character structure? (Mills 1965).

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CHAPTER SEVEN

INDIA : STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS AND FORMATION

STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS

IT is well-known that Indian civilization is made up of almost an infinite number of components and elements that have been continuously added, adapted, renewed, and synthesized at various interactional levels. This has been so from times immemorial in the Indian subcontinent (all-India) and the diachronic survey of this formation is given below. Today, these socio-cultural elements in the subsystems of arts, technology, social, and economic aspects, also exist in areas which are independent political entities—Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Ceylon, and Pakistan. Indian civilization may also be seen as a system which is made up of subsystemic regional—linguistic (culture)—areas which are well-known socio-cultural and politico-economic historical entities. These continuous geographical areas are fairly homogenous in many ways, and have been so for at least a thousand years, if not longer (Malik 1968; 1969; in press). While the importance of culture areas and their identities is quite clear, they have also contributed to the total system, since each region comprises of such structural elements that also belong to the all-India system. It is in this sense of culture areas that various structural elements may be seen within the framework of two interacting levels, i.e., the all-India level and the regional level, as follows.

SUBSYSTEMIC ELEMENTS

The various regional subsystems as socio-cultural and historical entities have endured the fluctuations of many political boundaries and centralized empires, so that there is a certain functional autonomy about them, almost as much as it exists in the main

system. For instance, regional social institutions have their own internal regulations; such as the *jati*, guilds of priests, learned specialists, ascetics, businessmen, craftsmen, artists, and especially legal-codifiers and jurists. All these have maintained subsystemic institutional boundaries of occupation, kinship, personal law, religion, and polity throughout history. Often, their autonomous functioning was maintained and encouraged by the state authority. In any case, the two outstanding institutional attributes of these subsystems are briefly: the *jati-varna* scheme of social stratification, and such goals and values which exist in the area of religion, metaphysics, ethics, sacraments, personal laws, and ideals of personality (such as of status and honour). Throughout history these characteristic attributes have been severally expounded, commented, and interpreted in Sanskrit, Prakrit, in various regional languages, as well as in myths and folklore. It is because of these processes, along with socio-economic developments, that not only has each subsystem evolved its own peculiar 'style' but it has also contributed to the total 'style' of the Indian configuration. At the interactional level, these means and processes have functioned within the context of common social (viz., caste and joint family), cultural, economic, linguistic, and other spheres. It is in this way that subsystemic structures of Indian civilization have formed.

Some of the socio-cultural elements which are peculiar within and to each region are:

1. Recreation, folk-tales and folklore, music, dance and drama, festivals, food and drink-exchange.
2. Communication by local and regional literature and language, names of people and places, and civil exchange.
3. Dress and ornaments.
4. Rural occupations.
5. *Jati* is mainly operative at the local and regional level, because *varna* categories do not hold ground. Social positions vary in the hierarchical system according to the institutional relationships which exist at the operational level. Today, for example, *brahmans* in Bengal are equal in status to the *kayasthas*; in some other regions, *brahmans* are also cultivators, agriculturalists, soldiers, policemen, cooks, and white-collar workers (Panchnandikars 1970).
6. Politics is basically regional, i.e., not every Indian in the past

could reach the upper levels of regional or local politics, much like now when learning is in the regional media, and an individual imbibes regional socio-cultural values.

7. Kinship and marriage is generally local and regional. There have been instances of inter-regional marriages (say, royal ties) within the same *jatis*, as recent sociological research suggests (personal communication by S. C. Dube). But this information is not well-known in currently available literature, or properly worked out historically.
8. Religion functions at the regional level, with its own version and interpretations of texts, myths, folklore, etc.

ALL-INDIA ELEMENTS

The subsystemic pattern of elements outlined above has contributed to the all-India pattern or 'style' by an interlocking of subsystems—due to cultural and economic interaction and social mobility, which has existed throughout history. But in terms of rural-urban and mobility-immobility interaction, urban groups had relatively little possibility of mobility in the early phases because of their fixed social occupations. By the beginning of colonial times there was considerable mobility, since significant social change was brought about due to a well-settled feudalistic economic system, and with it the emergence of a new elite and middle-class. However, no radical structural changes appear to have taken place, though organization and contents have been changing. It remains to be seen what will be the consequences of the 19th and 20th centuries on changing the older patterns, for we are too close to our times to analyze this clearly (Damle 1957).

On the other hand, rural classes—castes—and communities seem to have been relatively 'open' and mobile, specially because of (1) changing labour-tenant-landowner relationships, albeit land ownership was steadily retained by the rich agricultural castes, who were later to become business entrepreneurs in rural areas and (2) mobility during inter-seasonal period, because of new land settlement programmes, and migration which continued even during the Mughal period.

In short, in terms of the structural approach, binary elemental patterns may be analyzed at both synchronic and diachronic levels, alongwith the urban and rural dichotomous dimensions pointed

below. (At the present stage these analyses in terms of interactions are not possible.)

1. Religious textual vs. folklorist tradition such as the *laukik* vs *shastric* traditions (Saraswati 1970);
2. Sanskrit vs. Prakrit or regional language and literature;
3. Great vs Little traditions in the cultural sphere:
 - (i) 'high' form of music, painting and sculpture vs 'low' forms;
 - (ii) all-India vs regional units; (iii) concept of the one vs many; (iv) idea of *raja-praja—jajmani* relationships; (v) social classes of the high caste *brahmins* as opposed to the lowest untouchable; neither can exist without the other; and (vi) idea of stability vs change.

Structurally, and not in terms of culture areas, various elements interact with each other at the subsystemic level to give shape to the all-India system or configuration. For instance, a common base is provided by Sanskrit—*Brahmi*-script—for Indian and other subcontinental languages, literature, and other socio-cultural aspects. Some other examples are enumerated below.

(1) Common to each linguistic region are: Specific main and subsidiary agricultural castes which form the core of rural communities, along with their complementary artisan and service castes, involved in a *jajmani-parijan* relationship; and the urban area castes of business professions, crafts, guilds, and today's white-collar 'babu' occupations.

(2) Social interaction in pre-colonial urban cosmopolitan centres (located both inland and along the coastal areas) where mixed populations of foreigners lived alongside many Indian social-religious-linguistic groups of varied occupations, social positions, and beliefs.

(3) In the institutions of administration and defence, both social and physical mobility existed. For instance, recruitment was not restricted to the *kshatriya varna*, for we know that *brahmins* and *shudras* often became kings and chieftains. Cosmopolitan recruitment also took place due to and in such traditional cultural institutions as *gharanas* of music, dancing, and 'schools' of wrestling and medicine; *shastric* schools of learning; *maths*, *pithas*, and *akharas* of *sadhu* sects and other religious denominations; and in the guilds of priests at pilgrimage centres which have been of both regional

and all-India character. However, caste-wise recruitment as a basic pattern in normal life continued to prevail.

(4) Both during colonial and post-colonial periods, many 'modern' formal social groups have contributed to the totality. Hopefully, these 'new' structural elements will lead to a more viable political entity than has been the case during earlier periods of Indian history.

(5) Barriers of class-caste and other social taboos are non-existent during several cultural occasions; and the latter also in spheres of social interaction. Significant are pilgrim centres where patronage and charity are given by higher castes to lower castes for performances of rituals. Intercaste exchange between twice-born takes place by eating of *pakka* food; here, untouchables are excluded. There are many such cultural functions of inter-caste nature; but mostly these have regional or local dimensions, rather than operating generally at the inter-regional level. However, examples of certain pilgrim centres which are spheres of inter-regional interaction and of the different types of centres are:

- (i) Trans-sectarian pilgrim sites include Kashi (*Vishwanath* temple), Haridwar, Rameshwaram, Dwarka, Badrinath, etc.
- (ii) Regional pilgrim centres, which may also be sectarian, include temples at Madurai (mainly *Shaivite*—but not excluding *Vaishnavas*), Durga temple of Kalighat in Bengal, etc.
- (iii) Sectarian pilgrim centres include Udipi—for *Vaishnavas*—in Mysore which is associated with Ramanuj and other mystic *Bhakti* cults.

(6) Cultural identity is maintained by a common metaphysical base, such as the idea of ethical compensation (*karamphal*); this is accompanied by various items, objects, places, days, and auspicious periods that are commonly regarded as sacred and occur in each region.

(7) Variants of all-India epics and mythology, with their expositions of values and goals, are commonly shared in each of the regional subsystems. Examples are: *purusharth* (achievement ideals); *rna* (obligation); *dana* (sharing); *sanskara* (sacraments) at birth, death and marriage; *vrata* (the ritual to earn merit) and *prayaschitta* (penitance for expiation) (Panchmandikar 1970).

(8) Personal law and behavioural patterns have been handed down in the regions on the basis of the two commentaries of *Yajnavalka Smriti*: these consist of the *Dayabhag* system of inheritance in Bengal and the *Mitakshara* system which prevails over the rest of the country except in Kerala, where the operative systems are *Marumakettayam* and *Aliyasantanam*. It may be remembered here that the traditional personal law was—and is—applicable mainly to the higher social groups (their form of marriage is a statutory one, and is called the *Brahmi* or *Kanya Dan* that is solemnized by the *saptapadi* ritual in which until recently, there was neither any divorce nor any widow re-marriage). As against this, there is a marriage form called the *ashur* (or the autonomous one) in the rural community. In this form bride-price, divorce, remarriage, and inheritance by the natural sons exist. Formal property rights for the female are recognized in both forms of marriage.

(9) At the level of value-systems, as it interrelates to the socio-cultural system, the perception of the one ultimate *Brahman* and the many *Atman* (many forms, icons, deities, reincarnation, etc.), not only forms the fundamental base of various values but it also allows for the acceptance of diversity of traditions. It is one of the reasons that has allowed for the preservation for several centuries of different viewpoints of culture and society. This is enforced, perhaps, by the concept of different stations of life for an individual, in providing codes of conduct in both personal and social life; such as different social behaviour during diverse socio-cultural occasions of interaction with other individuals—say at the family level—with other social groups and so on.

(10) A corollary of the above value-system frame of reference leads to an acceptance of the existence and legitimacy of inequality, as represented by the hierarchical system of social stratification. This is sanctified and endorsed by the *brahmins* by their interpretations and rationalizations of what is expressed in socio-legal texts. Theoretically, of course, the system is characterized by the inheritance of social position, more or less in terms of the status-groups. This hierarchy is not sanctioned and maintained only because of the priests; it persists chiefly due to socio-political-economic powers of the subsystems, whether of dominance or of interdependence at the regional-local level of participation. Moreover, in practice, there are not only many regional variations in caste, kinship and marriage arrangements, but throughout

history the rigidities of the theoretical system have been opposed by several anti-caste, socio-religious reformists and nonconformist movements. Mention may be made of the earlier ones led by the Buddhists, Jains, and later *Bhakti* movements, *tantric* cults, *lingayats*, *brahmosamaj*, *arya-samaj*, etc., not excluding Islam, Christianity; to be followed very recently by the Gandhian movement as well as of non-caste movements of some social groups and tribes. Although these movements have not changed the structural-institutional framework of the main system, they have caused some organizational changes. One of the consequences has been the formation of several sub-castes, *jatis*. At this point we cannot go into the details of this problem, and these will form a separate study.

From the above socio-cultural viewpoint, we may perhaps generalize about the personality structure. For example, there is the characteristic emergence of a concern with status and honour, and pollution and purity—these are key individual goals, with reference to interaction with other individuals of different social statuses, and also within one's family and kin group. But in order to offset certain guilt feelings in the higher castes, there have been devised ways of psychic compensation, such as the sponsorship and patronage by higher social groups of lower ones, the recognition of low-caste festivals, etc. Again, frustration and individual victimization is handled by turning to charity, by going on pilgrimage, performing purificatory ceremonies, offering sacrifices, turning to astrology and horoscopes, etc. Then there is the ultimate choice of opting out of society by becoming an ascetic, albeit ascetic sects are also in a way part of the social system.

FORMATION: A DIACHRONIC SURVEY

In view of the foregoing discussion of structural elements, as well as the framework of enquiry suggested in the earlier chapters, it will be worth our while to seek socio-cultural dynamics of history, by examining various subsystemic adjustments and interactions diachronically. There have been and are many ways of doing this. By emphasizing economic aspects, the growth and development of India may be divided into two main periods; the pre-industrial and the industrial; or, into the colonial (associated with European-British politico-economic and social period) and the pre-colonial

phases and subphases. We are all too familiar with such divisions that are based on philosophical, artistic, and political developments. But, now there is an effort to drop the commonly known historic periods which have politico-religious overtones; namely, the divisions of Indian history into the ancient, the medieval and modern periods, which are based on European history (Cohn 1971; Malik 1971a; Thapar 1966, 1972).

Today, from the social science view point, these various developments may be seen in terms of socio-cultural dynamics and structural change i.e., as a result of both internal and external impacts, due to strains, tensions, and conflicts within and between various sub-systems. As discussed earlier in the chapter on structuralism, we may limit our enquiry to exploring outlines of the two themes; the continuing temporal dynamics of socio-cultural and historic change at the all-India level; and the continuity of systemic configurations in terms of the various subunits—the linguistic or regional territorial units—which are variants of the total structure. Their interaction may be seen in terms of three processes; subsystemic autonomy, systemic reciprocity, and configurational attributes. All these three processes have gone into the making of Indian civilization. In this manner historical studies will enable us to identify explicit and implicit elements of contemporary society, thereby making historical studies meaningful and significant. Ideally, this should be attempted by a kind of integration of diachronic and synchronic studies, which will particularly assume importance in understanding regional cultural communities. Nevertheless, this attempt will not be possible at present, since our approach here is to illustrate the framework of enquiry.

Thus, in terms of the dynamic view of history, diachronically we visualize five divisions. The phases in which we are interested here are three, bracketed on the one side by the Formative Period and at the other by the Modern Period. Each phase, with subdivisions of stages, represents adjustments as a result of competition between various closely related socio-cultural, economic, and political goals and values. Apart from the Formative Period, the First Phase begins with the settlement of later Aryans until the Turko-Afghan dynasties. The Second Phase begins during the period of the 'great' Mughals and ends with the coming of Europeans. This is the time when Indian economy is interlinked to the Industrial Revolution and colonial economy. Only in the

Third Phase—the British Period—very different systems of values and goals were crystallized. This is because this phase is associated with a pattern of economy that developed as a consequence of colonialism and of the commercial enterprise of the industrial age. It finally leads us into the Modern Period, characterized by the notions of secularization and modernization of institutions. Today, it is debatable whether there has been replacement of the feudal setting by a bourgeois society, for we still retain semi-feudal and semi-colonial patterns. But this initiation and introduction of new patterns in military and civil administration; in education; in financial, fiscal and business organizations; in legal codes; in the introduction of new mass media and communication networks; and in the idea of legislation and representation based on the concept of a nationhood marks the Modern Period. These 'modern' developments have produced a different class of urban elite who have clearly inculcated values of nationhood, liberalism, and democracy; or other various competing socio-politico-economic ideologies of the Western world.

In the following sections, we shall neither deal with these developments of the Modern Period nor of the first Formative one, since these have been dealt with earlier by the author (Malik 1968) and by others elsewhere. However, even for the other phases, we shall not go into many details, for the various phases are briefly surveyed to bring out the main features, whereby it becomes possible to make comparisons, and to understand both continuity and change. We might remind ourselves here that all attempts at periodization involve a degree of over-simplification, since there is bound to be considerable overlapping of different phases. All this makes it difficult to seek and identify clear demarcations of periods. Nevertheless, if the appearance of the new is kept as an indicator of a new phase, heuristic classifications become possible. Most of the following account of the First Phase, i.e. up to the 15th–16th centuries is based on Basham (1954), Kosambi (1965), and Thapar (1966). Ideas about the last two phases have been taken mainly from Cohn (1971). The chronological phasing is based, to a great extent, on Romila Thapar's general framework. Since this account is illustrative of our framework, detailed analysis of original sources was not considered necessary. That, and further elaborations will form a part of the second stage of research.

FORMATIVE PERIOD

This period, normally termed as the protohistoric period, begins from the third millennium B.C., at a time when urban life forms an important ingredient of social organization, especially in the Indus Valley region. This is the period when many elements of Indian structure were forming and taking shape, to continue into later India. Illustrative of this are the developments of caste-class patterns in social and economic organizations, the beginnings of village-rural-urban, 'little' and 'great' traditions, etc. The nomadic Aryans, whose coming was not a single event but a series, had adopted many of the local—pre-Aryan—socio-economic, and perhaps even some kind of political system. This happened due to their taking to a settled way of life, and following commercial and business activities. Consequently, it was the Aryans who were Indianized, rather than indigenous societies being Aryanized, as is commonly mentioned in many history textbooks. The influence of pre-Aryan ideas is clearly seen in the early Sanskrit texts by the use of non-Aryan words and concepts, as well as by a rationalization of the incorporation of non-Aryan traditions into the Vedic and other literatures. However, it is true that the Aryans did have superior weapons and a kind of predatory social organization which was to prove superior over the peasant-urban sedantry groups, and this is why their language and some other traditions were acculturated or imposed upon the local traditions. But there was also the adoption by Aryans of several non-Aryan deities, practices, rituals, shrines, and legends into the textual tradition as is clearly seen in what was later to be called 'Hinduism'.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BEGINNINGS—PHASE I: STAGE I

During the Formative Period acculturation took place between the Aryans and the non-Aryans, who were already settled on the subcontinent. The indigeneous economic and political system of Aryans based on cattle rearing now changed to a full-scale agricultural economy, specially with the introduction of iron technology. Extensive clearing of virgin land took place, and with it, apart from joint tribal ownerships, families also began to own private property; and in time this gave rise to wealthy landowners, and the resultant disputes over inheritance. The expansion of these agricul-

tural activities greatly increased trade and commercial life based on specialized occupational groups, such as of carpenters, metal workers, potters, and weavers. At the political level, similar changes took place in consonance with these economic changes. The tribal assemblies and councils, with no monarch as head, of the early Vedic literature, were replaced by tribal kingdoms, headed by a king who was assisted by a court, a chief priest, a military commander, etc.

At the social level, while the earliest Aryan organization was formed of three classes, referred to as the twice-born, somewhat later four classes came to exist. Briefly, the classical views of society (*Varna-Ashrama Dharma*) are as follows:

1. Early Rigvedic period: two types of social categories, the nobles or the *kshatriyas* and the tribes-men or *Vish*. But, sometimes a third category of poet-priest, *brahman*, was added.
2. Later Rigveda period (in the *Purushasukta*): four categories of priests, warriors, cultivator-artisans (later to become traders) emerge. It may be noted that, earlier, in Iran, Egypt, Indus Valley, there did exist four social classes. However, religious and ideological rationalization of social hierarchy became possible by the development of re-birth, *karma*, etc. A later rationalization and codification of social hierarchy and inequality was provided by Manu. Thus, the post-Vedic literature mentions two categories: the twice-born castes (which covers the three upper castes) and the once-born or the *shudras*—all with different duties.

Thus, the *brahmans*—with politico-economic backing—systematically arranged various social groups in the hierarchical system, and upgraded their own status by ritualistic sanction to the highest. This was at the normative level. However, there are indications that there was constant breaking of these rules. The codes of law themselves mention these developments of sub-castes or *jati* formations and rules for such 'deviations', since the *varna* system of the texts was not practised. Actually *jatis*, perpetuated by hereditary rules, the concept of pollution and other elaborate rules of endogamy and exogamy, were of relevance in the day to day working of society. It is because of the *jati* system that the various tribes and invaders

and others have been assimilated into Indian social structure. The joint family and the village as a chief territorial unit, also functioned within the wider frame of reference of the caste system.

Gradually, by about 900 B.C., with increasing specialization, economic interdependence of various sub-castes (now identified with occupational groups), priests became very important—at times even greater than any king—since they were the preservers of the world and their rituals and rites could destroy enemies. Class separation was maintained by Sanskrit, the learning and use of which were restricted to the upper classes, isolating them from other groups. The dominant role of the priests was reinforced by a value-structure, such as the idea of transmigration of individual soul and different logical doctrines in order not only to explain suffering but also to justify each man's social and economic position in society. In other words, religious developments were closely interlinked to socio-economic and political structures. However, while there was a great elaboration of orthodox ideas, there were also oppositions to these ideas; to caste, and to rites, rituals and sacrifices. This gave rise to the neo-orthodox expositions of the *Upanishads* which were to form the basis of various philosophical systems of Indian thought. In summary, the *Upanishadic* heritage may be enumerated after Buitenen and Johnson (1970) as follows:

1. Development of hierarchy and evolution as principles of intelligibility.
2. Concept of four social ranks and four stages of individual life.
3. Educational system of individual teaching—*guru-chela* system—which matured into the *Pathshala* and the *Gurukula* institutions; learning was by rote, deep language analyses through oral tradition, given by *Acharya* or *Shastri* or *Pandit*.
4. Inculcation of *Dharma* (duty) as a condition for good life.
And so on.

But this carries us into the next stage.

HETERODOXIES AND SUBSYSTEMS—PHASE I: STAGE 2

As a result of the development of the agrarian system (which was to develop fully under the Mauryas by 321 B.C.), based on a collection of revenues from agricultural land, by about 600 B.C. details

of Indian socio-political history—as conventionally known—begin to emerge with greater certainty (viz. the establishment of republics and powerful kingdoms or monarchies in Northern India, specially in the Ganga valley). The agrarian economic system was to dominate Indian history for many centuries. However, while land was one major source of income at this time, it was not the only one. Towns and ports (Shravasti, Champa, Rajagriha, Ayodhya, Kaushambi, Kashi, Vaishali, Ujjain, Taxila, Broach, etc.) which had come into existence were of substantial importance to the economy by being centres of industry, commerce, and trade; these were located along trade routes, both national and international. These urban areas were supported by hinterland settlements, because villages were by then specializing in particular crafts, such as in pottery, carpentry and cloth-weaving, supplying finished articles to various commercial centres. By the 4th century B.C., due to increasing trade facilitated by a monetary system between western Asia and north-western India, further impetus was given to the growth of towns. As a consequence of commercial expansion, the number of artisans increased and they now organized themselves into guilds (*shrenis*); members of each guild inhabited particular sections of towns, so that they could work closely together.

During this stage, perhaps the use of a script also helped in the expansion of trade, because, while classical Sanskrit was restricted to a select few of the upper classes, the popular language Prakrit, which with its local variations, along with Pali, was encouraged by Buddhism. Pali found support in the tribal republics (which continued to survive until the 4th century), since the dominance of the *brahmins* was not accepted here; *kshatriyas* also encouraged arts and crafts. It was in these areas that foreign invaders, such as the Greeks, Shakas, Kushanas, and Huna, were successfully assimilated in later periods. But a rapidly growing agrarian economy caused the decline of the republics and tribal cultures, encouraging the growth of monarchies and the formation of hereditary kinship, with a preference for rulers belonging to the *kshatriya* caste. However, this preference remained theoretical since people of all *varnas* are known to have ruled as chiefs or kings. For example, the Nandas (4th century B.C.), were the first of the many of *non-kshatriya* dynasties to rule in northern India (were the Mauryas *vaishya*?). Many religious teachers were of *kshatriya* origin, and some kings were *brahmins*. Again, social mobility is indicated when *shudra*

cultivators—who may have been once tribals of non-Aryan origin—became landowners.

These socio-economic and political developments were to have wider implications. In the urban areas, there was a sharp conflict between the established orthodoxy and the new social groups—the heterodoxy. It gave rise to new philosophical speculations ranging from extreme materialism to determinism, (viz. from the *Ajivikas* with their founder *Goshala* believed in the concept of free determination, to the philosophy of *Ajita Keshakamblin* and the *Charvakas* who were totally materialistic), and to ascetic sects and wandering philosophers who were very unorthodox in their thinking. The two major heterodoxies we know of are Jainism and Buddhism; both associated with urban—trade and commercial—centres, and whose leaders were born in non-*brahman* royal families. They had strongly opposed the *Brahminical* orthodoxy by specifically defying the authority of the Vedas and the importance of sacrifice—the keystones of orthodox powers. They pioneered the concept of *ahimsa* and vegetarianism. Also, both had an appeal to the socially down-trodden, specially the *vaishyas*, whose social status continued to be low despite considerable economic powers. It is thus clear that from the 6th to the 4th century B.C., this stage saw considerable economic prosperity, based on the expansion of trade and the mercantile communities—the newly emerging socio-economic groups. This led to the emergence of such new world views and philosophies which advocated a rational and secular outlook; and had a provision for the education of both the sexes even in their ascetic orders—this was quite different to the orthodox sects which were open only to *brahmins* who by now had stopped the education of women.

However, none of the heterodox schools offered any substantive alternative social organization in terms of any radical—structural—reforms, despite their professing social equality. Therefore, in their rivalry with *Brahminical* Hinduism, they lost ground. This is specially clear after A.D. 4th century when both the important heterodoxies incorporated into their philosophies the belief in the transmigration of soul and *karma* (action). But this does not underscore the fact that they did offer far reaching religious, philosophical, and artistic stimulation and development which has contributed considerably to Indian society and culture. One view is that a synthesis of the orthodox (*Sanatana Dharma*) and heterodox (such as Jain and Buddhist religions) concepts and ideas took place at two

levels: (1) *Paramarthik*, or a discussion of the metaphysical position and of religious institutions and ethical values, and (2) the normative or *Vyavahrika* level, which refers to public and personal laws, social stratification, meritorious and purificatory rights, etc. This synthesis was first initiated by the neo-orthodox *Upanishadic* thought, and later with the enunciation of various ideas by the Jain and Buddhist heterodoxy (Panchanandikar 1970: 45-6).

In any case, perhaps, it is wrong to see the development of Buddhism as a form of social 'revolution'. For one thing, it left the essentials of caste structure intact; and its followers belonged to the rich and highly noble strata. It is even said that the philosophy of Buddhism is not easy to understand, since it is really an elitist one, based on what is called social abstentionism, for later even admission to the monasteries was restricted. Perhaps, one of the important reasons why Buddhism did not bring about a social revolution is because it did not present any alternate programme of economic organization. In fact, if Buddhism flourished so far and wide it was because it encouraged the very source and fountainhead by which the *Brahminic* Hinduism thrived, namely, it preached the theory of transmigration which reinforced hierarchical social organization. For instance, when Buddhism went outside India, it took with it the idea of social inequality, along with non-violence and vegetarianism. If Buddhism vanished from India and Jainism continued to flourish, there are other reasons for it; these will be discussed elsewhere.

In short, by 300 B.C., it is clear that the major conceptual contours of socio-economic, political and religio-philosophical outlines of various subsystems as we know these today—were well-defined. Later on, their continuance did change by various modifications, albeit not structurally despite such various alien impacts as that of Islam and Christianity.

COMMERCE, SOCIAL MOBILITY AND CULTURAL SYNTHESIS—PHASE I: STAGE 3

The economic base of the Mauryan empire was predominantly agrarian, organized along large-scale centralization which gave considerable impetus to commercial and economic activities. For instance, it encouraged the formation of small-scale industries (in the non-industrial modern sense). This resulted in guilds becoming

large and complex, with a further localization of occupation. In turn, it simplified the process of collection of taxes, which was as efficiently organized as the political administration. The centralized bureaucracy had not only ruled metropolitan areas directly, but the empire was divided into four provinces. Each province was sub-divided into districts and in each of these villages were official units of administration. Administrative officers for smaller units were selected from local people. This system was to remain substantially unchanged for several centuries. While obviously the king's power had increased tremendously, there was a similar increase in the power of the *purohit* or chief-priest, who functioned practically as a 'chief minister'. The other two key offices which controlled the central administration were those of the treasurer and the chief collector (Thapar 1966: 83-4).

An important social consequence of large scale economic activities was the rise of commercial (*vaishya*) classes, as well as guild leaders in urban centres. Therefore, these groups assumed even greater powers, due to economic affluence, despite their low prestige and social position. In doing so they naturally came into conflict with upper classes. In such a situation of tension and conflict it was advantageous for the low status groups to support the heterodoxies of Buddhism and Jainism. The new religious movements therefore had their political, economic, and social purpose. But after the death of Asoka in 232 B.C. a revival of orthodoxy took place. As the Mauryan empire fell to pieces, by about 183 B.C., a *brahman* general of the Mauryan empire, Pusyamitra Shunga assumed the throne. His was not a centralized kingdom; it was held together by a loose federal system—a collection of vassal kingdoms. But another reason for anarchy, political instability, and violence in Northern India may have been the movements of the Indo-Greeks (Asiatic)—middle of 3rd century B.C.—or more appropriately the Greco-Bactrians in Central Asia towards the subcontinent. Along with them, at this time, a nomadic people called *Yueh-Chi* also drove the Scythian—Shakas—tribesman into Bactria and from Bactria into Iran and India. There was a special tribe of the *Yueh-Chi* which also entered into India, known as the Kushans. One of the important Kushana kings was Kanishka, who ruled between A.D. 78 and 144 in the western part of India upto Banaras, as well as parts of Central Asia. Patronizing Buddhism, his reign was one of great commercial and intellectual activities that went as far as to China and Rome.

After Kanishka's death regional kingdoms came into being, such as Khārvela in Orissa; Satavahanas or Andhras in the Deccan; Western satraps—a Shaka dynasty—in Kathiawar and Malwa; and the kingdoms of Chola, Kerala, and Pandya in the far south. It was only with the Gupta dynasty, A.D. 320, when Chandragupta attempted to repeat the centralized empire of the Mauryas. But that is another stage. For now, since the important aspects of this stage, from 300 B.C. to A.D. 300, are its commercial activity, social mobility, and cultural synthesis we may discuss these in detail.

COMMERCE AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

Merchant communities and their commercial activities did not slacken after the collapse of the Mauryan empire, despite continuing conflicts between the Shungas, Satavahanas, Indo-Greeks, Shakas, Kushanas, Cheras, and Cholas. In fact, commercial activities increased with the growth of urban life and guilds assumed further importance. Some of them now comprised several hundred workshops, forming complex organizations of production. Guilds assumed new social status, giving a general degree of security whereby they shaped not only public opinion but also the social behaviour of members and their families; this was controlled through guild courts which had the force of law. For example, inscriptions, such as the one from the cave near Nasik, tell us how guild leaders were important in urban life and in securing political, financial, and other interests; how royalty invested its money in commercial activities, thereby ensuring the well-being of the guilds. This inscription also tells us that guilds could act as bankers, financiers, and trustees—even though these functions were also carried out by other categories of merchants (Thapar 1966: 111).

In fact, road communication networks, originally built for administration by the Mauryans, turned out to be advantageous for merchants. Trade areas and commerce increased not only within India but also outside India; being well organized along sea coasts, where towns were specially well planned and divided into upper and lower class areas. Here, separate areas were reserved for foreign trading communities, many of whom soon became Indianized in their cultural habits and behaviour. The orthodoxy, of course, made efforts to prevent social assimilation, by invoking the codes of Manu. However, this social rigidity not only gave Buddhism and Jainism

further support, specially from the merchant classes, but also converted the Greeks, Kushanas, and Shakas to the new sects on the basis of new sub-castes or *jatis*. In this turmoil, *shudra* groups, by changing occupations and by being associated with localities that were reserved for foreigners, attained higher social rank.

Consequently, for the orthodoxy this stage of social and cultural disturbances was one of crises; especially the new sub-caste formations that led to the upward mobility of lower castes. This resulted in a feverish activity of rewriting and reinterpreting law books which emphasized the inherent superiority of the *brahman*. (This was to remain, by and large, only in the texts.) Besides reinterpretation of law texts, literary and creative activities like writing of poetry and drama, artistic and architectural activities also received new impetus. Many of these were patronized by wealthy merchants, guilds, and at times even through royal donations.

Thus, between the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C., intense socio-economic activities were also taking place not only in northern but also in Peninsular India. For example, the Andhra dynasty gave considerable support to trade links between the North and South, as well as an impetus to the exchange of ideas. One of the centres of trade was Paithan which was also mentioned by Ptolemy in his geography of India. At this time, due perhaps to an increasing contact with northern India, socio-economic structure in the South also moved from the pastoral into the complex agrarian stage, to bring about the familiar pattern of hereditary kings and a complex taxation system; there now existed various political kingdoms which evolved from tribal chieftainships to monarchies. In Peninsular India, an important development was the formation of village councils and local assemblies, which later on developed into powerful institutions by their association with temple complexes; the latter becoming the major centres of activities in each village.

In short, more significantly, at this stage the entire subcontinent was absorbed into a network of commercial development and enterprises with coastal trade being specially important. This international network of trade routes extended into other parts of Central, Western, South, and South-Eastern Asia, where merchant colonies were established—being interlinked with the Buddhist monasteries. International trade extended even to Rome and China. The growth of the economic system was encouraged by most of the continuing political kingdoms; social assimilation by upward

mobility continued to be maintained. All these processes contributed immensely to the evolving system of Indian civilization.

CULTURAL SYNTHESIS

Traditionally, the disintegration of the Mauryan empire is attributed to the fact that *brahmins* revolted against the pre-Buddhist policies. But the causes may be many. For instance, we have already mentioned the coming of Central Asian nomads as one cause. But other pressures were created by an economy which thrived on the collection of huge revenues in order to maintain a vast army and a large empire, with its administration and the newly developed urban sites. Moreover, too much centralization, with power resting in some key positions—ranging in hierarchy from the king downwards—often meant that in any change of loyalty lay the precursors of later conflicts. The agrarian sector could no longer sustain this economic burden.

We also know that in order to maintain themselves and the breaking of economic system, the kingship system leaned predominantly on religious orthodoxy. The latter made use of this to emphasize loyalty to social order, rather than to the other earlier republican concepts and ideas of the state. Very shrewdly *Brahminical* authority not only introduced Buddhist and Jain contractual concepts of the state, it also twisted the idea to vest the king with divinity—albeit clearly stating that his status and power resulted from a contract between the people and the social order or caste system. Thus was the idea of social order or *Dharma* replaced by the idea of the state, allowing for the removal of even a divine king (Thapar 1966: 89-91). It is this interdependence and interweaving of the socio-religious subsystem to the political subsystem that gradually led to caste status being accorded a higher place than any political office. This loyalty to social order was also actuated at local levels. It is worth noting here that even though *Brahminical* thought concerned itself with individual salvation, yet it never was divorced from the social context, i.e., making the individual always highly group-oriented, in the sense that his actions were to conform to a pattern of doing one's duty (to follow the right action) which had to be within the system of social values he was ordained to.

The impact of Buddhism and Jainism nevertheless is very evident in the changes they brought about in the orthodoxies. For instance,

the Vedic gods were now forgotten, to be replaced by others such as Shiva and Vishnu, and many popular cults which were incorporated to become part of the sophisticated or 'great' traditions. But the most notable change was the introduction of the concepts of non-violence and vegetarianism—borrowed from the heterodox sects. The now well-known epics, myths, and gods (*trimurti* concept) also came into their own during this period (the spread of the epics, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and the later developments of the *Puranas*—there are eighteen chief ones—was also to take place) specially because these were equally available for all levels of society in the local and regional media. These popular interpretations began to form a kind of scripture for *Brahminical* Hinduism, albeit structurally the latter has never developed a single orthodoxy.

In short, Hinduism as we know it today, becomes recognizable during this period. For example the early Aryan aniconic religion was replaced by the 1st century with the idea of images and of consecration. Several local and regional gods, tribal religious cults, and animism were absorbed to form the various gods and deities which have later been incorporated into the great textual literature and traditions, specially the *Puranas*. The *Vedic* ceremonial rituals such as the daily rites, the life and death ceremonies (*shradha*) have continued even though for all intents and purposes, the *Vedic* traditions as such were lost. On the other hand, monotheistic thinking, which had originated in the philosophy of the *Upanishads*, was strengthened due to the impact of heterodox sects. We thus see that Hinduism from the beginning has displayed a constant dialectic between the thought and practices of the specialists and the religious activity of the masses. This is why today, it is almost impossible to say what grew from the religion and what was created by the specialists and diffused to the people (Cohn 1971: 63-4).

An important consequence of the various new concepts was the shifting emphasis from rites and rituals to the view of a completely personal relationship between God and the devotee. Later this was to lead to the idea of *Bhakti*. Perhaps, this idea of devotional worship may be first seen c.500 B.C. in the worship of the supreme spirit *Vasudeva*—later mentioned in the *Gita*. *Bhakti* cults really spread with the *Mahabharata* epic. The main *Bhakti* cults are: (1) the *Pancharatra* cult (five nights) associated with *Purush-Narayana*, identified with *Vasudeva*; (2) the *Bhagvat* cult identified with Krishna (a reincarnation of Vishnu), which later developed into

Hari cults; (3) the *Pashupata* cult or the followers of Shiva which is called the *Hara* cults; (4) the idea of *Bodhisattavas*; or the fusion of Buddhism and *Bhakti* movements by about the first century, but this was submerged later on, within 500 years, by *tantrism*; (5) in South India, *Bhakti* movement developed as an anti-Jain and anti-Buddhist movement from c. the 6th century to the 10th century. It developed into two sects, Tamil *Shaivism* (associated with Aiyer *Brahmans*) and *Vaishnavism* (associated with Aiyankar *Brahmans*) (Wayman 1970).

In short, the change in the theological setup is perhaps expressed in the philosophy of the *Gita* and the doctrine of *Karma* which were to become central in Hindu beliefs at this time; that is, the morality of one's action depended on its conformity with *Dharma*. The arbiters of *Dharma* were *brahmins*, who thus naturally were to yield great authority and power in the centuries to come. To sum up, Buddhist decline from its original heterodox beliefs, and its absorption into *Brahminical* Hinduism, was due to several factors. Some of these are:

1. Initially, Buddhist monasteries were open to all. Later, they became exclusive, being reserved for certain upper classes, thereby barring lay-members. Their association with rich classes, landlords and land owners led to a 'degeneration'. This was unlike Jainism which has always involved itself with the masses, and for whom there existed special priests.
2. In Buddhism, there are no rites and rituals that may be performed during life crises, i.e., for events that are important both in social and individual life. In their absence, Buddhists had to summon 'Hindu' *brahmins* to perform these rites. This was another reason for the Brahminization of Buddhism. Jainism had developed its own rites and rituals, and its own priests for the masses and it survived.
3. *Brahminical* Hinduism itself had absorbed a great many concepts and ideas from Buddhism, specially the ideas of vegetarianism, *ahimsa*, *maths*, etc. This led some even to make the Buddha an incarnation of Vishnu.
4. The earliest evidence that pilgrim centres were important, perhaps may be seen during the time of the *Upanishads*. But this idea, so common later mainly spread and encouraged by Buddhism, was also taken over by Hinduism. Thus, by the time of *Puranas*, many pilgrim centres came into

prominence. These centres were encouraged and reinforced by the *Bhakti* cults. Apart from the fact that a visit to these centres (as meritorious acts) is important for *Darshana* and for *Prashad*; these are also centres of exchange—both socio-cultural and economic. In this way these have become areas of subsystemic interaction for the various sub-cultures and sub-societies, thereby contributing to the ‘totality’ of the Indian system.

In short, by the first two centuries of the Christian era, *Brahminism* had penetrated Buddhism by several means, including by *shastric* discussions. However, the logic and epistemological arguments of *Mahayana* Buddhism gave fresh lease to Indian philosophy. *Brahminism* now spread to Buddhist holy places wherein the worship of different cults and other features of polytheism took roots. Nevertheless, despite all this, ‘adulterated’ Buddhism continued to spread—even without the patronage of the kings, because it thrived on grass-root supports. As we have mentioned above, it also expanded because of its secular outlook that encouraged learning—reading and writing—which helped trading communities to maintain their momentum in terms of both national and international trade.

CRYSTALLIZATION OF SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC PATTERN—PHASE I: STAGE 4

The Gupta dynasty, after the break up of the Mauryan empire attempted, but did not quite succeed, to organize a similar centrally controlled empire. The Gupta period is often referred to as the ‘Classical’ or ‘Golden’ Age, because of its high artistic and literary attainments (this was the period of Kalidasa) specially during Vikramaditya’s (Chandragupta II) time. The attacks of the White Huns had probably accelerated the process of the decline and fall of the Gupta dynasty. Many other raiders came from Central Asia, prominent among them were the Gujjars. The Hun invasions, especially of the two Hun kings Toramana and his son Mihirkula, destroyed a great deal of Northwest India during A.D. 5th century. The Buddhist monasteries suffered in particular during these invasions. The demise of the Gupta dynasty led to political confusion in North India, with many kingdoms competing to inherit the glory

of the Guptas. In the post-Gupta times several regional states also emerged in South India, such as in Southern Deccan (Mysore), Deccan Plateau, Orissan coast and Southeastern coast.

The classical socio-cultural and economic pattern is clear to us by the time of Harsha (early A.D. 7th century). He succeeded to a limited extent in forming an imperial structure in parts of northern India, by loosely connecting in a federal setup several vassal kingdoms. These kingdoms were administered at local levels through councils in which commercial interests predominated. A significant feature of Harsha's time was the payment of cash salaries for military service. Tax-free land grants continued to be given specially to *brahmins* and also to secular officials. This policy only succeeded in elevating the privileged position of the upper groups, and gradually the ownership of land went out of control of the central authority. In turn, this weakened the authority of the king. Moreover, the increase in revenue and widespread taxation during this period indicates the lack of any clear economic policy. In its absence there were crises, because trade and commercial activities could no longer provide enough revenue to support agrarian taxation. The Buddhist *Sangh* now participated in some commercial activities, and it was rich enough to even act as a banker, to rent land, and so on. But Buddhists individually did not participate in large commercial enterprises. This was unlike the Jains who had close associations with the merchantile community and regularly invested in commercial enterprise that continued to be based largely on autonomous guilds. Now Kanauj dominated the Gangetic plain rather than the Mauryan capital of Pataliputra. Mathura became a centre of both textile trade and temples. Banaras and Haridwar assumed importance as pilgrim centres and Thaneshar acquired strategic importance in controlling trade in the upper Gangetic plain (Thapar 1966: 150).

On the social plane *brahmin* orthodoxy governed the behaviour of individuals, and they turned social laws into sacred ones. The formation of the fifth—outcaste—group or the untouchables began in this period not only because of *brahmin* dominance but also because *shudras* by now had considerably improved their position by becoming cultivators. (The formation of untouchable groups also suggests that there was now greater emphasis on the *brahmin's* purity—the bipolar or binary opposition of structural elements mentioned in another chapter.) Social disparity was also seen in

urban settlements, but this was less so in rural areas. Another source of *brahman* power was their monopolization of the educational system. Formal education was available, only theoretically, to all castes both in *Brahminical* institutions and in Buddhist monasteries. In practice, only in the guilds technical and specialized knowledge, with little or no formal education, was passed on to the sons of craftsmen or other low-status groups who were to be trained in the hereditary trade. However, the study of mathematics was an exception, since it provided a bridge between the two types of education (Thapar 1966: 154-5).

In South India, for about 360 years, after the middle of the sixth century, three major kingdoms—namely, the Chalukyas, Pallavas and Pandyas—were involved in conflict. In this struggle, the Pallavas managed to form a centralized empire. This period saw the beginning of a synthesis of the Northern and Southern patterns in the upper social strata. But a reaction against this upper class culture had also set in amongst the masses. This assertion of indigenous elements resulted in a crystallization of Tamil culture that was to contribute substantially to the development of Indian civilization. The pattern of administrative hierarchy continued as was the case in North India, specially in north Deccan and in western India where there was less autonomy than in the Tamil region in administration, with the village assemblies functioning more under the patronage of the officials.

By the end of the seventh-eighth centuries Buddhists had adopted many rituals and other practices from the *Brahminical* religion. By then the three major aspects of *Brahminism*—*Shaivism*, *Vaishnavism*, and *Shakti* cults—with image as the centre of worship assumed importance for ritual. While Buddhists continued to build monasteries, the 'Hindu' temple in Northern India did not really get into its own until the eighth century. However, while the Aryan pattern was dominant at the upper level, at other social levels the worship of mother-goddess, fertility cults, and other non-Aryan cults and symbols were clearly in vogue, and were later to be incorporated into 'Hinduism'. Under the Pallavas, importance was also given to *brahmins*. The Buddhist monasteries continued to be the nucleus of the educational system in the regions of the Krishna and Godavari valleys. However, the *Brahminical maths*, attached to temples, increased in importance because of patronage from royalty or wealthy merchants. Here, the *brahman* obsessed with ritual

regulation excluded the non-*brahmins* from participation in religious knowledge. Therefore, while by the 8th century, Sanskrit was a recognized medium in the guilds, in the court, as well as in literary circles, Tamil language was prevalent in many other areas. Tamil saints did not exclude any one for caste reasons, and their devotional cults were largely a result of the interaction between the North and South, probably as a consequence of the increasing political, social, and economic exchanges (Thapar 1966: 193).

This brief account of complex developments in socio-cultural and politico-economic subsystems significantly indicates that despite the lack of large scale empires, the people of the subcontinent were in contact with each other; that is, some minimum common socio-cultural and economic characteristics recognizable to us in contemporary 'Hinduism' were crystallizing in the various regions of the subcontinent. Perhaps, the rapid spread of the ideas of Shankracharya (A.D. 788-828) points out to this fact. But traditional history attaches too much importance to him for this synthesis. It ignores the contributions of various non-Vedic and heterodox religious groups, other than Buddhism and Jainism, specially the role of *Bhakti* cults. Nonetheless, Shankaracharya did play an important role in this integrative process even if it was to meet the challenge of heterodox sects and popular devotional cults. But some go to the extent of saying that Shankracharya had really derived his philosophy from *Mahayana* Buddhism. A little later, his *Shaivism* was counteracted by Ramanuj's (A.D. 1077-1137) *Vaishnavism*.

SUBSYSTEMS : REGIONS AND ECONOMY—PHASE I: STAGE 5

The period from the 8th to the 14th century is traditionally referred to as the 'dark age'. But this view ignores the fact that it is only from this period onwards that we are able to recognize many of today's regional institutions, language, literature, the arts, and architecture. Similarly, during this period feudalism took firm roots (to be clear only by the 16th century), as the basis of politico-economic structure; the proliferation of power and prestige and the consequent fragmentation of a graded bureaucracy was now directly related to the feudal organization of the system of land ownership and land tenure—in the form of an inverted pyramidal structure (Ray 1967).

Socially, many of the sub-castes in the social hierarchy which

evolved during this period have, until recently, continued to function and dominate in atleast rural areas, along with various regional languages and cults. Again, the problem of the different regions asserting their rights, the centripetal-centrifugal conflicts, etc., seen today also have their basis in this so called 'dark age', when culture areas clearly came into their own. In short, significant developments took place during this period to survive until modern times. Perhaps, this was a 'dark age' in the sense that reason and the spirit of enquiry were subordinated to ritualistic religions, and scriptural and even temporal authority; that secular literature was written less and less; that there was little regard for science and technology; and so on—all this being enhanced by the feudal system. Many of these 'regressive' developments took place first in the North, and then travelled southwards. But the South was to contribute considerably in the meantime. These issues of regionalism are discussed elsewhere (Malik 1968: 1971; Raikar 1961; Subbarao 1958).

Despite a lack of centralized empire, regional kingdoms were based on a common culture and history, albeit political fragmentation also led to the development of regional and local language, literature, arts, etc. But the consolidation of politico-economic structures led to feudalism. Its basic requisite being economic contract and feudal land ownership whereby peasants cultivated the land and handed over a fixed share of the produce to the land owners. Feudatories owed their loyalty to the king, furnished him with services (arms and men), and gave him a part of the revenue. For these obligations to the king and the court they were allowed to use their own symbols, etc. In return, in order to maintain their feudal dignity, land held by a feudatory tended to become hereditary, particularly in periods when the authority of the king was weak. Political theory at this time was based on commentaries of the old texts—like the *Dharma Shastra*, *Arthashastra*—in order to give sanctity to the contemporary ideas. Problems concerning legal institutions, division of land, and inheritance came in for special attention and the two systems of family law—*Dayabhaga* and *Mitakshara*—became the bases of civil law. These were to remain so until the Hindu Code Bill came into existence (Thapar 1966: 243-4).

There were also elaborate administrative arrangements, even more than what were present in centralized empires. But these methods left little incentive for surplus production. Moreover, surplus wealth was not only *not* invested in craft production, trade,

or public welfare, it was used for such conspicuous consumption as the building of palaces and treasures, large magnificent temples, etc.—all of which naturally attracted invaders to loot and plunder. Revenue and taxes were further wasted by being distributed along a long chain of administrative hierarchy, ranging from the king to the feudatories and temple authorities. The commercial arrangements evolved were also local in nature and even villages depended upon a self-sufficient economy. Earlier in the North, than in the South, there emerged an aristocracy which included both *brahmans* and Buddhists with ostentatious grand living. All this led to an economic depression, specially of the peasantry, because feudalism helped to make *brahmans* not only land owners but also politically powerful. In turn, the status of merchantile communities was lowered, further reducing the influence of Buddhism. But royal patronage of Buddhism continued in eastern India. And, as the social specialization of labour led to a proliferation of *jatis*, so also did it result in the formation of specific caste-panchayats, particularly in the rural areas. In short, the social structure, in general, became more rigid. Untouchability was now widely prevalent, even amongst the heretical sects. But there were also mixed sub-castes which changed their status by taking up new occupations and other economic advantages.

However, the decline of trade and growth of towns over most of the main land did not effect the prosperity of coastal towns, because of foreign trade and merchants who were part of coastal settlements. For instance, trade in eastern Indian towns continued to prosper until the 12th and 13th centuries, because of sufficient business with South-east Asia. Here, the only category of commercial professions whose prosperity increased were moneylenders, who kept the currency in circulation. Long distance trade did continue and the western and central kingdoms acted as acculturative bridges between the North and the South. Guilds, concentrated in urban areas, also continued to maintain their dominant position, but for a longer time in the South.

In the South, the pattern of politico-economic and socio-cultural developments diverged somewhat when the Cholas emerged as a dominant power, because they alone were able to have a broad centralized socio-economic and political system influencing not only most of the Peninsula but even areas of South-east Asia. For example, their system of administration was different in the sense

that the autonomy at the village level allowed officials to participate more as advisers and observers rather than as administrators. Village assemblies collected and assessed taxes for the government, sometimes jointly for the entire villages. They could levy tax for a particular purpose, such as for the construction of a water tank, and these taxes were kept separately from the collections for the state. Thus, the autonomy at the village level was maintained, despite shifting relations in the upper levels of administration and political structure. There were, of course, intermediaries between villages and the kings, i.e., the king's officers (Thapar 1966: 200-4). The result was the promotion of continuity in local growth and development, which maintained cultural continuity, especially in the Tamil regions. But local and regional self-sufficiency, despite finances for irrigation purposes, meant that there were no surpluses for large scale trade and exchange. This was so until the 11th century, when the picture changed with a rapid development of towns. Overseas trade strengthened the establishment of merchant castes and trading areas along the coasts from where it was carried on both Westwards and to China on a large scale. Consequently, from the 11th century onwards, it was the foreign trade which provided an additional incentive to the local markets. There was a network of urban merchant guilds all over the country. The centre of activities of social and economic life, particularly in the rural areas, was the temple, and its maintenance could be compared with any large scale institution of modern times. They were generally built from donations by the king and/or maintained through donations from guilds and merchants. But as in the rest of the country, caste consciousness in the South was outstanding since the *brahman's* status was quite distinct; political and economic power of religious leaders grew further with the exemption of tax, landownership, royal support, etc. But unlike their North Indian counterparts, they invested surplus income in trade and commerce. Religious leaders were even associated with trading castes that went out to South-east Asia. In any case, the main social divisions were along the *brahman—non-brahman* cleavage, for in the South little mention was made of *kshatriyas* and *vaishyas*. Lower status groups included landless labour, serfs, attached both to the land and temple, and other untouchables. However, the *non-brahman* castes often modified their status by economic means, or by achieving a privileged position in the court. Mention may be made here of the *Lingayats* who opposed religious

hypocrisy, questioning the authority of the *Vedas*. They, therefore, came under attack for their liberal attitudes from the *brahmins*. But the heretics always received support from the lower castes. Thus, the rigidities of the caste rule could not always be maintained and there arose several mixed castes.

At the cultural level, the rigidity of caste structure was closely linked to the prevalent *Brahminical* educational system, where Sanskrit instruction started becoming increasingly theological, and even Buddhist monasteries had become centres of theology. Most large villages had schools attached to local temples, which were exclusively used by *brahmins*. For non-*brahmins*, the older systems of imparting training in guilds continued, albeit theoretically they could attend all schools. All these developments led to the strengthening of local and regional influences in intellectual circles, even though Sanskrit continued to be the language of the courts, uniting a certain upper class nobility. Thus, the distinction between religion of the elite and religion of the masses became very evident. The two important Hindu sects, *Shaivism* and *Vaishnavism*, dominated North India, while Jainism continued in the west. Buddhism declined considerably, becoming a part of Hinduism due to its adoption of various Hindu cults, magic rituals, and *tantrism*. The cults of Krishna became very popular as also the *Bhakti* cult, with an interest in the *Puranas* and epic literature.

After Harsha, apart from minor raids by the Arabs, there were no major foreign invasions. But by the end of the 10th century Mahmood of Gazni attacked India several times. Large scale invasions by peoples professing Islam were to continue until the 18th century. These later invaders from Afghanistan and Central Asia had a social structure which was highly adapted for leading a martial life, with a system that put emphasis on the male lineage and kingship rather than territoriality. Moreover, apart from a strong ideology which supported a desire for conquests, they had a military technology based on cavalry tactics and a developed artillery. Thus, from time to time, powerful leaders organized small kin-groups into larger groups for conquest (Cohn 1971: 66). At any rate, these 10th–11th century developments laid the foundations of a new political empire, restricted to North India, known as the Delhi Sultanate or the Turkish-Afghan rule. In the South, by the end of the 12th century, the Chola power was weakened by the Hoyashalas and the Pandayas, the latter superseding the Cholas,

the dominant power in the Tamil country. Marco Polo who visited the Pandyan kingdom during 1288-1293 gives a vivid description of the richness of the land and prosperity of trade at this time. On the opposite coast, in Kerala, was the Chera kingdom, which had adequate income from its Western trade. Here to settle down, on the Malabar coast, came Syrian Jews during the 10th century.

SOCIO-CULTURAL SYCRETISM AND SYNTHESIS—PHASE I: STAGE 6

During the era of the Delhi Sultanate (13th to the 16th century) the main politico-administrative power continued (the basic land-grant system continued in agriculture) to be in the hands of quasi-autonomous Hindu chiefs, perhaps, mainly as a result of practical expediency. Land revenue was enhanced for the maintenance of troops, and the land tenure system was modified by ideas current in the Islamic system, as allowed by the *Sharia*. Road and communication networks were improved and maintained efficiently; the development of urban areas as trade centres was encouraged to open up once again trade contacts with North India and parts of Central Asia. Trade routes by sea remained the same, and the earlier lines of communications continued to be followed.

At the social level, since civil and financial matters were to be resolved by the 'natives', there were hardly any major structural innovations or changes in socio-cultural organization, despite the fact that Islam and Hinduism seemingly appear to clash. Acculturation processes did bring about changes not only in minor patterns, such as habits of behaviour, eating, and dress, but also in some socio-economic and political ideas; later these were to become part of Indian 'style' of life. But for the present obviously the basic pattern of the 'old' life styles of 'new' Muslim 'converts' could not differ radically from what they were once a part of; specially the hereditary artisans and craftsmen. Nonetheless, it was these proselytisms at the lowest level—including cultivators—which were to make their impact on Indian civilization. To illustrate one such process, it was the *Sufis* who were to absorb many pre-Islamic traditions, like those of *Guru (Pir)* and *Sanayasi (Faquir)*; and in turn, the movements influenced 'Hinduism'.

The impact of Delhi Sultanate in Peninsular India was politically insignificant. But in time the developments in the socio-cultural and politico-economic spheres were to create a close similarity between

the South and the North. For example, while in the beginning the Vijayanagar kingdom continued to follow the socio-economic (land revenue as a main source) pattern along the earlier Chola lines, village-councils gradually disintegrated due to inroads made by the northern feudal pattern; increased importance was given to land owners; caste-loyalty tended to assume significance; and ties between monarchy and religious authority also strengthened because the temple and the *maths* commanded money and power. Gradually, material prosperity was squandered on grand temple-building projects and other 'wasteful' expenditure.

In a sense, then, these developments brought South India in alignment with North India, by providing a unified framework of alike institutions in the various subsystems of the country. Similarly, the *Bhakti* cults also released forces of social change, both in the North and in the South. This interaction, with its basis in commerce and the mobility of traders, helped to contribute to many common networks of interrelationships throughout the subcontinent. This was despite the fact that there was the emergence of regional cultures, specially regional languages which had become fully mature, as indicated by the translations of the original Sanskrit texts and epics, implying a religious revival by a restudy of the older Hindu texts whereby the *Brahminical* social order and positions could be justified. However, such resistance from Hindu and Muslim orthodoxy did not stop the *Sufi* and *Bhakti* cults to merge together at various points. But this was neither merely because their followers came from diverse backgrounds of poorer classes, nor due to religious reasons. The reason for their popularity was the concern with the removal of various social and economic distinctions. It was this egalitarian philosophy of the saints of the *Bhakti* movement which laid the foundations of Sikhism. An important aspect of their popularity was their preaching in the local dialect and language, and the writing of simple commentaries of sacred literature, specially the *Bhagwad Gita* and the *Puranas*. It is these challenges to the existing pattern which were to intensify later, both by Hindus and Muslims, and to make a strong impact on Indian life styles, specially in art, philosophy and culture. Nevertheless, socially, despite organizational changes due to the emphasis on social and economic equality which created further new sub-castes and new sects within the broad *jati* system, the basic politico-economic system continued to flourish; authority and social prestige remained with castes traditionally

associated with power. A kind of class division was also followed in many Muslims communities, where the social division was along the lines of upper nobility and rich classes; and the lower level of artisans, craftsmen, and cultivators. In any case, by the 16th century, cultural patterns of Indians had evolved by an appreciable degree of acculturation processes, specially at the middle and lower levels. But rigid orthodox attitudes in the upper classes, of both Hindus and Muslims, continued to prevail.

New invaders, the Mongols and Persians, were now knocking at India's doors again. It was the Mongol raids which finally lead to the overthrow of the Sultanate in the year 1526, when Babur killed Ibrahim, the Lodhi king. These raids were successful since the provincial autonomy of various states was successfully exploited, to establish Mughal power. But we might remember that regional conflicts were not based on an antagonism between Hindus and Muslims; i.e., religion played only a minor role while political opportunity, economic exploitation, and adventurism were the chief factors that invited new invaders.

EMPIRES AGAIN : COLONIALISM—PHASE II

A new phase begins now not only because it is the beginning of the Mughal empire, but also because along with the decline of the Mughals, in the 18th century, we see the onset of colonialism. The year 1498 which saw the beginning of European association with the coming of the Portugese under Vasco de Gama, may be taken as the beginning of a major turning point in the history of India. However, the penetration of Europeans—their economy and culture—did not make a significant impact until the middle of the 18th century. But apart from this, in many respects the familiar patterns of Indian 'style' as we know today have grown out of the conditions which prevailed and developed during the 16th and the 18th centuries. When an anthropologist or historian speaks of the traditional Indian society as a timeless and spaceless referent, he is really speaking of the institutions whose roots are in this phase (Cohn 1971: 69-74).

STAGE I: THE MUGHALS

Babur established himself as the first of the Mughal emperors and

effective Mughal rule ended in 1748, though technically the dynasty survived until 1858 when Bahadur Shah II was disposed off by the British. The most well-known of the Mughal rulers was Akbar, and his empire's resource-base was primarily agriculture. Akbar made various land grants to military groups for political purposes and also to the priests, learned men, and officials for services rendered (Naqvi 1968: 1972). In addition to the several existing super-ordinates and intermediaries who had rights over the cultivators, now the rights were vested also in patrimonial groups who tended to come from higher castes in society. In this way *zamindars* and *jagirdars* were formed. In this period also came about the concept of the merchantile domain, and the buying and selling of personal property as desired on a much larger scale than ever before. In brief, then, Akbar developed a system whereby he tried to solve the three basic problems—of resource-collection, internal security, and the development of a viable and functioning administrative system—with one solution. He also tried to integrate and regularize the position of *zamindars* and other property holders, by accepting the status quo and by trying to regularize the amount demanded from them through surveying their resources and so on. Thus, by now feudalism was well established.

Aurengzeb, the other well-known Mughal, continued Akbar's system and granted official patronage and positions as a mean of winning over enemies and incorporating them, their families, and their properties into the empire. It is worth noting here that in many ways Aurengzeb also further helped the acculturative process between different areas of India. This is despite the fact that he wasted time and resources in the conquest of South India, yet by the end of his reign about a third of the upper officials were from the South, whereas in the beginning only about ten per cent were from the Deccan, both Hindu and Muslim.

In short, the general patterns of organization and life styles evolved during the Mughal empire, percolated and diffused down to the regional town-forts, land controllers, and among the many clerks and lower officials in the towns and cities. The empire provided a model in content and form of a cosmopolitan culture for most of urban India and even for the country side, which the post-Mughal smaller kingdoms were to follow. For example, with the establishment of a widespread empire which required large capital for the centre, there were created subsidiary centres for

regional and local administration. This, in turn, required the development and maintenance of a wide network of roads and communications, of uniform weights and measures, a standardized currency, the reduction of internal trade barriers in the form of dues and customs, and safer long distance trade and travel. A market for both luxury and subsistence goods had expanded since suitable conditions were established for flourishing commercial activities. Simultaneously with this internal stimulus to trade and consumption the Europeans began to make extensive inroads into the commercial operations in Asia (Cohn 1971: 75-7).

STAGE 2: COLONIALISM

The European contact with India was limited mainly to commercial activities in the beginning (exception to this were the Portugese who did a great deal to propogate Christianity, and established land grants and local government particularly on the west coast of India). However by the 18th century it had affected the nature of overseas trade by stimulating textile production in India which attracted commercial and artisan groups. India's commercial future became interrelated to European needs and requirements. Consequently, in a relatively short time (1739 to 1763), the pattern of European activity and goals that had been static for about 250 years changed radically. This also affected India politically since regional states were being taken over more by subversion than by military confrontation, by the European commercial interests. Political dominance initially grew out of the competition between the British and French—an extension of their rivarly in Europe—on land and especially for control of the seas. Thus, the victory at Plassey in 1747 is taken symbolically as the establishment of British rule. But effective control was completed only by 1818, with the defeat of the Marathas, and by 1853, all territories had come directly under British rule. In any case, within a few years, the British trading company changed into a ruler-administration, by evolving successful political and military systems; albeit the actual day to day activities and their functioning were left in the hands of the Indians. This was, in a way, a continuation of the policy of the Mughal administration. However, since they made many people *zamindars* by law, this change, effected in a legal manner, resulted in a different

relationship between the *zamindars* and the tillers and other intermediaries than had previously been the case.

COLONIALISM AND URBANIZATION—PHASE III

Under the British many of the drastic changes, including the legalization of the use of force by organizing an independent military system under direct control, were the result of the radical changes in the economic system. The colonial economy seriously affected the rural social and economic structure, specially due to the expansion of agricultural production for sale in world markets. As a part of the economy of the industrial era, India became the prime market for manufactured British goods like cotton textiles. This was to prove a disaster for Indian handicraft industries. Changes in the agrarian structure by the end of 19th century devastated the countryside so much, that they drained everything from the land for the benefit of the British and rich Indian landlords. This eventually depressed the income of the agriculturists, resulting in a large pool of cheap labour that swelled the ranks of landless labourers. The spread of a uniform economy became possible because of the building of a large railway network in the second half of the 19th century. Thus, complex economic changes resulted, but at varying pace in different regions, depending on the nature of land control, local ability to increase land under cultivation, the nature of the tax structure that the British established in different regions, and the regional potential for the development of cash crops. Apart from this, the introduction of new economic features, such as the opening of textile mills, small scale industries, and banking facilities helped to develop technological and managerial skill (Cohn 1971).

At the urban level also the early 19th century saw significant changes. Cities now performed major functions, such as being economic centres for marketing, trade, and commercial activities, as well as being military and political centres. The port cities of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras, serving mainly the British interests, are examples of this new orientation. There was also the growth of other types of urban areas, in the early 19th century, which were governed by patterns of the cosmopolitan, regional, and local life styles. However, in such old cities as Banaras, Bareilly, and Dacca (which have always been contemporaneously the most traditional

and the most cosmopolitan), these changes in urban social structure and life styles did not take place. Only the great port cities were the seats of significant structural changes during the third and fourth decades of the 19th century (Cohn 1971).

It is in these complex developments that one begins to discern the processes of 'westernization'. For example, broad scale changes in cultural values and ideas; specially in the inculcation of modern ideas of social relations and stratifications and about basic economic structures in small but significant social groups. On the other hand, the mass media, specially the newly developed press, also helped to spread traditional texts, stories, myths, rituals, and values which dominated most aspects of life. Nevertheless, many Indians were exposed to Western type of school education, so that for these select social groups Western values of achievement, individualism, rationality, and scientific empiricism were very true and valid (Cohn 1971: 91ff). The 'new' Indian elites and intellectuals were conscious of living in a new era, of their heritage, and of a new age. It is thus that reformist movements either as revivalism or as attempts to reconcile the two cultures—Eastern and Western—were made. But whichever form they took, a major theme was the rediscovery and a reinterpretation of the past of India. It is with this growing consciousness that small groups of Western-influenced urban elites gradually began to argue for a larger share in the management of government. In short, the early nationalist movements were associated with significant economic, educational, and social changes that had their beginning in the middle of 19th century. However, while the new elites began to reject the British for favour of cultural nationalism, there was also a tendency to become provincial by seeking regional identities, such as in terms of the glorification of local gods and heroes, and languages and literature. Significantly this represents the subsystemic assertions within the total system.

In any case, these various developments tell us not only of the direction of new intellectual environment whereby through voluntarily associations, petitions, public meetings, and periodicals British supremacy was disputed, but also that Indians themselves used these means to assert local and regional rights. Of course, this debate was restricted to a few and not to the semi-literate masses. But such and the other developments, which are beyond our purview, lead to nationalist movements of the 20th century.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Archaeology tells us that sophisticated cities existed during and after the third millennium B.C. in a widespread area of the Indus valley and adjoining areas of the subcontinent. It is clear that a great many aspects, in incipient forms, of present day Indian society and culture can be traced to this Formative Period. The basic pattern emerges as a result of acculturation with the Aryans, who came subsequently in several 'waves' covering many centuries. The Aryan 'tribes' were not urban-oriented; their nomadic cattle-herding habits encouraged settlements of small villages with houses built of wood and reed. But they wrote enduring and famous sacred texts which are used even today in religious rites and during wedding and funeral rituals. From various evidences we learn that Aryan, non-Aryan and pre-Aryan patterns were acculturating with each other. This was not only at the cultural level, but also in terms of socio-economic conditions. For example, we learn that Aryan social organization had initially comprised of three classes. But by the time settlements had spread to the northern plains of Panjab and the Ganga valley, society was divided into four classes.

Thus, at the beginning of First Phase settled life in urban-rural areas was well established, with large scale trade and commerce supporting political kingdoms, like Koshal, Magadha, Vatsa and Avanti. We know a great deal about this period because it was the time of two great religious reformers, the Buddha and Mahavira. This was a period of the beginning of a synthesis of orthodox, neo-orthodox, and heterodox views was taking place. We may note in general that Indian values took the more recognizable shape through the *Gita* exposition as expressed in the *Mahabharata*, and the writings of the *Dharamashastra* and *Arthashastra*. All these developments were reinforced considerably by the religious orders which came under the influence of the *Bhakti* movements; these gave rise to many *Bhakti* leaders later on (viz. in the 13th century, Jnanadeva in Maharashtra; in the North Vallabhacharya in the 15th century; Chaitanya (1485-1533) in Bengal; Mirabai and Tulsidas in the Hindi speaking areas of the 16th and 17th centuries). Many of the later *Bhakti* movements were as a result of *Sufi* influence; and these also brought about a literary renaissance.

These developments were not always part of orthodoxy, or even so smooth. For, these represent many 'protest', 'dissent', nonconfor-

mist, revivalist and reformist—revolt—movements against *Brahminical* Hinduism. These sects initiated the idea of social and economic equality, rejecting in principle the authority of the *brahman* and denying that he has to be a necessary intermediary between God and man. However, the rise of protestant and reformist movements throughout India's history has not been studied in details. In any case, after some generations we find *brahmins* again monopolising the sacred offices of many of these heretical sects that were originally anti-*Brahminic*; all of these processes continued to modify orthodoxy.

By the end of the First Phase early conversions to Islam had taken place in areas where a vacuum was created by the absence of Buddhism, specially amongst the lower classes due to the efforts of *Sufi* missionaries. The *Sufis* were themselves suspected by Muslim orthodoxy or the *Ulema* since they had well incorporated into their system such Hindu ideas as music styles, local shrines, local legends, and worship. By the Second Phase there are many more instances of such Hindu-Muslim synthesis and, apart from the attempts by Akbar and Darashikoh, we know of the efforts made by people like Tukaram, Namdeva, Kabir, and Guru Nanak in this direction. However, Islam in general also influenced socio-economic and cultural life, because the backdrop of these acculturation processes was mainly the political, administrative, and economic developments. One important impact of Islam was the overthrow of the dominance of the twice-born castes and their guilds. This also allowed for the upward mobility of lower groups (perhaps due to their conversions) a process which was supported by the new military and administrative classes of the now well-established feudal economy. These new social groups could claim greater status and honour than the rich non-Muslim classes. But the new 'elites' of conquerors and their Indian allies, also began to form an upper class. At the economic level, there was the reassertion of earlier introduced feudalistic ideas. The various regional areas continued to exert their rights at the subunit local levels, as indigenous socio-cultural institutions were allowed to function in an autonomous manner. But it is at the theological and philosophical levels—the upper class conservatives—that the differences may be seen as the greatest, between Muslims and Hindus. This was not true for other classes in the rural areas where the two communities lived together, and there has always been varying degrees of interpenetration and

interaction at various subsystemic levels. For example, at the rural level the synthetic or syncretic culture is represented by the use of ritual and social forms associated with either religion, and respected by members of each religion. A majority of rural Muslims, most of whom have descended from Hindus, continue to practice religious rituals that they had once followed as Hindus. Again, many Hindus especially North Indian rural and urban elites, have imbibed several 'Muslim' traits, such as in etiquette, manners, music, art, and literature, and participated in Muslim rites and worship.

We may now briefly enumerate various socio-cultural values and traits—not politico-economic ones—that have been added throughout the early phases of the Indian system.

1. The early Harappan contributions; of social divisions; settled urban economy; and other religious and cultural traits.
2. Aryan-non-Aryan acculturation resulted in some enduring orthodox traditions, including values of patriarchal joint family; concept of cosmic order and process (*rita*); truth-invested with magic power; divinely established and religiously sanctioned social rank; the concept of sacrifice; sacredness of the cow; the concept of the four stages of life; *shradh* ceremonies; ritual pollution; medical practices; and foundations of music, dance and drama.
3. The Buddhist, Jain, and other heterodox traditions made significant contributions like the concept of monasteries (*vihars*) which eventually led to the formation of *maths* of Brahminical Hinduism; the ideas of ascetism, non-injury or non-violence, vegetarianism; and the great emphasis on *karma* and transmigration.
4. Contributions of local cults—'little traditions'—would include the worship of Shiva, Vishnu, and Krishna—and their female counterparts; *tantricism*; the elaboration of the caste (*varna*) system into sub-castes or *jati*; local and regional versions of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*; *Jataka* tales and *Puranic* epics; myths; legends; as well as pilgrimage sites; festivals; and the various *Bhakti* movements.
5. Islamic contributions would include those in the field of art and architecture; musical innovations; *pardha* and other dress forms as the *pyjama*, etc.; different foods by

- changes in dietary habits; poetic styles; and the impact on later *Bhakti* movements through the *Sufis*.
6. Values and attitudes; these have crept into the various sub-cultures and sub-societies—spatio-temporally. For example, these would include the notion of duty and correct action (reinforced by the *Gita*); loyalty of kingroups involving status and honour of family and the extended kingroup—or social group—is idealized; the acceptance of social inequality, which is legitimized by means of different status and symbols; and the tolerance and range of differences and beliefs which perhaps arises out of the notion of the one (*Brahman*) leading to the many (*Atman*)—an extension of these beliefs and codes of conducts is at the socio-economic and cultural level whereby differences are easily accepted. [Perhaps, this has helped to absorb, adopt, and retain various elements. But it may also be noted, that this tolerance may really be a kind of indifference, since there is no concept of ‘I am my brother’s keeper’, in Hinduism. (??) (Elder 1970: 298-9)].

Thus, at the structural level the basic socio-cultural systemic arrangement of elements has been reorganized and rearranged during the first two phases. But the structure did not really alter fundamentally, despite many movements which believed in social justice and economic equality. Major changes of structural significance were initiated during the Third Phase—with the coming of the Europeans and the British. The reason was that the ‘new’ economic pattern helped in a greater practical political unity than had even been the case during Mughal times. The various economic changes, in being part of the colonial system, implied wider communication networks and other newer social institutions, and cultural values that are basically quite different; apart from their conflict with traditional values and goals. In terms of the concept of nationhood, these new developments allowed for considerable interlocking of the various subsystems. (Today, we hope, stability and equilibrium results in feasible—practical—changes of national integration; since much less probability of disintegration exists now than has been the case earlier.) These all-India elements are, once again, part of the regional subsystems as well.

We may, briefly, highlight some of these recent contributions—modern elements—that have become part of Indian civilization today.

1. Factory industrialization; it began with British colonial economy and later received impetus in post-independent India by the introduction of a planned socialistic pattern of economy and the creation of corporate organizations or 'firms'—introducing the concept of entrepreneurship and labour-division due to extreme specialization.
2. Urban centres are now based on large scale complex industrial organizations; the pre-colonial ones were centres for the manufacture of goods for purposes of building large scale monumental structures and temples. But this pre-modern complexity differs from the modern one because of the introduction of large industries and corporate organizations which are centrally controlled; apart from the use of new forms of harnessing energy for power that allows for the mechanization of manufactured goods and so on.
3. Industrialization; it accelerated the growth of urban areas that range in scale from towns, cities to metropolitan centres; all are tied to a market capitalist economy which has increased class stratification and polarization between the rich and the poor. (Perhaps, as long as India continues to be a part of world capitalist economic system and value structure, this will remain so.) The rapid growth of urban phenomena with its 'hybrid' values is in sharp contrast to the agricultural or rural settlements based on traditional farming patterns.
4. These new economic factors brought into existence the formation of new types of classes. Apart from the upper ones, a middle—English-educated intellectual—class, as well as the white-collar workers or *babus* have come into existence. These social groups occur both as all-India institutions and in the regional subsystems.
5. In terms of social relations, family and kinship systems, specially in the urban areas, there is the isolation of the individual. This, in fact, is a modern phenomena in all urban areas of the world, and is a result of the indirect relations involved in industrial social institutions.

Today, national integration becomes possible because of the

institutions which are all-India in nature, albeit these did exist on a relatively smaller scale in pre-modern times. These would include defence services, administrative services, and educational system. While earlier these institutions existed in different socio-economic and political context which reinforced the elite groups, the developments of the 19th and 20th centuries produced an intellectual class from different strata and introduced radically different value-orientations. These newer values created by the new socio-cultural, economic, and political institutions imply structural changes of such magnitude and change that they may herald a completely new age for India. But this is not yet so clear, for it may well be debated how far these new values have been internalized at the various local and regional levels. Nevertheless, today, the notion of socio-economic equality and justice, democracy, secular liberalism, scientific outlook, and rationalism form an important core value of 'Indian' structural elements. These are, of course, as yet urban based values for a select few, that compete with or are opposed by the older values of loyalty to caste, kin, and family. This has enacted a conflict between 'traditionalism' and 'modernism' or as some say, 'westernization'. Modern values, briefly, would include such political values as of nationhood, rather than in terms of loyalty to family, caste and language; as well as the concept of equality before law; welfare and planning; freedom of worship, speech and association. In economic values, there exists now contractual loyalty in the context of opportunity, competition, mobility, and collective bargaining. In the ethical values there is the idea of liberalism, reform, and welfare through voluntary organization. And, finally individualism, decision-making, etc.

At any rate, modern values, even if they are unimplemented and not internalized as yet in the majority, do exist clearly in the linguistic regions in their semi-urban and urban areas. It is in this way that they, once again, contribute to the total civilizational structure of contemporary India. Today, this situation is developing regionally, at different levels and at unequal rates. We need not go into the recent historical details of the nationalist movements which have led to various other recent developments, such as the accelerated interaction between rural and urban areas due to modern socio-cultural and economic institutions. To sum up, the significant structural elements, within the framework of which we may examine Indian civilization are as follows:

1. Rural and urban settlement patterns. These differ markedly in terms of economics and thereby in occupation, stratification, and mobility.
2. Linguistic regions with their language and literature that exist as subsystems.
3. The diachronic phases, with stages—bracketed on either end by the Formative and Modern period—which have gone into the making of the Indian configuration or 'style'.
4. Values, goals, and loyalties which have changed and shifted during the various phases. This suggests that 'conflict-tension' problems which existed throughout have brought about changes of various kinds, rather than merely adjustments within the framework of equilibrium models.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

SOME MISCONCEPTIONS EXAMINED

WE HAVE noted earlier that the advent of British suzerainty brought into focus three major approaches to the study of India—the orientalist, the administrative, and the missionary. As a result, many prejudices and myths left their mark on later and even current academic researches on Indian civilization. For instance, the characterization of India by its 'spiritual' quality. This interpretation was partly due to a reliance upon sacred texts and literature, and also because it was a European dream to think of India as a repository of great spiritual truth which the West could use immediately as an antidote for its own growing materialism. This was the orientalist opinion. The dominant missionary view harped on the theme of a gloomy philosophy of India, in which starvation and suffering were virtues, in a caste-ridden society that was governed by fatalistic values; all this was the cause of an inert people who were unwilling to enjoy life since little incentive to improve the rotten state of affairs was available in their world view. It is pertinent to state these stereotypes because these views not only exist today as commonsense knowledge, they have also been built into the implicit models of historical and social science researches about Indian civilization. Unfortunately, in fact, a powerful lobby of the 'status-quo' people—vested interests—desires to keep the down-trodden—both the underdeveloped nations and poor people—in their place, by constantly reminding them that 'materialism' will ruin their treasured contentment; that the destiny of India is spiritualism. For instance, the stereotype of Indian spirituality, generalized from historical studies, has tended to fossilize and re-enforce the 'sacred' and the privileged, i.e., the traditional, social, and economic class divisions.

However, here, it is worth noting another view about Indians held by foreigners at an early date, which recent studies of the past

have revealed. This was the view of Indians being a very practical and down-to-earth people, which many pre-British travellers, from the West and other parts of the world, who visited India from the 13th century onwards, have clearly pointed out. The mundane aspects of Indian civilization has been clearly stated, suggesting that the Indian character-structure was specially materialistic and acquisitive in nature (Dharampal 1971).

Apart from how outsiders viewed us, empirical facts seriously contradict many notions about India. For example, the view about the 'spiritual' characterization is based on the written texts, since it was believed that Indians were preoccupied with thinking and writing about metaphysics, moral ideals, and other themes of a very serious nature. But this ignores another set of values reflected in drama, lyrical poetry, folk-literature, innumerable tales of romances, etc. These forms of literature delight in the sheer act of living, in artistic—sensual—sensitiveness, and in praise of the rewards of prosperity. It is thus clear that notions of sorrow and suffering present in some philosophies have been in fact theological presumptions and dogma rather than representing reality. Consequently, just as the highest moral order of Indian thinking is considered to be significant and enduring, the real and immediate experiences of the ordinary mundane joy of daily living have equally contributed to the Indian way of life (Buitenen 1959).

Undoubtedly, many philosophies are associated with superstitious ideas of *karma*, sacrifice, and magic which do suggest a certain amount of lethargy and passiveness, pessimism or even of *maya* and illusion. But we can concentrate on reading the literature of priests and thinkers, only at the expense of ignoring all other writings that indicate a more touching variety and activity of reality which is at some point filled with brutality, sensuality, and materialism. For instance, it will take us far away from the transcendental dreams in which India is supposed to be engulfed, if we read a very alive—virile—intellectual activity, indicating 'materialism' that is demonstrated by commercial codes and laws relating to finance, market regulations, customs, loans, inheritance problems, etc. This and other evidences clearly tell us that economic life in India was very active and not sterile, and Indian society did not exist in and for religion.

Thus, it is preposterous to believe, as some history books emphasize even now, that a chief characteristic of Indian society is its metaphysics and religion. In fact, even a realistic interpretation

of the law books makes it quite obvious that everybody was by no means virtuous and conformist. It is clear that in these works a rationalization of irregularities and of breaking rules has been attempted in order somehow to maintain and uphold the supremacy of the propertied privileged and other upper classes. The lesson for historical research is that total approaches to the study of history cannot ignore many mundane works, unwritten sources, such as folk-literature and myths. A social science view may be ignored at the risk of producing a lop-sided picture of Indian civilization.

We may now briefly examine some topics apropos misconceptions and prejudiced views that seem to persist in much of the current literature on Indian history and civilization.

TRADE AND COMMERCE

India's history clearly indicates how it has continuously maintained a fairly widespread and intense commerce since very early times. It is recorded by historians like Pliny that an estimated balance of trade greatly in favour of India existed at the time of its trade with Rome. Later on, many nations were importing spices, muslin, silk, and shawls; and this area even exported rice, sugar, cotton, etc (Basham 1954). Some researchers have explained this 'wealth' in terms of the richness of the soil or favourable climatic conditions. But these natural resources could not have been exploited without socio-economic values of organization and certain implicit values, such as of activity, patience, and ingenuity. In fact, some kind of 'industrial' and commercial genius, not passivity and lethargy, can also be shown historically.

Independently of the innumerable external evidences, economic vitality is clearly shown in many commercial laws and sacred codes themselves. Despite all strict social and legal rules and regulations, commercial laws did not stop growing and economic life was never static nor extinct in India. It is well-known that the *Arthashastra* is a key text which tells us about political and economic means and ends of that period. But apart from this text, other sources of information include the *Jataka* tales, travellers' accounts, dramas, epics, sculpture, temple-building activities, and cave paintings. All this evidence of commercial and economic activities reflect sufficient 'experience' of intense production, as well as the starting of new

enterprises, indicate a series of networks of communication for travel within in India. In addition, in even socio-legal texts—the *Dharamshastra*—the king is not merely an upholder of moral values, the *Dharma*, he has been charged with maintaining an equilibrium between sellers, consumers, as well as of regulating capital, profit and loss, checking weights and measures, and quality of merchandise. Besides, for centuries people, specially from the West, had looked upon this subcontinent as a source of all riches—perhaps one reason why it has suffered so many conquests from times immemorial. All this cannot be true of a people attributed with fatalism, lethargy and other-wordly nature. If anything, India can claim the glory of not only many mythologies, philosophies, and metaphysics, but also experiences of more material nature that are indicated in its arts, architecture and so on.

All this does not mean that the economic subsystem was functioning independently of other subsystems. Theoretically, for traditional societies, just as the subsystems of religion and politics are interwoven, the concept of economics may be understood within the political context, i.e., the concept of politico-economics corresponds to the domain of *artha*—the economic component including both the dominance of wealth, and possession of landed interests as well as of political power. But while in later stages we note that religion and politics differentiated into their own subsystems, economics remained undifferentiated within politics. Thus, many scholars doubt if the modern concept of economics, as an independent category apart from politics, may be applicable to traditional India. This is because it was only at the end of the 18th century that economics appeared as a distinct category, independent of politics, even in the Western world (Dumont 1970: 164-6; 182 ff).

RELIGION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

In traditional societies religion and economics are closely interwoven. In discussing the impact of religion on early India's economic pattern and growth, it has to be seen whether economic life has a determining influence on religion or, whether they are both determined by a complex of interacting factors whereby neither is dominant. For instance, the effect of religion on economic life may also be seen in terms of the values in cultural pattern that

motivate and canalize such non-religious activities as economic growth and rates of change. In India, this relationship has been close, albeit outside factors in the past have effected both religion and economic growth itself (Mishra 1962). However, not very much is known about the earlier periods of social and economic history. But we may pose such questions as; how far has a relative lack of scientific inquiry been responsible for the economic situation, and immobility in occupational distribution during the pre-industrial period, compared to what happened during the industrial period?

To illustrate, we may indicate the close interaction of economic and religious activities in the heretical sects. In the beginning, in the missionary zeal of preaching sermons, the Buddhists travelled far and wide. Gradually, this mode was abandoned and they adopted the institution of monasteries, soon to become land owners and landlords albeit receiving considerable help through donations from kings, merchants, and guilds. Thus, despite Buddhism professing ascetism, monasteries grew in wealth, and this gave rise to strife and tension—a common problem that is present in other social and economic institutions. It is also well-known that when the two kinds of Buddhism—*Hinayana* and *Mahayana*—spread to various parts of Asia, traders as well as other Indian forms of economic and social organization went with them, specially to Ceylon, Burma, and Thailand. The spread to China was associated with various trade routes along Central Asia, and, therefore, also has a social economic background. As is well-known, Jainism has been clearly associated with trade and commerce.

The following diachronic scheme may suggest the nature and impact of socio-cultural and religious patterns, attitudes, and values on economic growth:

1. Harappan civilization encouraged economic growth.
2. Early Vedic religion was possibly a positive factor in economic growth. This is indicated by its association with the psychology of living a full and happy life on earth. But later Vedic religion began to develop a negative aspect, with the intensification of the sacrificial ritual which resulted in waste and inefficient allocation of energy and resources.
3. *Upanishadic* thought, while it acted as a positive factor by throwing doubts on the efficacy of the ritual, it adversely

- affected the economy by inculcating an other-worldly attitude.
4. Under Buddhist, Jain, and similar influences (during 600 to 300 B.C.), the economy was favourably generated by rationalistic thinking, by some concepts of a liberal social structure, and so on.
 5. The stress on rationalism, and on certain ethical codes of social and individual conduct by religion, during the 300 B.C. to A.D. 300, continued to be favourable for the economy.
 6. During the A.D. 300-800 religion adjusted itself admirably to the fullness of life. But it did not act sufficiently as a causal factor—or a negative one—in economic growth, despite the fact that from A.D. 500-800 men looked towards heavenly powers, discouraging initiative, and enterprise.
 7. During A.D. 800-1200, religion acted definitely as a brake by accentuating the negative tendencies mentioned in the preceding period.
 8. During A.D. 1200-1500, *Brahminical* Hinduism became indifferent, and hence a negative factor in economic growth, even though there was a high level of economic growth in the kingdom of Vijayanagar.
 9. Feudalism encouraged economic growth from the 16th to the 18th centuries since religion was no bar. But there was also a great deal of wasteful expenditure.
 10. The older social institutions, religious values, and social attitudes were to hinder economic growth, when the impact of Western industrialization began to be felt (Mishra 1962).

CRAFTSMEN AND ARTISANS

A corollary to increasing economic growth, trade, and commerce is that production of goods and material has also to increase. This is possible if the artisans and craftsmen produce more goods, and recruit more men to increase production. If the social system was really as rigid as made out, then not only would trade and commerce—economic subsystem—not grow but also the various cultural and religious activities including the building of grand monuments, should have come to a stop. In short, along with merchant classes, groups of craftsmen and artisans have played a

crucial role in characterizing Indian cultural and social developments. Further research is required on this subject, but we may highlight some features here.

In early India, apart from peasants and labourers, there existed shopkeepers, both in villages and towns, milkmen, spice sellers, oil merchants, the perfumers, and tavern keepers. But an important role was played by craftsmen and artisans, viz., carpenters, blacksmiths, and potters, who supplied the comparatively simple needs of the inhabitants. During periods of economic expansion, specially when social and economic activities required colonization of new land, it was difficult to attract craftsmen to the new areas. At such times of labour shortage, specially of skilled craftsmen upon whose techniques village economy depended, incentives were given to these specialists by offering free plots of land; copper plates from widely separated parts of the Gupta empire tell us about the grants of such lands. But such incentives were apparently not enough to attract craftsmen, for whom other inducement like contract fee, land grants, etc., had to be offered.

Under such a dynamic state, the social standing of specialized groups varied considerably. For example, with the expansion of trade and commerce, the tradition of crafts as a hereditary activity and its succession which is normally by means of apprenticeship and adoption, could not always have been followed. We also know that the four *varna* orders did not always strictly adhere to their special craft, in the early phase. For instance, in the *Jatakas*, *Baudhayana* (4th century B.C.) mentions that castes which lived by handicraft had worked for the king. It is only during the time of the *Arthashastra* as well as of the *Vishnumriti* (the 3rd century A.D.) that all branches of the arts became the duty of the *shudras*. However, many of these craftsmen had clear mixed caste parentage—*brahman* and *shudras*—and were also cultivators and owners of land. In a 12th century inscription from Chingleput a carpenter refers to himself as the owner of the better half of the land of the carpenters in the Chola kingdom (A.D. 985–1018). Beginning with Ashoka to Mahendra Varmana, the Pallava king of the 7th century, as well as from Harsha to Akbar, the kings and monarchs were great patrons of arts and crafts. In appreciation of their work craftsmen received remunerations in gold, land grants, clothes and ornaments. Families who have followed craft traditions for centuries are well known. For example, from the *Bhangora* family of architects, who went from

Gujarat to Rajasthan from the 14th century a member—Mandana—built the *Kirtistambha* in Chitor (A.D. 1414–1418). He is the author of many textbooks of architecture (*Rupamandana*, *Vastu-Rajavallabha*), which are still in use for architecture in western India. Various traditional texts of crafts, etc., for building temples and monasteries are available from all over India (Kramrisch 1959). In short, artisans and craftsmen were very crucial in the socio-economic organizations, apart from their significant contributions in the cultural field.

INDIAN MERCHANT

Trade and commerce, which were prevalent in India from the Harappan times, have influenced all those who came to India and were later—beginning with the Aryans—to adopt indigeneous economic systems. In all these activities, merchants were to play a crucial role. In fact, the intense activity of merchants made many of the great emperors jealous of their wealth and many emperors even tried to stop these commercial activities by means of heavy taxation, regulations, and even outright confiscation. *Brahmans*, of course, tried to lower the status of businessmen in caste hierarchy. But despite these efforts, there has been always a great vitality of Indian trade and business, whose operations went into Africa, West Asia, China and South-east Asia (Lamb 1959).

Just as in the transformation of the nomadic Aryans into settled agriculturalists commerce and trade played a crucial role, so also by 600 B.C., along with a great flowering of Buddhist and Jain intellectual traditions, trade and commerce played an important role in the Gangetic plains where great cities flourished. It was the land owners and the business communities (*vaishyas*) which greatly helped to spread the new religions. Merchants, bankers, and traders in the pre-Christian era developed their own organizations in order to give themselves greater security and trade, and organized themselves into guilds by increasing specialization. By the end of the first millennium of the Christian era when there seems to be a decline of trade in the Gangetic plain, in western India commerce and trade continued to flourish. This was probably due both to the sea ports and their export markets, and also because

this area had moved away from the domination and orthodox *Brahminism* to follow Jainism and *Vaishnavism*.

It has been suggested that the development of the decimal system and the concept of zero in numerology was invented in India probably because of the impetus given by the merchant class. These and other new tools came with the expansion of business and trade activities. This seems likely for otherwise the Greeks, with their capacity for abstraction, ought to have developed these much earlier. In fact, the early Sanskrit works on mathematics are full of problems of trading, taxation, interests, and debt calculation, and Indian businessmen even developed at this time double-entry book keeping. All this suggests a great deal of social freedom and mobility associated with business prestige which freed itself from the *brahman's* superiority (Lamb 1959).

Thus, merchant communities and related groups have for centuries been associated with a wide range of cross-cutting social and economic relations, albeit limited by a minimum of local regulations. But we must note that merchants have also been the conservative members of Indian society, despite being exposed to many new situations of social change. This contradictory statement will be understood if we differentiate between the cultural and structural dimensions of caste. For example, merchant castes may be clearly distinguished within themselves by various considerations of ritual purity and pollution at the cultural level. Different merchant castes may be distinguished hierarchically from the viewpoint of homogenous social units, of *jati* and endogamy. But due to the demands of certain political and economic situations, there always have been both fragmentation and alignments and regroupings that cut across sub-caste barriers. Because of this economic and political situations seem to often confound caste-loyalty, for merchants participated—and continue to do so now—in numerous cross-cutting social relations and pursue diverse economic interests while still maintaining their socio-cultural boundaries. These views are supported by contemporary merchant-community studies; that is, there is a network of sub-structures rather than of self-contained caste isolates or cohesive communities. This gives rise to various cleavages within the single caste as well as to alliances between members of different castes when economic and political situations create conflicting interests (Hazelhurst 1968).

SOCIAL MOBILITY

The vitality of the social system of caste is evident by its existence throughout the various phases of Indian civilization (Srinivas 1968). But this continuity has led to an erroneous belief that society in pre-British India was basically static, monotonous, and stationary. Earlier researchers had characterized social immobility as a characteristic of the 'oriental' as opposed to the progressive mobility of the 'occidental'. This is not to say that social mobility resulted in the elimination of the system. Perhaps, it is because the characteristic social system has not been restructured that it gives us the commonly depicted 'static' view. Assigning of the normative values undue importance has also contributed a great deal to this. But we know that major changes and adjustments, sometimes very drastic ones, have taken place at the operative—organizational—level in terms of various interactional relationships. The necessity of this fluidity and flexibility is obvious, if the system was to survive, specially in view of the fact that people have to adjust to not only the dynamics of the seasonal variations and the life cycles of human existence but also to new and continuous incoming social and cultural groups. For instance, beginning with the Formative Period, there has been a great deal of adjustment to new social and economic situations whereby various subcastes or *jatis* come into existence. These processes are clearly related to continuous changing socio-political and economic systems, cultural movements, as well as demographic spread to marginal areas that were brought under cultivation.

At another level, in pre-modern times, mobility may be seen in the close relationship which existed between social and political order, i.e., under early Indian law it was the king's responsibility not only to prevent the confusion of castes but also to change caste-status and create new castes. This is because the maintenance of social system necessarily requires political backing, for the mere *brahman* or sacred authority will not do. Such political power belonged not only to the king, but it also lay in the hands of local dominant castes, soldiers, and officials who at times became land owners, or even chiefs and kings. Instances exist of ambitious and unscrupulous tax collectors who took advantage during periods of confusion to establish their own chiefdoms or kingdoms, specially during transitional times of changing rulers and loyalties. We also

know of several examples of how lower 'caste' groups have raised their status to those of *kshatriyas*. Thus, warfare and landownership caused social mobility since those who were loyal were rewarded, and others often punished in terms of caste hierarchy. In short, the *kshatriya varna* was recruited from a wide variety of castes, all of which had one attribute in common—possession of land and political power, specially during periods of uncertainty; thus the dominant peasant castes like the Marathas, Reddies, Vellalas, Nayars and Coorgs have been able to claim *kshatriya* status. Other instances are of Shivaji (1627-1680), son of a *jagirdar*; the Nanda dynasty of the 5th century B.C. belonged to a non-*kshatriya* (*vaishya*) caste; the Pala dynasty of Bengal was *shudra* in origin; the Patidars of Gujarat, originally a peasant caste, became politically powerful in the 18th century to claim the *kshatriya* status through a support of the Gaikwads (Shah 1959); and tribes such as the Bhumij, Munda, and Gond have also established their claims as *kshatriyas*.

Muslim kings had also exerted their rights of reward and punishment for the raising and lowering of castes. But it was under the impact of Islamic ideas, that another source of mobility was opened. Encouragement was given by rulers, in the agrarian system, for the development of marginal land which was settled and cultivated by various families. Consequently, social mobility was a result of spatial mobility, specially of those families who were excessively oppressed either politically or socially.

Again, there were two main avenues whereby a 'foreign' group could enter into the social system. One, at the level when tribes became untouchables, was by both modifying and retaining their original features. The other possible avenue was at the level of dominance, viz., while when large or small kingdoms were conquered by 'foreigners' politically, yet socially and culturally it was the 'conversion' of the invaders which took place. This method of 'reabsorption' is a social process which explains historical movements (mobility) better than 'tolerance' and 'melting pot' concepts. This was also the case in villages when, with fluctuating political powers, land owners became tenants, and vice-versa, i.e., social mobility was result of a superior right over the land. This constant formation and reformation of sub-castes has also occurred within *brahmanic* groups, wherein exist endogamous sub-categories that continue even today.

An examination of sacred texts and legal codes significantly reveals the same process of social mobility. For instance, the very insistence of drawing up such firm demarcations of social groupings in the law books is a sure sign of mobility in practice. This rigidity probably did not ever correspond to real categories, because the theory of four castes is only a bold simplification which ignores the multiplicity of various sub-groups. As a socio-cultural analysis of historical data clearly suggests that the enumeration of various mixed castes, the explanations by Manu are really justifications after the event. These texts betray the embarrassment of a theoretician when he faces facts that contradict his theory. For example, when certain law codes state that marriages of the primary (legitimate) type are strictly regulated or at least can be rationalized, while secondary (not conforming to regulations, specially for a woman) marriages may be treated as free since they do not conform to the ideal. Therefore, we should not trust the illusions of *brahmanic* traditions, because these are later textual rationalizations. These statements only imply that strict hierarchy had never really existed, and marriages were always taking place between those of superior and inferior status. Thus, there was a constant breakdown of endogamy and 'mixed' people, the products of inter-*varna* unions, are clear examples of this.

This is further confirmed by the rules and regulations of inheritance. For instance, it was only if a man has a son by equal or inferior woman that inheritance rights were counted, i.e., the right of inheritance was identified with legitimacy. Therefore, while it was hoped that marriages should take place between people of same *varnas*, it is also stated that not all children are born in this way. These difficulties are mentioned in many texts such as by Gautama and Yajnavalkya and in the several verses of Manu; all being dominated by the overriding concern to link marriages and unions, wives and children in relation to each other specially those occurring outside textual codes (Dumont 1970: 133-4).

It is thus clear that the lack of clarity is an essential feature of the system, in as much as it allows social mobility and adaptation, flexibility as well as tolerance. But a concentration on textual evidence or overemphasis on the non-competitive basis of caste will blind us to the actual situation, such as the fact that various examples of caste competition and rivalries have existed throughout history. Moreover, continuous movements have been not only

vertical—upward and downward—but horizontal, because of demographic, economic, and social factors as well as political power during the first two phases. Nevertheless, pre-colonial mobility is different to the one which begins with the second stage of the Third Phase, when radical changes in different subsystems are to be seen, for the quantum of mobility substantially increases from then on.

Today, adult franchise has increased the competition for power and office, enabling block movements of castes or sub-caste groups, along with variations in individual status; both being associated with economic or political change. Hence, there are now increasing number of situations in which one's caste is of little importance, particularly where roles tend to be achieved rather than ascribed. That concepts such as discrimination and prejudice are becoming widespread and applied to many practices taken as normal or accepted without comment just a few decades ago, indicates that the system is rapidly changing in the rural areas (Cohn 1971: 141). But if 'mobility' means 'freedom' as in Western society, in the sense of being able to choose the place of domicile, to gain a basic livelihood, the ability to have economic activities and mix socially, to choose a marriage partner of one's liking, and to decide one's relations with supernatural power or world view, then this has not been the case generally, nor do conditions exist at present for this purpose. Individual identity and concern are submerged and determined by group membership. From this viewpoint Indian society has rigid limitations and its orthodoxy may be used as universal basic principles of this social structure, ignoring the local and regional differences. In this sense the pressure to conform and live within the group is supreme, and there is little mobility even in space in this context.

Although social ideology places a high premium on conformity, yet a person's attitude to religion is considered an entirely private affair. But this acceptance of the relativity of moral ideas is not associated with a freedom of social choice, for the only way an individual can free himself is to opt out of society—albeit here he remains a component of the subsystem. Perhaps, the acceptance of the differences in the social codes of different castes and ethnic groups springs not so much from an opportunity of tolerance, but from the indifference to the affairs of those who are not one's own. It is taken for granted that different social groups or *jatis* observe customs different from

those of one's own castes, and such divergences seem neither shocking nor undesirable but inherent in a world order which provides for the division of humanity into groups of different status and values. It is this attitude which allows each group to pursue its own separate ways of life, which has parallels in the various life stages and makes for the great diversity of social patterns in India. Therefore, in none of the reformation movements, including Buddhism, can one discover the conscious and explicit emphasis on the value of human freedom which is basic to Western humanist and liberal traditions (Bidney 1963).

DOMINANT BRAHMANS AND OTHER-WORLDLINESS

The keystone of the entire edifice of the caste system has been considered to be the universally recognized primacy of the *brahman*. Implying thereby that it is because of him (of various diverse divisions) and by his crucial presence during life cycle and social ceremonies, that sentiments of common kinship are created. In understanding the total system, the uncontended superiority of this class is one of the constituent principles of social organization in India, and it has even been considered as the characteristic of Hinduism. However, historically it is doubtful if this group was in existence during the earliest Vedic period, when there existed three classes but no castes, because early texts by no means give us an exact and complete picture of social organization and life. It is not very clear how, within the framework of understanding processes, this class assumed importance. Karve (1961) gives little weight to the *brahmanical* emphasis upon religious rituals, and the incentives to preserve them, as elements in the formation of the system as a whole. In any case, the system was not created by 'race' conscious *brahmans*. More likely, it was a scheme which grew out of the social and economic organization which existed much before the advent of Aryans (Malik 1968). In fact, the *brahman's* view of himself and of society was not accepted even during the Vedic times. The sharp differentiation of social roles becomes abundantly clearly only in post-Vedic times. Of course, it has never been so clear in practice because, as our previous section on social mobility suggests, there was constant shifting in the group composition of social hierarchy, specially with changing responsibilities, viz., when a *brahman*

becomes a warrior or an agriculturalist he has new obligations. Besides, in matters as complex and durable as the structure of caste system, it could not have been a deliberate invention of the *brahman*.

Theoretically the heart and origin of the *brahman* tradition is in the Veda: he being one who knows the Vedic verses, while one who does not is only in name a *brahman* (*brahman-bandhu*). It is the respectable *brahman* whose job is to learn verses in order to perform the rituals and to earn a living according to the prescribed traditions that has been considered to be the heart by the bearers of tradition. Once again, in practice, it was not the respectable and orthodox *brahman*, well-versed in Vedic texts, who spread the idea of *brahminic* culture. It was a *brahman* minority which perpetuated this. To illustrate this two cases can be mentioned (Ingalls 1959). First, for those *brahman*s who sought wealth by means of education, the most obvious reason, it seems for learning this exacting training was profit (for example, see a standard textbook of the 14th century literature, *Sahitya Darpana*, written by a *brahman* minister of King Bhoj of Dhar). It is common to see that poetry and other literary works were written in praise of the king, in order to gain favour or to obtain a lucrative position. The author Umapatidhara, who was a great minister of Sena dynasty of Bengal is an example; the entire line of ministers of kings in Kashmir as well as the others in the Vijayanagar dynasty in the South owed much of their wealth and prestige to their intellectual accomplishment in the *shastric* traditions. Those motivations of profits and substantial fees taken by *brahman*s are clear even in early evidence, such as in one of the *Upanishadas* (*Brihadaryankya*) where the sage Yajnavalakya, after his conversation with King Janaka, goes home with ten thousand cows; or, the hymns and verses which mention the jealously guarded property right of the *brahman*s in the *Atharva Veda*. There are several examples of the temporal power and acquisition of material wealth by *brahman*s. It was all these successful scholars in important positions who were able to influence social institutions by trying to establish the prestige of the *brahman*.

Second, the other-worldliness is a late entry into 'Hinduism'. It arose when a group of *brahman*s broke from the traditional setup by renouncing wealth and brought ascetic orders into existence and great rivalries existed between these new ascetic orders and orthodoxy. It is likely that these orders had existed in the pre-Vedic indigenous population. But we know that it was during the

8th century, following Buddhist ideas, that Shankracharya made these ascetic orders and mysticism respectable in *brahmanical* tradition. It was his influence which brought back *brahman* orthodoxy into full force, moving it away from Buddhist monks and teachers, even if many were not actually converted to the new creed.

At any rate, historically speaking, *brahman* dominance was not in practice, which both secular and sacred literature may have us believe. But even the manner in which the *brahman's* pre-eminence is asserted in these texts, only proves that it was not admitted without discussion. Unquestionably, since examples proliferate, they also took on the monopoly of such temporal powers as politics and economics, in the guise of religious functions. Perhaps, this is why the amazing power of this group has been in existence throughout Indian political history. It may be that the existence of so many social groups and subgroups, has prevented any kind of caste-class unification and domination; and hence *brahman* power remained. But we must remember that the *brahman* caste within itself has lacked unity. It was never an organized body, and neither has it had order nor any church or scripture as such like Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam. In fact, there are even greater variations in the organization of *brahman* castes. Thus, it is probably not the control of religion as such, but the existence of ancient religious practices and rituals which has maintained the continuous existence of *brahman*s and *brahmanism*—all essentially having their basis in the socio-politico-economic structure.

In sum, then, an anthropological perspective can orient historical inquiry, for the framework attracts the contents. It is not a worthless task to pose these questions of *brahman* tradition and of social mobility in the context of economic, commercial, and common life. We simply cannot deal with these in terms of unique events, by mere historical narration. These problems have to be examined within a framework of impact and interaction, within the workings of economics, politics, culture, and social organization. We may remind ourselves that similar kinds of class-caste systems existed in nearly all earlier civilizations, such as in Egypt. Even those societies which are committed to democracy today do furnish plenty of evidence for a study of general properties of hierarchy. They all have a spirit of separation or repulsion which is a condition of

practical labour-economic-divisions, and social organization. Therefore, it is in the establishing of general comparisons in our searching analysis that the distinctive case of India as an example would be very valuable. It is a fruitless exercise to exaggerate the power of religion over Indian civilization as such. Of course, a religious concern is present in everyday life, not theoretically alone. But that is not all, nor has it ever been so.

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CHAPTER NINE

CIVILIZATIONAL STUDIES AND SOCIAL RELEVANCE

UNTIL recently, historians, archaeologists and anthropologists in India have cared little about re-evaluating the fundamental basis of their disciplines, specially in the context of civilizational studies. Perhaps, this is because such critical intellectual endeavours are frequently equated to pure philosophical speculation, devoid of any factual foundations and are considered to be beyond the realm of academic research. In fact, those researchers who are looking for data (substance) are demarcated clearly from those interested in theory (speculation). But this insistence on the unilateral importance of facts, which simultaneously stigmatizes any theoretical endeavour as being both a case of speculation and fashionable jargon, is reductionism at the most elementary level. It is hard to believe, in this day and age, that such a rigid dichotomy is maintained. Science tells us that mere empiricism is no guarantee of a successful way of reaching knowledge and that descriptive level of research by itself is impotent. This statement will make little sense for those who are accustomed to define their subject as a descriptive-quantitative one; treating socio-cultural phenomena as something external to themselves, endowed with objective and quantifiable characteristics; and perceiving the universe as a mere collection of individual, observable phenomena with no meta-empirical levels of reality. Not only this, they justify such research on the grounds of being scientific and value-free—all 19th century notions. Today, it is evident that no discipline can escape asking questions about the source and criteria of valid knowledge, and definitions of the object of investigation and its relationship to the intellectual activity of the researcher.

Critics may object that we are already loaded with methods, which have improved over the years in each discipline. But methodological developments have not taken place in India at a conscious

level. Such an effort has to be undertaken by each discipline, in terms of an intellectual inquiry, rather than as *ad hoc* procedures, by trial and error. This is not to state that intuition, imagination, guesses, and hunches have no place in research. But *ad hoc* planning procedures and the judicious use of imagination is not the same. Moreover, demonstrating the utility of the guess and to precisely convey this to others is equally important. As a matter of fact, these are operational procedures (of making suitable arrangements of ideas and phenomena) which we all carry out continuously in daily living in any case. However, for an academic discipline these must be carried out overtly, for no automatic theory can develop as such through mere data collection. Of course, the ideas and formulations suggested here may eventually be rejected in favour of new and more effective, simpler and wider conceptualizations. Nevertheless, this is worth an attempt since it is only in this way that knowledge advances. Therefore, the more we clarify our concepts with regard to Indian civilization, the more we will be able to understand its development and structure.

Our emphasis has also been on the utilization of some of the methods and techniques of social sciences for historical studies. For example, the use of systems or structuralist-functionalist approaches. But this does not mean that we wish to view India's history on the analogy of a machine or a mechanical information model. Nevertheless, there will be many critics who will object to a scientific treatment of human societies. But it is these very critics who advocate a 'cold' detached view of the objectivity of history. This attitude is a result of an earlier definition of science; a posture specially adopted to avoid a discussion of social relevance. Today, we know that every discipline has to be involved, in one way or another, with current ideas of knowledge and the contemporary dynamics of socio-cultural change. It may be pertinently objected that relevance will curtail the broad freedom to research, such as out of sheer curiosity, which has produced highly useful new knowledge. For example, the history of natural and physical sciences demonstrates repeatedly that seemingly insignificant discoveries are often essential ingredients of practical and very relevant technical developments. But we must remember that this has been possible because scientific research reflects a higher degree of truly explanatory and innovative research than the social sciences and humanities. This only suggests that theoretical research is related

to problems of social significance. This is in the sense of deciding what are the important areas of research, on the basis of what we can decide which broad research methodological and theoretical problems as 'relevant'. We cannot escape the fact that decisions about those problems which are worthy of solution have to be taken by drawing a list of various topics and categories, i.e., a programme of priorities in some critical areas is necessary. To illustrate, historical research can no longer be investigated in terms of the role of the supernatural and the unknown, which was considered a decisive determinant for the people in pre-modern times, when experience and sharing of knowledge remained secondary to theology and metaphysics. Of course, myths and epics—modern and traditional—and other commonly shared memories are essential to maintain a stable order. But we do not want these to turn out into reverberating forms of fantasy, a kind of substratum of historic reality that is shorn of time and space.

Today, knowledge has to be derived from the contemporary world views and canons of knowledge; this is a consequence, very generally speaking, arising out of the developments of science. From this have followed the ideas of secularism, democracy, equality—all based on humanism and a kind of rationalism. The point of the argument is that each age and people see the past according to their world view and philosophy; and this is what the writing of history ought to reveal, i.e., reveal the basic patterns of values and social structures which are fundamental to a particular age. This is one reason why Indian civilization ought to be understood as a system. This is irrespective of whether Indian civilization has been really one unit or not, because as a developing nation it is worth seeing if it has—or if it does or can—function as a 'total' systemic organization. Perhaps, the growth of a new nation into some form of a unity may become possible in terms of a shifting emphasis between the past and the future; by the continual process of communication and communalization of new master symbols. At the moment very few of the 'modern' symbols have penetrated deeply at different social levels. This is because new values and ideas, by mere intellectualization and state planning, cannot fully integrate unless there is a legitimization of symbols, i.e., unless a majority of the masses shift their basic value orientations. Consequently, a certain correctness of the symbols, their roles and meanings has to be given; that is, they must be in answer to some concrete features of the character-

structure, values and roles which exist in the individual. It is in this sense that historical, archaeological, and anthropological studies, by giving insights into past pattern—become crucial in nation-building processes.

Thus, in order to get out of the old grooves and formulate clear conceptual and methodological frameworks of enquiry, we have to give up intellectual dogmas and react creatively to new socio-economic and political challenges. It is for the same reasons that we should also encourage new ways of examining our society and culture. Today, a whole new series of question have been posed in many of the social sciences—apart from the sciences—specially in economics, sociology, and mathematics. Different inter-disciplinary approaches now provide us with fundamental models and concepts which are rich in their explanatory power and analysis. In this manner we may be able to promote ideas that have grown with a new outlook of man and his relationship to the universe. This is why one of the main purposes of this work has been to select, define, or redefine a number of concepts and models for understanding India. Our aim has been neither to provide any new information, nor have we covered all aspects which are available in Indian history, art, archaeology, and anthropology. Evidently, no one person is qualified to know all of the vast knowledge which is encompassed by Indian civilization. It is for this reason also that we had to select specific aspects which seemed to us to be more significant to the approach adopted here. Perhaps, a committee or a research group would have provided a better setting for such a demonstration. But at this illustrative stage it is probably easier for one person to be able to sift various facts much quicker than is it possible for several people.

In this context, many of the weaknesses of our disciplines derive much less from the inherent difficulties of our subject matter and much more from the built-in features of our 'academic' sub-culture. It is within this that we need to bring about a pattern of 'culture-change', not only in methodological developments but also in a revitalization of movements of the entire sub-culture of academic institutions. For instance, today in India, while there is a great deal of talk about multi-disciplinary research little attempt has been made to train people specifically for this purpose. Moreover, there is also an absence of textbooks, or even any general books on the integration of different disciplines. We are all quite

aware that in this age of extreme specialization, in order to systematically comprehend total phenomenon these steps are essential to communicate. Unfortunately, what does happen with a work such as this one is that it is academically placed in a kind of no man's land since the existing institutional—administrative—structure has no flexibility to adopt such innovations. Nevertheless, we hope that these approaches of 'no man's land' will become the main land of future development, when a language which is appropriate in dealing with the more general problems of Indian history and civilization may develop. We hope that transformation of the existing approaches is brought both in academic formulations as well as in institutional structures. But as long as scholarship tends to remain a closed system, lacking incentives for a cross-fertilization of ideas to widen our horizons, the old tradition of individual schools of thought will remain. What is really important is to avoid any kind of emotional commitment and dogma—be it on the side of humanity and justice, or even for scientific-academic excellence. Perhaps, the problem of irrelevant research arises because of the quality of the research material which abounds in our journals. In fairness, we may say that even those who are working on socially relevant problems, their methodology is also often pedestrian. Consequently, while all research interests have to be geared both towards social issues and to conceptual and methodological problems, research must be fundamentally sound before it can be relevant for anything worthwhile.

Finally, the orientation of our entire work has its basis on the adoption of an explicit scientific philosophy, i.e., we need social scientific explanations of the working of societies, cultures, and civilizations. This intellectual sorting out is necessary for a processual understanding of Indian civilization; this is already a common procedure for seeking explanations in the physical, chemical, biological, and other scientific disciplines. Attempts like ours become necessary whenever there is a great output of not only new findings, discoveries, and ideas but also a large number of facts that are described in increasing frequency. This is the time when numerous efforts to work out new theoretical formulations and perspectives are imperative. It has been an objective of this book to present a systematic statement of just one out of these many perspectives. The material and problems selected here are based on focus-selection, i.e., based on the framework of enquiry. Conse-

quently, this presentation involves omissions as well as commissions. But there is no claim here to achieve a complete synthesis of the various aspects of Indian civilization and its subsystems. Whether our programmatic statements have been adequately backed up by sufficient logical arguments and illustrations is a complex question, because the entire perspective and approach requires further study, investigation, and analysis. However, our modest hope is that it will at least provide some kind of intellectual stimulation for future research. If this aim is achieved, then it will be no small accomplishment.

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