

**DIALOGUE**  
**QUARTERLY**

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# DIALOGUE

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## Editorial Perspective

### Development alone shall not do

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's development agenda is commendable. As a precursor of the vast change, he is taking numerous steps, which in long-term is going to bring desired positive results in many fields. Many of the Prime Minister's initiatives, such as drive for clean India, shall gradually take the shape of social movements, and bring healthy attitudinal change in the society. Of course, the main emphasis of the Prime Minister is the development. Here, a particular question arises, which needs to be answered. The question is: India was the most developed State of the world for almost 1800 years out of the last two thousand years. Then why such a developed country remained under the foreign colonial rule for so long? It needs mention here that Sindh and Multan remained under foreign domination for the longest period of 1300 years. Obviously, development alone shall not do. The country remained the most developed one in the world. The strength of character of the people, their morality, bravery, highest tradition of learning, nature's endowments, and the heroic resistance to foreign invaders could not save it from foreign domination. This clearly indicates that something was basically wrong with us. It also shows that development alone is not enough. On pondering over our decline, the reason behind the same certainly seems to be our intellectual and moral decline.

India's encounter with the outsiders from the north and north-west may be categorised in three parts. This, however, does not include the Arabs, whose aggression of Sindh was only a fringe phenomenon for India. The first to come to India – the Tukharas and white Huns—had the cultural, religious and political affiliation with India. Ashoka's kingdom extended beyond the boundaries of the British India in Afghanistan and Xinjiang. Khotan, Kucha and Agnidesha were Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms; they had Hindu kings. There were great centres of learning like Nava Vihar. Kashgar, also known as Kashi, in Xinjiang was great centre of Sanskrit learning, where Kumarjiva learnt Vedas.

Naturally, when Kushanas and so-called White Huns came to India, they did not find alien culture and religion here and were absorbed in Indian society. Therefore, the phenomenon should be explained in the frame of cultural continuum, rather than in the frame of absorption attributes of the Hindu Society.

The second wave of aggressors were the Turks and Mughals. Earlier, they were Buddhists, but they came to India with the ideology of Islam with swords in their hands. Most of them, except Akbar, who believed in collaborating with the locals, continued the war, which ultimately resulted in weakening of the Mughal rule in India to the extent that the British took the reign of India from the Marathas, Sikhs, Ahoms and many other non-Mughal kings.

The British captured power in India more by deceit and stratagem than any other means. Their rule in India, practically, lasted only for ninety years. They thoroughly destroyed Indian economy and education; left this country hungry, diseased, naked and problem-ridden. They fabricated myths and lies, which divided India socially. The roots of the problems of social divide and ethnic conflicts may be searched in the colonial myths and lies. Macalayism and Marxism were the most potent weapons imported by the Britishers in India, which still continue to harm this country socially, culturally, politically and religiously. The British knew that the Marxism was helpful for British Empire; and that was the reason that they used to supply Marxist literature to the freedom fighters in jails, and the latter used to come out from the jails as Marxists.

India produced many thinkers during the half last centuries of the British rule. That was the renaissance period for this country, a period of self-discovery. Unfortunately, this trend petered out during the post-independence period, and the country could produce only few thinker scholars, such as Ram Swarup, Dharmpal and A.B. Sharan during that period. We are gradually losing the capacity to generate original ideas, and the reason behind the same is the continuance of Macaulayist education system and dominance of Marxists and leftish in the Indian academia. It is precisely the reason that the intellectual decline is visible everywhere now a days.

We find a very sad trend in the arena of the generation of knowledge/ideas is that nothing goes unchallenged in this country. Due to such unhealthy trend, even most authentic thoughts lapse into unauthenticity, leaving the people confused. Another aspect needing mention is that an established scholar in India assumes that he knows

everything and speaks on any and every subject or topic. We may cite the case of Amartya Sen, the Nobel Laureate in Economics; his statements on almost every subject—history, education, religion, politics, language—is coming in the newspapers for the last 10-12 years. The subject of his book *Argumentative India* is politics, rather than economics. When the University of Nalanda was revived, he was made Chancellor; whereas a scholar of Buddhism, such as Lokesh Chandra, Govinda Chandra Pandey (now late) or Samdhong Rimpoche should have been made Chancellor of that university. A reader of a college of Delhi University was made the Vice-Chancellor; University functioned from Delhi office; took too much time to grow. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the then President of India, being unhappy with the sad affairs of the University, dissociated himself from its functioning. The Government of India has appointed new Chancellor, Sen is not happy. In his new book, *The Country of First Boys*, Amartya Sen has criticized the NDA government of political interference in the field of education. Sen, in his book, points out that the persons giving priority to *Hindutva* are made heads of the institutions of national importance during NDA regime; Y. Sudarshan Rao, appointed as head of the Indian Council of Historical Research, according to him, is known for his opinion about *Hindutva*, and not historical research. He quotes Lokesh Chandra's remark, declaring Modi as a new 'avatar of God'. This he writes, as if by that remark Lokesh Chandra becomes a non-scholar.

The deficiency syndrome in our educational institutions is becoming worrisome. Universities without knowledge-generating scholars, schools without properly qualified teachers, textbooks with defective course contents and faulty presentation of the teaching materials, think tanks without thinkers are the hurdles in the proper growth of education and healthy thinking.

A very sad aspect of the researches in social sciences in our country is that others set the agenda of the research in our universities. Take the case of 'deconstructionist' study of Indian society. It predominates in the arena of Indic Studies in American Universities. But why so in India? Why should we pay our own agencies to present the 'etic' view about ourselves by replacing the 'emic'?

Lastly, it needs mention that changes in the field of education and generation of ideas is overdue in India. But the forces opposing the same generate intellectual terror, and the BJP government gets terrorized. The problem shall continue till the thought-phobia is eliminated.

## Social Science Education: NCERT Textbooks for Indoctrination

A casual perusal of the social science textbooks for the school children prepared by the NCERT shockingly reveals the sad fact that these textbooks were prepared with certain ideological framework in mind. The writers have taken the unusual liberty, nowhere to be found in writing the school books for the children, and introduced the text material useful for indoctrination, rather than for education. The very first textbook of the subject (Class VI Social Science textbook) has a very strange beginning with the concocted story to smuggle a *political* conclusion about Hindu-Muslim riots in general. Not supported by any judicial inquiry report, it professes a conclusion about riots. At many other places also, the text material reflects plain indoctrination. For example, in chapter 2, about the situation of girls' education among Muslims. Similarly, the term 'dalit' is not in the Constitution, but is given in this chapter arbitrarily. It has problematic sentences such as, "India became a nation in 1947... ."

Publicity to all kinds of activist organizations (including semi-political organizations, such as SAHMAT, IPTA, etc. directly controlled by Communist Parties), and the individuals and friends for this or that minor help, in running text, is rampant and strange. The text abounds in newspaper materials and cartoons.

At least in two maps of India, its territory is shown beyond the boundary of the country; in one, Jammu & Kashmir, and in other, the North-East.

There is almost negligible care about the content, coherency, mental level of children and the real society they live in. Incoherency and haphazard babbling about anything and everything abound, the only one concern being 'to hammer political correct opinions about religious diversity, caste and secularism. The concepts such as 'caste system' or 'inequality' are defined amateurishly; these do not strictly adhere to the academic standards. Diversity is emphasized mainly in terms of religion and caste, and repeated many times in similar words and sentences in the very first chapter. In the name giving text material on diversity, the book, actually, feeds difference of selective kind with readymade, but doubtful conclusions, especially on religious and caste issues.

The authors follow the policy of starving the students of basic information. It is strange that the very guideline of the NCERT for the production of the textbooks for the young school students boasts of the policy of curtailing of the information input. Only two parts of India, namely, Laddakh and Jammu & Kashmir are covered in few sentences. Description of 'Kerala' in the first chapter is given in a manner as if no

Indian was living there and it was populated by Jewish and Arab traders. Also, most descriptions are about these only. Sentences like, 'Our present lives are all about moving from place to place for work and with each move our cultural traditional and way of life slowly become part of the new people we are in.' (Chapter 1) give odd impression. It gives the odd impression as if the book was written for some nomad children. And not celebrating diversity of the country.

Rather than the precise, correct information about inequality, discrimination, prejudice, etc., the opinions are more widespread in the whole text, as if some informal talk is going on between adult academics. The texts mention the full references in the text, as used in academic articles, which is absurd for a school text of preliminary classes. As is evident, the language reeks more of academic interaction between university professors and such academic, who speak in laconic, jargonized way; knowing the other will understand it anyway.

The style of text is peculiar; it shows the immaturity of the writers. The use 'we' at several places keep confusing. Sometimes it means children studying it, sometimes the textbook writers. Similarly, at several places the use of 'you', 'us' and 'they' do not make sense. The writers completely forget what they wrote in the last sentence, so a reference to 'us' takes the form of 'they' in the very next sentence! Needless to say that lack of carefulness makes the text highly confusing.

While reading the book, even mature and grown up persons get confused. Therefore, it is natural that after reading it, no children would be able to define anything in correct terms, not even what political science or politics is? Thus, the very purpose of writing the book on the subject is defeated.

The school textbooks of the social sciences, published by the NCERT, had many weaknesses. The materials taught to the young ones are partly responsible for the increasing social conflicts and the anarchical trends in the society. The new Government at the centre should arrange studies on what we are teaching to our students, and take steps to bring the desired change. The books written with the political agenda should be removed as soon as possible. After all, we may only have poor quality of textbook writings from activists with low standards of objectivity, and parochial and political agenda, lacking professionalism. Efforts by the government to balance the social science textbooks may arouse protests from the left and liberal forces, but it needs to be done using the services of the educationists of repute nevertheless.

— Dr. B.B. Kumar

## Judicial Activism on the Upswing; Courts Make-up for Executive Apathy, Corruption

**Patricia Mukhim\***

The judiciary has been on the upswing and taking suo-moto notice of executive failures or malafide intent on the part of governments. Whether we take the VYAPAM scam in Madhya Pradesh, the landmark National Green Tribunal crackdown on environmental degradation through mining activities, deforestation and other forms of pollution; the Neer Mahal case of Tripura where the court has ordered the Government of Tripura not to encroach on heritage property which is also a private property and many more, the courts have played a pro-people role.

These court rulings have had far reaching consequences. The salutary effects they have had on groups, individuals and firms that had hitherto been used to the 'business as usual' attitude, believing they can bribe their way through is also intuitive. A supine bureaucracy has been obliging wheeler-dealers who have free entry into all the State secretariats. For decades the executive (government) has allowed laws to be flouted; bureaucrats and politicians have colluded with vested interests and encouraged the culture of crony capitalism. In this culture merit has no value. It is political clout and money that is the deciding factor whether it be for government employment, entry into professional institutes or educational institutions of higher learning. Law abiding citizens have almost lost hope in the system. Those who can afford to, approach the courts of law for redressal. Others who cannot afford

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\* The writer is editor, The Shillong Times and an eminent social activist, journalist and member of National Security Advisory Board.

legal fees bear and grin and perhaps in their frustration take the wrong path.

The NGT ban on coal mining in Meghalaya came like a blessing in disguise for environmental activists who had been campaigning for years against rat hole mining which were carrying on without any environmental safeguards. Child labour was rampant in the coal mines. When mines collapsed as a result of flash floods etc., the miners were buried inside and no one cared about what happened to them. Most of these deaths went unreported. The media had been highlighting these issues repeatedly but to no avail. It took a PIL from the Dima Hasao Students' Union in the Supreme Court to bring in the NGT ban on coal mining. The people of Dima Hasao (formerly North Cachar Hills) had been complaining of highly toxic water flowing down from the coal mines of Meghalaya into their rivers and streams. No one listened to them until they filed a PIL. Now the NGT has allowed only coal that has been extracted before April 2014 to be transported. This quantum of extracted coal is being determined by a committee appointed by the NGT.

Several rivers in coal rich East and West Jaintia Hills district such as the river Myntdu and Lukha had become toxic and could no longer support marine life. With the NGT ban on coal mining the rivers would hopefully rejuvenate themselves.

Another landmark judgement of the Meghalaya High Court this year was to ban all bandhs and protests that bring life to a standstill. This followed a bandh call from the Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) an insurgent outfit, to protest against the ordinance passed by the State Government for grass-roots administration. The ordinance was meant to restore the powers of the Headmen (Rangbah Shnong) of Khasi-Jaintia Hills to issue certificates of good conduct or to identify the residents of their village/localities. This power had earlier been stripped by the Meghalaya High Court following a petition by some villagers who had been ostracised from their village on the allegation that they practised witchcraft. Since the powers and responsibilities of the Rangbah Shnong had not been defined they assumed arbitrary powers over time. So the Headmen took it upon themselves to issue certificates to the residents within their localities for opening bank accounts, apply for electricity connection, apply for passports etc. The court ruled that this was not the mandate of the Rangbah Shnong and is the remit of the District Administration.

The HNLC bandh call, saw the entire Khasi & Jaintia Hills come to a standstill. Although the government offices were open, attendance

was thin. Banking institutions and schools, colleges and universities were closed. The High Court took a dim view of things when court officers themselves absented themselves from duty. The Director General of Police, Meghalaya was summoned to the High Court and asked to explain why enough security was not provided, so that citizens could go about their daily activities. The Police honcho blamed the media for highlighting the bandh call, each time militant outfits or other fringe groups called a bandh. The High Court then directed that no media should carry news of any bandh call by any militant outfit or organisation. The media complied. Normally the HNLC and other militant groups of North East India call a bandh on Independence Day and Republic Day. This time although they sent their regular bandh call missive by email, no media carried the news. As a result Independence Day this year was celebrated with rare abandon. This has happened almost after two decades of house arrest on national days plus other days.

The court ruling has in fact shown up how insurgent outfits have succeeded to get their messages across through media houses for decades. These outfits have used the media as their force multipliers. When the media stopped publishing news of the bandh call on Independence Day, people actually enjoyed their freedom in more ways than one.

The most recent Gauhati High Court interim order has put the brakes on sale of all passenger vehicles (M1 category) weighing up to 1500 kilograms. The interim order, passed on July 26, was in response to petitions filed by three persons based in Guwahati. They cite low safety level of small cars in India as the reason for filing the petitions. The interim order came into effect after the Assam Transport Department sent a directive to all district transport officers on August 6. This move is expected to affect automobile companies' sales in the region which is a major market for small cars. It is learnt that Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai Motor India are most affected by the interim order. The PIL drew the attention of the court to the results of the European New Car Assessment Programme (Euro NCAP) tests last year where some cars from India failed to get any star rating. The Gauhati High Court cites the Euro NCAP test held in November 2014, in its interim order. The Gauhati High Court has "directed" the Central government "not to permit the auto manufacturers to release and sell the small 4-wheelers with a mass of up to 1500 kilograms and quadri-cycles without putting them to crash test and emission test."

On May 10 this year, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) directed the Union Ministry of Power, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, governments of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam and the Brahmaputra Board to set up a proposal for scientific study of the comprehensive cumulative environmental impact from the hydroelectric projects being set up in Arunachal Pradesh. The Tribunal says the study should be conducted in terms of the effect of these hydroelectric projects on the downstream areas on water sources, biodiversity and socio-ecology of the people.

This ruling comes after a petition filed by a senior citizen, Pradip Kumar Bhuyan and wildlife photographer Joydeep Bhuyan on April 30 last. Mr Pradip Bhuyan is an avid environmentalist and educationist, who started Faculty School in Guwahati. The petitioners argued that the Brahmaputra is central to all those hydroelectric projects coming up in Arunachal Pradesh and a flowing Brahmaputra is sacrosanct for the people of the NE region. The proposed over 135 hydroelectric projects in Arunachal Pradesh are having four-hour-peaking generation type dams, which hold up water for 20 hours or so in a day in lean months and create tsunami in four hours or so when all turbines are operational.

They contended that this process will devastate the valleys of Arunachal Pradesh, the Brahmaputra and also the river island Majuli, Kaziranga National Park once the dams are commissioned 15 to 20 years hence. This should put paid to the commissioning of so many hydel projects in Arunachal Pradesh without adequate impact assessment.

While on the subject of court rulings in another significant judgement with serious ramification, the High Court of Tripura had on May 6, 2014 cancelled recruitment of all school teachers from March 2010. A total of 10,323 undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate teachers would lose their jobs, following the order that termed the appointments illegal.

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Deepak Gupta and Justice S.C. Das who heard 58 petitions from aggrieved unemployed youths for over four months, delivered the judgement with certain directives to the government. Senior counsel Arun Chandra Bhowmik who represented several petitioners, termed the verdict historic and victory for suffering youths who were deprived of jobs, despite having the requisite qualifications.

The plaintiffs complained all appointment procedures and norms were violated in recruitment of 10,323 teachers. The State government

had in March 2010 appointed 4,617 graduate teachers, 1,100 postgraduate teachers in August of the same year and 4,606 undergraduate teachers in December 2013.

The judgement mentioned that despite cancellation of appointments, the recruited teachers can continue working till the next December 31. It directed the State government to ensure transparent recruitment of teachers as per the procedure and made a point to consider the age limit of bonafide candidates who were denied jobs in earlier recruitment exercises.

It may be pointed out that the setting up of the High Courts in the States of Meghalaya, Manipur, Sikkim, Tripura, Gauhati etc., had also provided the judiciary in these States with a better perspective of the governance vacuum and the massive corruption that has destroyed the hopes and dreams of many. For now, the courts have instilled a sense of hope in the citizens that all is not lost.

## Who is Indigenous and Who is Outsider?

**Pradip Phanjoubam\***

In diplomacy and politics there are only interests and no friends or enemies they say. This time worn dictum of statecraft deserves a closer look in the present day Manipur.

This is particularly so because the place continues pathetically to be unable to get itself out of the time warp of seeing only in terms of primeval allies and adversaries. Catch phrases like “indigenous peoples” and “outsiders,” and the presumptions all indigenous peoples are natural allies and that all outsiders are not to be trusted, today dominate discussions and concerns at every level.

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\*Editor, Imphal Free Press, Imphal, Manipur.

First in the elite circles, then these vocabularies and jargons percolate and come to be flaunted with a sense of mission in Manipur's familiar brand of street politics. Every now and then jolts come to shake up these presumptions. The "indigenous peoples" often discover that they have no goodwill at all for each other, and sometimes even nurture mutual ill will, yet the illusion persists. The same drama plays out in the reverse when it is discovered that the so-called outsiders can be good friends and allies.

One is reminded of Albert Camus' *The Guest*, where the divide between the "outsider" and the "insider" in the ultimate analysis is never bridged, even when every condition and quality needed to cement human bondages are present. The guest remains a guest till the end, never to be part of the host community. Wonder if it is the English translation from French which preferred the word "guest," and if the original French did not mean what we in the Northeast, and in particular Manipur, understand by the term "outsider," for the story fits our situation perfectly.

It is time to leave this bubble behind, before there are more disappointments and souring of relations. The way to go is to identify these "interests" realpolitik prescribes and then from a close consideration of them, renew and rebuild the avenues for friendships. But as a believer that a zero sum game is imminently avoidable, and to differ from the old dictum quoted about, this friendship building exercise does not have to necessarily create enemies.

What should have come across long ago is the realisation that the primacy in politics is on "interests" and not imagined traditional friendships or enmities. Indeed, with the inevitable process of the shifts of "interests" in keeping with the ebbs and flows of the tides of time, the latter will change too.

Fostering and preserving communal harmony then should be about ensuring these "interests" remain real and shared. This can only be done by building institutional structures of power sharing through consensus. This project unfortunately has never been taken up in earnest or else remained mired in platitudes and homilies.

As we have often argued in these columns, there are certain externalities beyond anybody's volition to change making it necessary for everybody to think in terms of peaceful co-existence, for there is no other way. This will be the most fundamental and given "interest" spanning everybody in the State. Even at the height of spiting each

other, people in the same boat cannot wish the boat to sink. Manipur's geography is this way.

If the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system, does become law in the State, it is to be seen as a good fence designed to make good neighbours, within the State two similar goodwill fences, some of which already exist, must be thought, lest the communities continue to step on each other's toes. This inner fence exists to some extent already, and the hills enjoy some measure of land protection.

Now with a Naga Accord in the horizon, what is certain is, part of the bargain in the final Naga settlement will have more autonomy for the Naga dominated districts. Probably this would mean similar autonomy for the remaining hill district of Churachandpur as well.

For obvious reasons, this will not be taken well by the valley districts, unless there is something for these districts too, to give justice parity. There obviously have been many ways the valley by its arrogance and insensitivities hurt the hills, and amends must be made for this, but cornering and pushing the valley against the wall relentlessly cannot be in the interest of peace either.

The ILP discussion must also be brought within this equation. It must not lead to more Moreh like situations, as it does seem it will, particularly if the clock is sought to be turned back six decades to define domicile. In any case, even if such a bill is introduced in the Assembly, there is no guarantee it will not be shot down on the way by the Union or else the courts.

The Assam experience is there to recall. If in the 1980s the demand for a cut off year of 1951 to define domicile was not acceptable, and finally the agreed year was 1971, just about a decade backdated, and even then it remained impossible to execute, to ask for backdating to 1951 in 2015, may amount to predicating the doom of the initiative at the very start.

There is no doubt that huge influx of immigrants from numerically far larger cultures can be a danger to the identities of small ethnic communities, but measures to check this must not amount to asking for the impossible, or causing undue hurts and injustices to others. It will do everybody, including the initiative itself good, to think of a more realistic and liberal date, if it cannot be just about freezing further influx from the current date.

# The Nation and Its Northeast

**Mrinal Miri\***

The magnitude of the cultural diversity of the northeast almost defies imagination. Perhaps there is no comparable geographical area in the world which is home to cultural diversity of this magnitude. The linguistic diversity of the region is an inalienable part of this cultural diversity. Difficult as it is to individuate languages - (Is there one Bengali language or is there a cluster of fairly distinct languages individuated as a single language for a variety of reasons?) – there may be – on a fairly stringent count - close to two hundred languages spoken in the northeast. Many of these languages are on the UNESCO list of ‘endangered’ languages. Although, the number of languages may not quite coincide with the number of cultures, because a single culture can frequently embrace considerable linguistic variations, languages that are, in very large measure, independent of each other (e.g. Bhojpuri and Khasi), embody distinct cultures.

A culture, in a rough way of looking at it, is the web of meanings that shapes the collective as well as the individual awareness of the members of a community – awareness of the significance that the world and things in it have for them. This sets it apart from other such webs of meanings, and language, being the primary carrier of meanings, is a sure mark of the distinctness, and therefore, the identity of a culture. But it is also clear that language does not encompass the entire world or web of meanings that constitutes a culture. Nature and objects in the natural world – the sun, the moon, stars, the sky, trees, animals, rivers,

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water bodies, and phenomena like eclipses of the sun and the moon are all part of the matrix of meanings constituting a culture, and language, the primary seat of meanings, embraces them in a wide fellowship of meaningfulness. Meanings of things and meanings of words interpenetrate and while meaning-laden things become part of the language, words frequently acquire or have particular sensory properties like texture, sound and so on and thereby become part of the world of things. [“Dream work” in Freudian psychology provides fascinating examples of how words can acquire the status of things and can have meanings in the way that things have meanings in life. The untranslatability of poetry might have much to do with a word being employed primarily for its sensory properties and not just in its dictionary meaning.] This interpenetrative mix of words and things is what I call fellowship of meaningfulness and is the stuff of poetry and myth. The distinctiveness of this mix is the basis of the distinctiveness of a culture and it is in this sense of distinctiveness of a culture that the diversity of cultures in the northeast is of enormous significance for our national life.

The most important thing about such distinctiveness is that each such distinctive culture has its own norms of good conduct, its own sense of right and wrong, its own ideas of human fulfilment, its own notions of what is of importance to life and what is not, and, perhaps, most importantly, its own answer to the question, “What is it to live well?” While such distinctiveness is an inescapable fact of the human condition, it is also a fact that cultures have interacted, learned from one another, some have dominated others, meanings have coalesced, and, in many cases, there has been a diminution of the distinctiveness.

Cultures of the north-east, because of their long common experience of the world around them and of each other in their manifold manifestations of humanity, have a natural understanding of and respect for each other. Since respect for diversity – including respect for cultural diversity – is part of the accepted ethic of our national life, the crucial question to ask in this context is: what is it to cultivate such respect? This is a large philosophical question; and I shall merely say this in answer to it: genuine respect presupposes genuine understanding, and genuine understanding involves an authentic insight into the right and wrong, good and bad as conceived and articulated in terms of the culture’s own resources of meaning and as permeating the culture’s springs of action, insight into the culture’s ideas of fulfilment, flourishing and of the good life, and its day-to-day normative sizing up of people,

actions and things, and the contextual subtleties and variations of such ethical practice.

In our current political and cultural context, the obstacles to authentic understanding, and therefore to genuine respect come from two sources – both powerful and frequently, quite invidious. The first is the widely accepted norms of governance in a republic of great diversity, such as India – the bureaucrat’s rule book. Bureaucratic rules are largely insensitive to contextual differentiations and subtleties. Concepts such as equality, decency, civilised, free, ugly, welfare, promiscuity, justice, – to take an extremely random sample – are generally used in abstraction from the density of contexts and their variety and thus very often end up with only a surface and frequently distorted, therefore, dangerous assessment of a community’s life and springs of action. I have no doubt in my mind that this has happened with communities, particularly, tribal communities in the northeast and that substantial part of the anxiety of the people of the region arises from this fact. I wish, however, to warn at the same time that the general issue is complicated and is currently the subject of a fairly intense debate in philosophy. Perhaps a useful approach to the debate is to see it as arising out of a crucial mandate – if we can call it that – of the modern state and the imperative of recognising plurality within the state. The modern, and we might add the adjective liberal, state has citizens and potential citizens (e.g. infants and children) as its basic human constituents. The state is responsible for providing the infrastructure for a relatively conflict-free – and, therefore, discrimination-free – society so that citizens can go about pursuing their lives’ ends in peace and with relative freedom from hindrances. For this the state needs rules that are general and abstract, as free from contextual variations as possible. These rules might have an ethical edge, e.g. rules relating to the concept of welfare, right, public honesty, equality, matrimony etc.; but their ethical content is only on the periphery, they do not enter into the density of our context-bound, palpable matrix of every-day ethical life. The latter is plural and culturally contingent. The modern liberal state acknowledges this ethical plurality but, for that reason, is in the permanent predicament of having to reconcile it with the bureaucratic imperatives of state functioning. Frequently, attempts at reconciliation are themselves taken to be contrary to the best interest of the state, and are abandoned and bureaucratic abstraction triumphs. I would like to suggest that the very best bureaucratic practice is flawed by the need to adhere to the imperative of ‘state interest’. The

Verier Elwin intervention in the northeast in the early 1950’s was a mild and groping attempt at such a reconciliation, but it was very quickly cut short and abandoned. While the very best bureaucratic practice may be thus flawed, one can imagine what a bureaucratic practice which is both incompetent and insensitive to ‘alien’ local perspectives, but at the same time, armed with state power, can do to the life and spirit of a vulnerably placed culture.

The second obstacle to authentic understanding is the widely prevalent “mainstream” cultural baggage with which cultures on the peripheries of national life, such as tribal cultures, are sought to be understood. Politicians, bureaucrats, corporations, traders, and even academics and intellectuals carry this baggage. This cultural baggage is a huge hindrance to understanding. And freedom from such hindrances will require a degree of self-examination and self-awareness, and, therefore, unselfishness, that is hardly ever achieved. Such is our human predicament – the ‘ego-centric predicament’, as some philosophers termed it many years ago.

While, even academics and intellectuals tend to carry the baggage of so-called mainstream culture, these groups are vulnerable to another, related, but even more invidious source of biased perception and this is the hold that ideologies and theories have over them. Marxism, liberalism, evolutionism, behaviourism, utilitarianism, Kantianism, and add to them their counterparts in the Indian intellectual tradition – helpful as they are in many ways – each of them imposes a framework of understanding that is not open to experience which is opaque to its way of looking at things, to its own community of ideas. This results either in being dismissive of such experiences as meaningful at all; or in imputing meanings to them which are not theirs at all. Thus take the Frazerian view that rituals in tribal communities are to be understood as pre-scientific, pre-rational magical practices – and, therefore that, such communities are ‘primitive’ - at the lowest level of human evolutionary development. The damage done by such theoretical perspective on our understanding of tribal cultures has been quite incalculable.

I wish now to draw attention to two or three somewhat more ground level, concrete issues. There has perhaps been more said and written about the need to enhance the economic well-being of the northeast, than about such need for any other region. Yet north-east’s economy has never gathered sufficient energy to give it a sense of autonomy and confidence. There is good reason why in spite of the

great diversity of the region, and political skirmishes within it, the northeast should be regarded as a sort of unit that must be economically integrated and strengthened. For one thing the entire region is almost cripplingly economically dependent on the rest of country; combined with the sense of historical autonomy that the region, as a whole, enjoys, this absence of economic self-reliance is a powerful impetus for profound dissatisfaction and anxiety among the people; and, this, negative though it is, is a very strong binding force for the people of the northeast. Also let us remind ourselves that economic exchange and mutual interdependence among the communities of the northeast are a part of the living memory of the people of the northeast. Strengthening and integrating the economy of the northeast has been on the national agenda for half a century and more – but with almost nothing to show for it. Economic dependence on the mainland has only increased if anything and there is only a minuscule presence of the northeast in the general economy of the country. Opening up the eastern boundaries of the region for infrastructure development, trade, commerce, industry, vigorous renewal of old cultural ties, education and research can make the crucial difference. The important point to keep in mind, however, is that opening up of the eastern boundaries must not mean opening up of these boundaries to facilitate economic ties with our eastern neighbours through a narrow northeastern corridor. This will only ensure that economic status quo is not disturbed, and culturally there might be even more depressing consequences.

Next I wish to say a little about the importance of history for a people and the dangers of either ignoring it, or attempting to replace it by a past that is in no way theirs. Think of an individual and her idea of what or who she is – in short, her identity, and let us also remember that without a sense of what or who I am, I am lost in the world – an “unaccommodated” denuded creature. [“unaccommodated (by language, memory and community) man is no more but such a poor bare, forked animal.” William Shakespeare, *King Lear*]. The individual’s identity is inseparable from her past, and it can only be articulated in terms of her emotional, ethical and reflective engagement with it. Take away her past, and you have taken away her capacity for any meaningful, sustainable self-awareness. Without self-awareness, there is no self-identity. It is similar in the case of a community or a culture. A community’s self-identity is similarly premised on its awareness of its past and its emotional and yet reflective and critical commitment to and engagement with it. The past of a community, like our tribal non-

literate communities, comes down to it orally from generation to generation, through its language, music, songs, other forms of creative expression and its great variety of narratives – tales, stories, legends and myths. These, as it were, constitute the thickness or density of their history. Such thick history is to be contrasted with the formal, abstract, lifeless, thin histories of these communities that we attempt to write in our universities. It is in the creative engagement with its thick past that a community can be at home with itself. Such engagement, of course, does not exclude a critical look at oneself and openness to the other. Our attempts – frequently unwitting – to deprive our communities of their past come from different sources. Two of them are: 1. the totally misconceived so-called “strategic” reason that for purposes of national integration, it is best that memories of an autonomous past are not rekindled. It is misconceived strategically, because national unity cannot be built on erased memories. In fact memories, cannot be erased. They have a way of surfacing in different guises some of which may be quite dangerous from whatever point of view we look at them: whether of national interest or of the interest of the communities whose memories are in question. 2. The so-called civilising mission that some cultures engage in in relation to other – less powerful – cultures. The aim of such missions is to convince the “victim” culture that its past is so murky that it is best for it to disown and abandon it and live life as though it didn’t have a past at all or, even perhaps worse, equip it with a new past – a past that is in no way its own. It requires only a little reflection to realise that such attempts have indeed been made – sometimes perhaps with “noble” intentions – in relation to the cultures of the northeast. The idea that the tribes can be saved for humanity only by “lifting” them out of their savage and brute existence and placing them in the lap of some mentally and spiritually “evolved” form of life is deeply ingrained in the ideologies of many religions as also, I am afraid, in the ideology of scientific rationality. I can think of – but shall not elaborate – profound moral objections to such missions. Suffice it to say that the ethical maturity of an individual or a community is firmly based on the way it is able to own up its past, come to terms with it and overcome its hold on it when one’s ethical compulsions so demand, and not by being given a past which is not its own.

At the end a word about national unity. To my mind national unity is our work in progress. Commitment to a nation has an ethical edge, but it is also deeply interest driven. The ethical edge comes from the fact that the nation gives one a sense of belonging that can enhance

one's self and, if you like, one's personhood. Being an Indian means that one is the inheritor of the great wealth – moral, spiritual, cultural and intellectual wealth – that is India's. The wealth, of course, also means the wealth of diversity. Such inheritance can give one an enhanced sense of identity, which brings with it a special sense of responsibility. And this responsibility can become part of our total ethical being. National identity may sometimes acquire an overriding ethical dimension; but it is not necessary, nor does it of course exclude respect for other national identities. But commitment to a nation is a powerful challenge – the challenge needs to be met with much ethical energy and sensitivity. The challenge – it is important to remind oneself – is to a very large extent the challenge of developing respect – genuine, deep, as opposed to surface, respect for diversity. The other aspect of national unity is the strength of the self-interest that is involved in being part of a nation. The interest ranges from security, both internal and external, economic well-being and sharing a world of peace, harmony, freedom and equality. Thus ethics and self-interest combine to provide us with a powerful motive for engaging in the adventure of building a nation. It is crucial however to realise that this is a motive that all of us – all communities, all cultures all regions including the northeast – have to cultivate in order to turn this land of magical diversity into a thriving, pulsating nation. The onus on the north-east – let me add a last word – is just as crucial as the onus on the rest of the country.

The concept of a nation had its origin in the context of a set of particular historical-political contingencies; and through time, it has changed its meaning, but to most people who believe that it is a concept that is used legitimately to organise an important cluster of our experiences of the world outside ourselves, it has a very significant ethical and emotional content. This content has to do with the concept's deep association with ideas like unity, belonging, co-operation, territoriality ("my land") etc. and our ordinary day to day ethical experience is intricately embedded in ideas like these and others. It is for us Indians to determine the proper ethical contours of the concept of a nation; and this is a major part of the challenge I referred to above.

## Champa in the Global Vision of Classical India

Lokesh Chandra\*

The foundation and flourishing of Champa on the major marine trade route from Kanchi to Canton, or from the SE Asian isles to Canton, was part of a new historic phenomenon of the fast emergence of cultural kingdoms from tribal orders. The new paradigm was the empowerment of the dormant energy of the non-alphabetic tribes by enriching them with a writing system and thinking patterns; establishing kingdoms with a king, ministers, nobility and State functionaries; setting up palaces and temples; the rise of an intellectual class and priestly orders. Emperor Asoka sought the substitution of war drums by the drums of Dharma, *bherighosa* became *dharmaghosa*. He initiated this process of culturization by sending his son Mahendra and his daughter Sanghamitra to Srilanka by deputing his ministers to Khotan and crowning his son as the first "King of Khotan," by planning his son Kunala to be the King of Kucha, and so on. This sowing of intellectual seeds in the immensity of the regions was the rise of a new order of a spiritual culture and secular civilisation in the whole of Asia. The theodiversity, pluralism of life styles, alongwith an organised state, economy and strategic systems of India became the dawn of a new age in the SE Asian region upto mainland China. Indian savants, princes and merchants envisioned Suvarnavdipa in their quest of affluence of life. Suvarnavdipa was a general term for Eutopian lands in SE Asia. Kaundinya's voyage to Cambodia, his victory over the Nagi queen and marrying her to

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found the new kingdom, or the exciting find of a first century ceramic sherd with Kharosthi characters from the coastal region of Bangkah in Bali, and other happenings evidence the continuous acculturation of the region as well as the development of trade.

International marine trade remained intrinsic to the economic, cultural and technological development of India. The names of the Gupta emperors Srigupta, Candragupta and Samudragupta indicate a flourishing trans-oceanic trade. In Srigupta, Sri is affluence which resulted from trade with China. Itsing points out that he constructed a Cina-vihara for Chinese monks who accompanied the ocean-going merchants to pray for a safe journey. Candra in Candragupta refers to the turbulence on the seas due to the rising of the moon on a full-moon day or night. I have personally experienced the havoc of the full-moon during a month long journey from Bombay to Naples via the Cape of Good Hope, when the sea became so rough that the utensils were flying in the cabin, faced constant vomiting and had to be tied to the slipperette to avoid being hurt. In the name Candragupta the word candra refers to the oceans, by semantic extension to 'marine trade,' and the means adopted to ensure safety. Under Candragupta I the Gupta dynasty rose into prominence because of the expanding international commerce. His son and successor Samudragupta (r.335-375) is a clear reference to the Gupta dominance over the seas (*samudra*).

The Chalukya kings of Gujarat built the celebrated Somanatha Temple on the coast of Kathiawar. It was dedicated to Lord Siva as the Lord (natha) of the Moon (Soma) to guard the trans-oceanic merchants. The waxing and waning of the moon has "fatal" effects on the waves of the oceans which toss the ships in deadly turbulence. Siva as Somanatha was to mitigate the tumult and turbulence, the *Sturm und Drang*, caused by Soma or the Moon. The large number of Siva temples blessing the coastline of Champa were divine blessings to ensure safety across the seas. Champa enshrines the shining memories of India when she ruled the waves. Champa is the Jaya Somanatha of history.

The Chinese Emperor sent an embassy to the King of Kanchi in AD 1-6 to request for a rhinoceros. Its horns are powdered and considered most efficacious as tonic in China. A pair of its horns symbolise happiness and they are one of the eight treasures.<sup>1</sup> The "tribute" of the rhinoceros was repeated in AD 84 and 94, and it continued as late as T'ang. Breathing tubes made of a rhinoceros horn are mentioned in a passage of the Pao-p'u-tzu (about AD 320) which enabled to breathe in water (Needham, *ibid.*673). Mêng-ch'ung or ships with their backs and roofs armoured over with rhinoceros hide were

used to swoop suddenly on an unprepared enemy. Thus, rhinoceros had magico-medical qualities, as well as was adapted for high mobility in strategic operations (Needham IV.3:686). Because of the developing trade with China, India realised the importance of inhabiting the long coastal line of Vietnam from Kanchi to Canton. The earliest Chinese reference to Linyu 'or Champa dates to AD 190-1933.<sup>3</sup> Linyu 林邑 means the "kingdom of forests."

Around the same time the Mara dynasty was ruling Champa, as evidenced by the Vo-chanh Rock Inscription dated to the second century AD on paleographic grounds (*mara...rajakula, mara...kula-nandana*).<sup>4</sup> The poet Nakkirar addresses the Pandyan prince Nan-Maran as "O Mara, whose sword is ever victorious, spend thou thy days in peace and joy, drinking daily out of golden cups ... the wine brought by the Yavanas in their good ships." (Pillay, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, ch.iii). The Mara dynasty of the Vo-chanh Inscription may have been an offshoot of this Pandyan royal family. The Pandyan bride of Prince Vijaya was brought over to Sri Lanka in a large ship which carried more than 800 passengers on boards.<sup>5</sup> The Pandyans were conscious of advantages of maintaining international contacts. In 20 BC a Pandyan king sent an embassy to Rome (*ibid.*96). The Pandyan kingdom had extensive commercial relations with overseas countries. Megasthenes had heard of it in the fourth century BC. The Sanskrit grammarian Katyayana (4th cent. BC) mentions the Pandyas. It was known to Pliny (1st cent.) as a flourishing kingdom, also to the Periplus (c.AD 80) and to Ptolemy (c.AD 140).

The local tribes of the forests must have felt threatened by the newly arrived Indians and skirmishes must have been a frequent occurrence. To pre-empt them, the Indianised kings were obliged to import the tall and swift steeds of Central Asian Kambuja (i.e. Ferghana). The sole of these steeds has been highlighted in the Karandavyuha in the Simhalavadana chapter. K'ang-t'ai, who travelled to SE Asia around AD 260 says that the Kings used to get horses from the Yüeh-chih. A decade earlier (c.AD 250) the King of Cambodia got four fine Yüeh-chih horses.<sup>6</sup> The Yüeh-chih horses, called *balahaka* in Sanskrit, were a crucial factor in the grand game of acculturation, political transformation and economic development of the areas that were adopting India's spiritual culture and material civilisation, under Indian kings who married locally and merged with the indigenous people in the first generation.

A lost third century Chinese work (quoted in later works) refers to the Tun-sun kingdom whose king was named K'un-lun 王名崑崙 .

Five hundred families and more than a thousand brahmanas had come here from India. The local people followed the doctrine of India and gave their daughters in marriage to the Indians.<sup>7</sup> The Chinese K'un-lun is a transcription of Kundunga the place whence Narendra the grandfather of King Mulavarman had come. The son of Narendra was Asvavarman who laid the foundations of the dynasty. It seems that originally they came for trading horses and in course of time assumed royal power. I have detailed the Kundunga dynasty in the *Cultural Horizons of India* 7.221-230 in a discussion of their seven inscriptions. The Kundunga dynasty gave its name to the whole region and to the people of the South Seas in Chinese as K'un-lun. Even Masudi speaks of the Sea of Kundrang.<sup>8</sup> The toponym Kundunga in the inscription of Mulavarman refers to Kundungal. The Centenary Edition of the *Post and Telegraph Guide* (Part II.385) issued in Oct 1954 mentions Kundungal as a sub-post office of Kazhikode in Malabar. Malabar was the source of teakwood, which was used for building ships. The Arab writer ibn Khurdadhbih Bullin mentions the Southern Malabar port called Kulam Mali (QuiIon) where Arab ships paid toll of a thousand dirhams, and skirted south of Sri Lanka'→ Nicobar Islands'→ Kedah'→ Malacca Strait, and cutting across they stopped at the ports in Champa (Arabic Sanf)'→ Gulf of Tongking '→ Hanoi '→ and finally to Canton (George Fadlo Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times*, Princeton, 1951:70-72). The Arabs, took a good supply of water, food and other necessities for the long run to China (Hourani 1951:70).

It was natural that Indian transnational merchants of Malabar sailed to the SE Asian islands and founded the Kundunga dynasty with their fast steeds. King Mulavarman of this dynasty conquered chieftains of the surrounding areas, assumed imperial powers, and established the first lighthouse in the region which triggered multinational trade to the heights of safety and left the imprint of his dynastic glory in the Chinese name K'un-lun for the SE Asian region. The lighthouse may have been modelled after that of Alexandria which was constructed in 270 BC. All these developments were enhancing the role of Champa in international trade, with its long coastline. Even naval battles took place between the Chinese and the people of Champa in AD 248, again in 359, and in 407. In AD 431 more than a hundred ships 'of Champa, with superstructures, attacked the province of Tongking," but had to retreat due to the fleet of "castled ships." Champa was a powerful State with a large fleet of ships, and advanced technology for naval defence. In AD 284 Champa sent the first embassy to China. As mentioned

earlier, the name of Samudragupta suggests domination of the sea lanes during his long reign of forty years (335-375) and contacts with Champa may have existed. Champa's naval attack in AD 359 on Tongking falls during his rule.

In the mid-fourth century, King Bhadravarman erected the palladium temple consecrated to the Siva-lings Bhadresvara. He commenced the tradition of prefixing the name of the reigning king to Isvara or Siva. As maritime trade was the major source of the affluence of the state of Champa, Lord Siva was invoked to bless the safety of the sea lanes. By 758, Champa developed major commercial centres at Kauthara (mod. Nha. trang) and Panduranga (mod. Phan-rang).

Sambhuvarman succeeded his father Rudravarman, restored the temple of Bhadresvara, and sent embassies to China in AD 568 and 572, stopped the customary tribute for some years but renewed it in AD 595. The Chinese invaded Champa by land and sea, defeated the Champa forces, King Sambhuvarman fled from the battlefield, and reached the capital in 605. The Chinese general took musicians to the Imperial court of China, the golden tablets of 18 Kings who ruled before Sambhuvarman and immense booty that impressed the Chinese with the fabulous wealth of Champa. But above all, he took 1350 Buddhist works. Champa became the main entrepot to service the shipping and sailors travelling between the Malay world and Canton.

The maritime route was safer than the Central Asian Silk Route to India. So Buddhist pilgrims journeyed to India by sea. In 424, Gunavarman of Kashmir reached China via Champa. In the Lives of Sixty Monks who pilgrimaged to India in the seventh century, I-tsing mentions that 37 of them travelled by sea. Monk Chen-ku took the route from Canton to Fan-yu to Champa to Srivijaya.

Champa with its vibrant Sanskrit culture as can be visualised in the elaborate metres of her inscriptions, with its rich holdings of Sanskrit texts, its advanced technology of navigation, controlled the shipping from Kanchi to Canton. It was the "look east" policy of ancient India as the cultural superpower of the Asian world in those times.

Emperor Shomu of Japan raised the national temple of the Todaiji to symbolise the power of the State, and national solidarity of all classes of the population. Its consecration ceremony was held on 9 April, 752. It was accompanied by grand musical performances by Buddhasthira who hailed from Champa (Jap. Rinyu). He performed eight dances with music from Champa for the consecration of the Daibutsu of Roshana or Colossal Image of Rocana, the like of which did not exist even in China. The eight Champa performances were:

1. Bodhisattva dance
2. Pedu dance of killing the dragon
3. Kalavinka dance
4. Dance of the triumphant march of Bhairava (tandava)
5. Dance of Amba (Iasya)
6. Joy of a Thousand Autumns
7. Dance of Nagaraja Sagara
8. Dance of a drunken Hu (Sogdian)

The first five dances were purely Indian. The second dance represents the Rigvedic legend of Pedu who was a protégé of the Asvins. They gave him a horse called Paidva who killed demons (*ahihan*). This swift, strong, white, incomparable, dragon-slaying steed, impelled by Indra, won Pedu unbounded spoils (RV.1.116.6 etc. in Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p.52). In 1874, during the Meiji Restoration to Modern Japan, twenty musicals were fixed for court ceremonies. Three of the Champa ceremonies of Pedu (2), Kalavinka (3) and Nagaraja Sagara (7) were retained. They are the only Champa ceremonies performed in our times.

Buddhasthira of Champa, along with Bodhisena of India, taught Sanskrit to the Japanese for the first time. Sanskrit words like *sara* (Skt. sarava) for a plate, *osewa* (Skt. seva) for an automat enshrine their memory.

The most important inscriptions from Champa number 128. Majority of them invoke Saiva deities: 92 Saiva deities, 21 no deity, 7 Buddha, 5 Brahma, 3 Visnu. Siva was the government of the beyond, and his consort became Bhagavati Kautharesvari as the Palladium of the State (Skt. Kauthara is mod Nha-trang, Cham: Yattran). The Chains still remember her as Po Nagar 'the Sovereign of the Realm' when everything has been destroyed by the cruel hand of history. Cham village women in Central Vietnam continue to recount the exploits of *Yan In* that is God Indra with his strength and weaknesses. The golden centuries of Champa, profound in *Hoch Kultur* or High Culture, can be glimpsed in the inscription of King Sri Paramesvara where the goddess of Nha-trang is identified with Uma. How well the Chams expressed themselves in Sanskrit in 1050 AD in the subtle alliteration of the kavyas exercises our ingenuity even to comprehend:

भताभतेशभता भवि भव-विभवोद्भाव-भावात्मभावा

In the remarkably brilliant translation of Bergaigne, who could unfold the wonder of words in the challenging diction of sragdhara and

sardulavikridita; the inscription means: "Pertaining to him who is the lord of what is and what is not, having as real nature the quality of being the origin of the development of existence on earth ... being one with the being and the non-being that exists in the world, primordial potentiality of the being and the non-being, having as body the half of the body of Siva who has the moon as diadem, having a beautiful body, Oh you who are part of the Lord ... Oh Blessed One, be as it were, by your magic power, the vanquisher of us who are prostrate before you."

Champa was the efflorescence of a process of the appearance of kingdoms from tribal Chieftans, by the acceptance of Indic religions, construction of Hindu-Buddhist temples and the use of Sanskrit in inscriptions. Champa lay on two major marine routes from India to China and from the Indonesian world to China. To this end Siva sancta dotted the coastline of Champa, with Lord Siva blessing the sea-going vessels against the turbulence of the waves that tore the hearts of voyagers, or as Aryasura says in the Jatakamala (ed. Kern p.89) नौरभ्यधिकं चक्रम्पे विषादयन्ती हृदयानि तेषाम । The language of the Chams is related to Indonesian and Malay.

Champa breathes centuries of history in the glittering silence of her mind, and whispers in our ears:

*I am also a drop of nectar  
With tomorrows inside.*

The tomorrows have to be the creative leap of India in the dawning years.

#### Notes:

1. Joseph Needham, Science and Civilisation in China, IV.3:444.
2. B. Laufer, Chinese Clay Figures Pt.I, *Prolegomena to the History of Defensive Armour*, Field Museum of Natural History (Chicago) Publications, 13 no.2 (177), 1914:80 .
3. Kenneth H Hall, *Maritime Trade and State Development ill Early Southeast Asia*, Honolulu, 1985: 179f.
4. R.C. Majumdar, *Champa*, Lahore, 1927:21.
5. Radha Kumud Mookerji, *A History of Indian Shipping*, Calcutta, Orient Longmans Pvt. Ltd., 1957:20, 48-49
6. Paul Pelliot, Le Fou-nan, *BEFEO* 1903:3.57; Needham IV.3:449.
7. Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*, 1961: 17.
8. Wheatley 1961:228.
9. Needham IV/3.442. Details in G. Ferrand, Le K'ouen-Louen et les Anciennes Navigations Interocéaniques dans les Mers du Sud, JA. 1991: 13.239, 431, 14.5, 201.



In the beginning of man's history, his first social object was to form a community, to grow into a person. At that early period, individuals were gathered together within geographical enclosures. But in the present age, with its facility of communication, geographical barriers have almost lost their reality, and the great federation of men, which is waiting either to find its true scope or to break asunder in a final catastrophe, is not a meeting of individuals, but of various human races. Now the problem before us is of one single country, which is this earth, where the races as individuals must find both their freedom of self-expression and their bond of federation. Mankind must realize a unity, wider in range, deeper in sentiment, stronger in power than ever before. Now that the problem is large, we have to solve it on a bigger scale, to realize the God in man by a larger faith and to build the temple of our faith on a sure and worldwide basis.

The first step towards realization is to create opportunities for revealing the different peoples to one another. This can never be done in those fields where the exploiting utilitarian spirit is supreme. We must find some meeting ground, where there can be no question of conflicting interests. One of such places is the University, where we can work together in a common pursuit of truth, share together our common heritage, and realize that artists in all parts of the world have created forms of beauty, scientists discovered secrets of the universe, philosophers solved the problems of existence, saints made the truth of the spiritual world organic in their own lives, not merely for some particular race to which they belonged, but for all mankind. When the science of meteorology knows the earth's atmosphere as continuously one, affecting the different parts of the world differently, but in a harmony of adjustments, it knows and attains truth. And so, too, we must know that the great mind of man is one, working through the many differences which are needed to ensure the full result of its fundamental unity. When we understand this truth in a disinterested spirit, it teaches us to respect all the differences in man that are real, yet remain conscious of our oneness; and to know that perfection of unity is not in uniformity, but in harmony.

This is the problem of the present age. The East, for its own sake and for the sake of the world, must not remain unrevealed. The deepest source of all calamities in history is misunderstanding. For where we do not understand, we can never be just.

Being strongly impressed with the need and the responsibility, which every individual today must realize according to his power, I

have formed the nucleus of an International University in India, as one of the best means of promoting mutual understanding between the East and the West. This Institution, according to the plan I have in mind, will invite students from the West to study the different systems of Indian philosophy, literature, art and music in their proper environment, encouraging them to carry on research work in collaboration with the scholars already engaged in this task.

India has her renaissance. She is preparing to make her contribution to the world of the future. In the past she produced her great culture, and in the present age she has an equally important contribution to make to the culture of the New World which is emerging from the wreckage of the Old. This is a momentous period of her history pregnant with precious possibilities, when any disinterested offer of co-operation from any part of the West will have an immense moral value, the memory of which will become brighter as the regeneration of the East grows in vigour and creative power.

The Western Universities give their students an opportunity to learn what all the European peoples have contributed to their Western culture. Thus the intellectual mind of the West has been luminously revealed to the world. What is needed to complete this illumination is for the East to collect its own scattered lamps and offer them to the enlightenment of the world.

There was a time when the great countries of Asia had, each of them, to nurture its own civilization apart in comparative seclusion. Now has come the age of co-ordination and co-operation. The seedlings that were reared within narrow plots must now be transplanted into the open fields. They must pass the test of the world market, if their maximum value is to be obtained.

But before Asia is in a position to co-operate with the culture of Europe, she must base her own structure on a synthesis of all the different cultures which she has. When, taking her stand on such a culture, she turns toward the West, she will take, with a confident sense of mental freedom, her own view of truth, from her own vantage ground, and open a new vista of thought to the world. Otherwise, she will allow her priceless inheritance to crumble into dust, and, trying to replace it clumsily with feeble imitations of the West, make herself superfluous, cheap and ludicrous. If she thus loses her individuality and her specific power to exist, will it in the least help the rest of the world? Will not her terrible bankruptcy involve also the Western mind? If the whole

world grows at last into an exaggerated West, then such an illimitable parody of the modern age will die, crushed beneath its own absurdity.

In this belief, it is my desire to extend by degrees the scope of this University on simple lines, until it comprehends the whole range of Eastern cultures – the Aryan, Semitic, Mongolian and others. Its object will be to reveal the Eastern mind to the world.

Of one thing I felt certain during my travels in Europe, that a genuine interest has been roused there in the philosophy and the arts of the East, from which the Western mind seeks fresh inspiration of truth and beauty. Once the East had her reputation of fabulous wealth, and the seekers were attracted from across the sea. Since then, the shrine of wealth has changed its site. But the East is famed also for her storage of wisdom, harvested by her patriarchs from long successive ages of spiritual endeavour. And when, as now, in the midst of the pursuit of power and wealth, there rises the cry of privation from the famished spirit of man, an opportunity is offered to the East, to offer her store to those who need it.

Once upon a time we were in possession of such a thing as our own mind in India. It was living. It thought, it felt, it expressed itself. It was receptive as well as productive. That this mind could be of any use in the process, or in the end, of our education was overlooked by our modern educational dispensation. We are provided with buildings and books and other magnificent burdens calculated to suppress our mind. The latter was treated like a library shelf solidly made of wood, to be loaded with leather-bound volumes of second-hand information. In consequence, it has lost its own colour and character, and has borrowed polish from the carpenter's shop. All this has cost us money, and also our finer ideas, while our intellectual vacancy has been crammed with what is described in official reports as Education. In fact, we have bought our spectacles at the expense of our eyesight.

In India our goddess of learning is Saraswati. My audience in the West, I am sure, will be glad to know that her complexion is white. But the signal fact is that she is living and she is a woman, and her seat is on a lotus flower. The symbolic meaning of this is, that she dwells in the centre of life and the heart of all existence, which opens itself in beauty to the light of heaven.

The Western education which we have chanced to know is impersonal. Its complexion is also white, but it is the whiteness of the white-washed classroom walls. It dwells in the cold storage compartments of lessons and the ice packed minds of the schoolmasters.

The effect which it had on my mind when, as a boy, I was compelled to go to school, I have described elsewhere. My feeling was very much the same as a tree might have, which was not allowed to live its full life, but was cut down to be made into packing cases.

The introduction of this education was not a part of the solemn marriage ceremony which was to unite the minds of the East and West in mutual understanding. It represented an artificial method of training specially calculated to produce the carriers of the white man's burden. This want of ideals still clings to our education system, though our Universities have latterly burdened their syllabus with a greater number of subjects than before. But it is only like adding to the bags of wheat the bullock carries to market; it does not make the bullock any better off.

Mind, when long deprived of its natural food of truth and freedom of growth, develops an unnatural craving for success; and our students have fallen victim to the mania for success in examinations. Success consists in obtaining the largest number of marks with the strictest economy of knowledge. It is a deliberate cultivation of disloyalty to truth, of intellectual dishonesty, of a foolish imposition by which the mind is encouraged to rob itself. But as we are by means of it made to forget the existence of mind, we are supremely happy at the result. We pass examinations, and shrivel up into clerks, lawyers and police inspectors, and we die young.

Universities should never be made into mechanical organizations for collecting and distributing knowledge. Through them the people should offer their intellectual hospitality, their wealth of mind to others, and earn their proud right in return to receive gifts from the rest of the world. But in the whole length and breadth of India there is not a single University established in the modern time where a foreign or an Indian student can properly be acquainted with the best products of the Indian mind. For that we have to cross the sea, and knock at the doors of France and Germany. Educational institutions in our country are India's alms-bowl of knowledge; they lower our intellectual self-respect; they encourage us to make a foolish display of decorations composed of borrowed feathers.

This it was that led me to found a school in Bengal, in face of many difficulties and discouragements, and in spite of my own vocation as a poet, who finds his true inspiration only when he forgets that he is a schoolmaster. It is my hope that in this school a nucleus has been formed, round which an indigenous University of our own land will

find its natural growth – a University which will help India's mind to concentrate and to be fully conscious of itself; free to seek the truth and make this truth its own wherever found, to judge by its own standard, give expression to its own creative genius, and offer its wisdom to the guests who come from other parts of the world.

Man's intellect has a natural pride in its own aristocracy, which is the pride of its culture. Culture only acknowledges the excellence whose criticism is in its inner perfection, not in any external success. When this pride succumbs to some compulsion of necessity or lure of material advantage, it brings humiliation to the intellectual man. Modern India, through her very education, has been made to suffer this humiliation. Once she herself provided her children with a culture which was the product of her own ages of thought and creation. But it has been thrust aside, and we are made to tread the mill of passing examinations, not for learning anything, but for notifying that we are qualified for employments under organisations conducted in English. Our educated community is not a cultured community, but a community of qualified candidates. Meanwhile the proportion of possible employments to the number of claimants has gradually been growing narrower, and the consequent disaffection has been widespread. At last the very authorities who are responsible for this are blaming their victims. Such is the perversity of human nature. It bears its worst grudge against those it has injured.

It is as if some tribe which had the primitive habit of decorating its tribal members with birds' plumage were some day to hold these very birds guilty of the crime of being extinct. There are belated attempts on the part of our governors to read us pious homilies about disinterested love of learning, while the old machinery goes on working, whose product is not education but certificates. It is good to remind the fettered bird that its wings are for soaring; but it is better to cut the chain which is holding it to its perch. The most pathetic feature of the tragedy is that the bird itself has learnt to use its chain for its ornament, simply because the chain jingles in fairly respectable English.

In the Bengali language there is a modern maxim which can be translated, 'He who learns to read and write rides in a carriage and pair.' In English there is a similar proverb, 'Knowledge is power.' It is an offer of a prospective bribe to the student, a promise of an ulterior reward which is more important than knowledge itself. Temptations, held before us as inducements to be good or to pursue uncongenial paths, are most often flimsy lies or half-truths, such as the oft-quoted

maxim of respectable piety, 'Honesty is the best policy,' at which politicians all over the world seem to laugh in their sleeves. But unfortunately, education conducted under a special providence of purposefulness, of eating the fruit of knowledge from the wrong end, does lead one to that special paradise on earth, the daily rides in one's own carriage and pair. And the West, I have heard from authentic sources, is aspiring in its education after that special cultivation of worldliness.

Where society is comparatively simple and obstructions are not too numerous, we can clearly see how the life-process guides education in its vital purpose. The system of folk-education, which is indigenous to India, but is dying out, was one with the people's life. It flowed naturally through the social channels and made its way everywhere. It is a system of widespread irrigation of culture. Its teachers, specially trained men, are in constant requisition, and find crowded meetings in our villages, where they repeat the best thoughts and express the ideals of the land in the most effective form. The mode of instruction includes the recitation of epics, expounding of the scriptures, reading from the Puranas, which are the classical records of old history, performance of plays founded upon the early myths and legends, dramatic narration of the lives of ancient heroes, and the singing in chorus of songs from the old religious literature. Evidently, according to this system, the best function of education is to enable us to realize that to live as a man is great, requiring profound philosophy for its ideal, poetry for its expression, and heroism in its conduct. Owing to this vital method of culture the common people of India, though technically illiterate, have been made conscious of the sanctity of social relationships, entailing constant sacrifice and self-control, urged and supported by ideals collectively expressed in one word, Dharma.

Such a system of education may sound too simple for the complexities of modern life. But the fundamental principle of social life in its different stages of development remains the same; and in no circumstance can the truth be ignored that all human complexities must harmonize in organic unity with life, failing which there will be endless conflict. Most things in the civilized world occupy more than their legitimate space. Much of their burden is needless. By bearing this burden civilized man may be showing great strength, but he displays little skill. To the gods, viewing this from on high, it must seem like the floundering of a giant who has got out of his depth and knows not how to swim.

The main source of all forms of voluntary slavery is the desire of gain. It is difficult to fight against this when modern civilization is tainted with such a universal contamination of avarice. I have realized it myself in the little boys of my own school. For the first few years there is no trouble. But as soon as the upper class is reached, their worldly wisdom – the malady of the aged – begins to assert itself. They rebelliously insist that they must no longer learn, but rather pass examinations. Professions in the modern age are more numerous and lucrative than ever before. They need specialization of training and knowledge, tempting education to yield its spiritual freedom to the claims of utilitarian ambitions. But man's deeper nature is hurt; his smothered life seeks to be liberated from the suffocating folds and sensual ties of prosperity. And this is why we find almost everywhere in the world a growing dissatisfaction with the prevalent system of teaching, which betrays the encroachment of senility and worldly prudence over pure intellect.

In India, also, a vague feeling of discontent has given rise to numerous attempts at establishing national schools and colleges. But, unfortunately, our very education has been successful in depriving us of our real initiative and our courage of thought. The training we get in our schools has the constant implication in it that it is not for us to produce but to borrow. And we are casting about to borrow our educational plans from European institutions. The trampled plants of Indian corn are dreaming of recouping their harvest from the neighbouring wheat fields. To change the figure, we forget that, for proficiency in walking, it is better to train the muscles of our own legs than to strut upon wooden ones of foreign make, although they clatter and cause more surprise at our skill in using them than if they were living and real.

But when we go to borrow help from a foreign neighbourhood we are apt to overlook the real source of help behind all that is external and apparent. Had the deep-water fishes happened to produce a scientist who chose the jumping of a monkey for his research work, I am sure he would give most of the credit to the branches of the trees and very little to the monkey itself. In a foreign University we see the branching wildernesses of its buildings, furniture, regulations, and syllabus, but the monkey, which is a difficult creature to catch and more difficult to manufacture, we are likely to treat as a mere accident of minor importance. It is convenient for us to overlook the fact that among the Europeans the living spirit of the University is widely spread in their

society, their parliament, their literature, and the numerous activities of their corporate life. In all these functions they are in perpetual touch with the great personality of the land which is creative and heroic in its constant acts of self-expression and self-sacrifice. They have their thoughts published in their books as well as through the medium of living men who think those thoughts, and who criticise, compare and disseminate them. Some at least of the drawbacks of their academic education are redeemed by the living energy of the intellectual personality pervading their social organism. It is like the stagnant reservoir of water which finds its purification in the showers of rain to which it keeps itself open. But, to our misfortune, we have in India all the furniture of the European University except the human teacher. We have, instead, mere purveyors of book-lore in whom the paper god of the bookshop has been made vocal.

A most important truth, which we are apt to forget, is that a teacher can never truly teach unless he is still learning himself. A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame. The teacher who has come to the end of his subject, who has no living traffic with his knowledge, but merely repeats his lessons to his students, can only load their minds; he cannot quicken them. Truth not only must inform but inspire. If the inspiration dies out, and the information only accumulates, then truth loses its infinity. The greater part of our learning in the schools has been wasted because, for most of our teachers, their subjects are like dead specimens of once living things, with which they have a learned acquaintance, but no communication of life and love.

The educational institution, therefore, which I have in mind has primarily for its object the constant pursuit of truth, from which the imparting of truth naturally follows. It must not be a dead cage in which living minds are fed with food artificially prepared. It should be an open house, in which students and teachers are at one. They must live their complete life together, dominated by a common aspiration for truth and a need of sharing all the delights of culture. In former days the great master-craftsmen had students in their workshops where they co-operated in shaping things to perfection. That was the place where knowledge could become living – that knowledge which not only has its substance and law, but its atmosphere subtly informed by a creative personality. For intellectual knowledge also has its aspect of creative art, in which the man who explores truth expresses something which is human in him – his enthusiasm, his courage, his sacrifice, his honesty, and his skill. In merely academical teaching we find subjects, but not

the man who pursues the subjects; therefore the vital part of education remains incomplete.

For our Universities we must claim, not labelled packages of truth and authorized agents to distribute them, but truth in its living association with her lovers and seekers and discoverers. Also we must know that the concentration of the mind-forces scattered throughout the country is the most important mission of a University, which, like the nucleus of a living cell, should be the centre of the intellectual life of the people.

The bringing about of an intellectual unity in India is, I am told, difficult to the verge of impossibility owing to the fact that India has so many different languages. Such a statement is as unreasonable as to say that man, because he has a diversity of limbs, should find it impossible to realize life's unity in himself, and that only an earthworm composed of a tail and nothing else could truly know that it had a body.

Let us admit that India is not like any one of the great countries of Europe, which has its own separate language; but is rather like Europe herself, branching out into different peoples with many different languages. And yet Europe has a common civilization, with an intellectual unity which is not based upon uniformity of language. It is true that in the earlier stages of her culture the whole of Europe had Latin for her learned tongue. That was in her intellectual budding time, when all her petals of self-expression were closed in one point. But the perfection of her mental unfolding was not represented by the singularity of her literary vehicle. When the great European countries found their individual languages, then only the true federation of cultures became possible in the West, and the very differences of the channels made the commerce of ideas in Europe so richly copious and so variedly active. We can well imagine what the loss to European civilization would be if France, Italy and Germany, and England herself, had not through their separate agencies contributed to the common coffer their individual earnings.

There was a time with us when India had her common language of culture in Sanskrit. But, for the complete commerce of her thought, she required that all her vernaculars should attain their perfect powers, through which her different peoples might manifest their idiosyncrasies; and this could never be done through a foreign tongue.

In the United States, in Canada and other British Colonies, the language of the people is English. It has a great literature which had its birth and growth in the history of the British Islands. But when this

language, with all its products and acquisitions, matured by ages on its own mother soil, is carried into foreign lands, which have their own separate history and their own life-growth, it must constantly hamper the indigenous growth of culture and destroy individuality of judgement and the perfect freedom of self-expression, The inherited wealth of the English language, with all its splendour, becomes an impediment when taken into different surroundings, just as when lungs are given to the whale in the sea. If such is the case even with races whose grandmother tongue naturally continues to be their own mother tongue, one can imagine what sterility it means for a person who accepts, for its vehicle of culture, an altogether foreign language. A language is not like an umbrella or an overcoat, that can be borrowed by unconscious or deliberate mistake; it is like the living skin itself. If the body of a draught-horse enters into the skin of a race-horse, it will be safe to wager that such an anomaly will never win a race, and will fail even to drag a cart. Have we not watched some modern Japanese artists imitating European art? The imitation may sometimes produce clever results; but such cleverness has only the perfection of artificial flowers which never bear fruit.

All great countries have their vital centres for intellectual life, where a high standard of learning is maintained, where the minds of the people are naturally attracted, where they find their genial atmosphere, in which to prove their worth and to contribute their share to the country's culture. Thus they kindle, on the common altar of the land, that great sacrificial fire which can radiate the sacred light of wisdom abroad.

Athens was such a centre in Greece, Rome in Italy; and Paris is such today in France. Benares has been and still continues to be the centre of our Sanskrit culture. But Sanskrit learning does not exhaust all the elements of culture that exist in modern India.

If we were to take for granted, what some people maintain, that Western culture is the only source of light for our mind, then it would be like depending for daybreak upon some star, which is the sun of a far distant sphere. The star may give us light, but not the day; it may give us direction in our voyage of exploration, but it can never open the full view of truth before our eyes. In fact, we can never use this cold starlight for stirring the sap in our branches, and giving colour and bloom to our life. This is the reason why European education has become for India mere school lessons and no culture; a box of matches, good for the small uses of illumination, but not the light of morning, in

which the use and beauty, and all the subtle mysteries of life are blended in one.

Let me say clearly that I have no distrust of any culture because of its foreign character. On the contrary, I believe that the shock of such extraneous forces is necessary for the vitality of our intellectual nature. It is admitted that much of the spirit of Christianity runs counter, not only to the classical culture of Europe, but to the European temperament altogether. And yet this alien movement of ideas, constantly running against the natural mental current of Europe, has been a most important factor in strengthening and enriching her civilization, on account of the sharp antagonism of its intellectual direction. In fact, the European vernaculars first woke up to life and fruitful vigour when they felt the impact of this foreign thought-power with all its oriental forms and affinities. The same thing is happening in India. The European culture has come to us, not only with its knowledge, but with its velocity.

Then, again, let us admit that modern Science is Europe's great gift to humanity for all time to come. We, in India, must claim it from her hands, and gratefully accept it in order to be saved from the curse of futility by lagging behind. We shall fail to reap the harvest of the present age if we delay.

What I object to is the artificial arrangement by which foreign education tends to occupy all the space of our national mind, and thus kills, or hampers, the great opportunity for the creation of a new thought-power by a new combination of truths. It is this which makes me urge that all the elements in our own culture have to be strengthened, not to resist the Western culture, but truly to accept and assimilate it; to use it for our sustenance, not as our burden; to get mastery over this culture, and not to live on its outskirts as the hewers of texts and drawers of book-learning.

The main river in Indian culture has flowed in four streams, – the Vedic, the Puranic, the Buddhist, and the Jain. It has its source in the heights of the Indian consciousness. But a river, belonging to a country, is not fed by its own waters alone. The Tibetan Brahmaputra is a tributary to the Indian Ganges. Contributions have similarly found their way to India's original culture. The Muhammadan, for example, has repeatedly come into India from outside, laden with his own stores of knowledge and feeling and his wonderful religious democracy, bringing freshet after freshet to swell the current. To our music, our architecture, our pictorial art, our literature, the Muhammadans have made their permanent and precious contribution. Those who have studied the lives

and writings of our medieval saints, and all the great religious movements that sprang up in the time of the Muhammadan rule, know how deep is our debt to this foreign current that has so intimately mingled with our life.

So, in our centre of Indian learning, we must provide for the co-ordinate study of all these different cultures, – the Vedic, the Puranic, the Buddhist, the Jain, the Islamic, the Sikh and the Zoroastrian. The Chinese, Japanese, and Tibetan will also have to be added; for, in the past, India did not remain isolated within her own boundaries. Therefore, in order to learn what she was, in her relation to the whole continent of Asia, these cultures too must be studied. Side by side with them must finally be placed the Western culture. For only then shall we be able to assimilate this last contribution to our common stock. A river flowing within banks is truly our own, and it can contain its due tributaries; but our relations with a flood can only prove disastrous.

There are some who are exclusively modern, who believe that the past is the bankrupt time, leaving no assets for us, but only a legacy of debts. They refuse to believe that the army which is marching forward can be fed from the rear. It is well to remind such persons that the great ages of renaissance in history were those when man suddenly discovered the seeds of thought in the granary of the past.

The unfortunate people who have lost the harvest of their past have lost their present age. They have missed their seed for cultivation, and go begging for their bare livelihood. We must not imagine that we are one of these disinherited peoples of the world. The time has come for us to break open the treasure-trove of our ancestors, and use it for our commerce of life. Let us, with its help, make our future our own, and not continue our existence as the eternal rag-pickers in other people's dustbins.

So far I have dwelt only upon the intellectual aspect of Education. For, even in the West, it is the intellectual training which receives almost exclusive emphasis. The Western universities have not yet truly recognized that fulness of expression is fulness of life. And a large part of man can never find its expression in the mere language of words. It must therefore seek for its other languages, – lines and colours, sounds and movements. Through our mastery of these we not only make our whole nature articulate, but also understand man in all his attempts to reveal his innermost being in every age and clime. The great use of Education is not merely to collect facts, but to know man and to make oneself known to man. It is the duty of every human being to master, at

least to some extent, not only the language of intellect, but also that personality which is the language of Art. It is a great world of reality for man, – vast and profound, – this growing world of his own creative nature. This is the world of Art. To be brought up in ignorance of it is to be deprived of the knowledge and use of that great inheritance of humanity, which has been growing and waiting for every one of us from the beginning of our history. It is to remain deaf to the eternal voice of Man, that speaks to all men the messages that are beyond speech. From the educational point of view we know Europe where it is scientific, or at best literary. So our notion of its modern culture is limited within the boundary lines of grammar and the laboratory. We almost completely ignore the aesthetic life of man, leaving it uncultivated, allowing weeds to grow there. Our newspapers are prolific, our meeting places are vociferous; and in them we wear to shreds the things we have borrowed from our English teachers. We make the air dismal and damp with the tears of our grievances. But where are our arts, which, like the outbreak of spring flowers, are the spontaneous overflow of our deeper nature and spiritual magnificence?

Through this great deficiency of our modern education, we are condemned to carry to the end a dead load of dumb wisdom. Like miserable outcasts, we are deprived of our place in the festival of culture, and wait at the outer court, where the colours are not for us, nor the forms of delight, nor the songs. Ours is the education of a prison house, with hard labour and with a drab dress cut to the limits of minimum decency and necessity. We are made to forget that the perfection of colour and form and expression belongs to the perfection of vitality, – that the joy of life is only the other side of the strength of life. The timber merchant may think that the flowers and foliage are mere frivolous decorations of a tree; but if these are suppressed, he will know to his cost that the timber too will fail.

During the Moghal period, music and art in India found a great impetus from the rulers, because their whole life – not merely their official life – was lived in this land; and it is the wholeness of life from which originates Art. But our English teachers are birds of passage; they cackle to us, but do not sing, – their true heart is not in the land of their exile.

Construction of life, owing to this narrowness of culture, must no longer be encouraged. In the centre of Indian culture which I am proposing, music and art must have their prominent seats of honour, and not be given merely a tolerant nod of recognition. The different

systems of music and different schools of art which lie scattered in the different ages and provinces of India, and in the different strata of society, and also those belonging to the other great countries of Asia, which had communication with India, have to be brought there together and studied.

I have already hinted that Education should not be dragged out of its native element, the life-current of the people. Economic life covers the whole width of the fundamental basis of society, because its necessities are the simplest and the most universal. Educational institutions, in order to obtain their fulness of truth, must have close association with this economic life. The highest mission of education is to help us to realize the inner principle of the unity of all knowledge and all the activities of our social and spiritual being. Society in its early stage was held together by its economic co-operation, when all its members felt in unison a natural interest in their right to live. Civilization could never have been started at all if such was not the case. And civilization will fall to pieces if it never again realizes the spirit of mutual help and the common sharing of benefits in the elemental necessities of life. The idea of such economic co-operation should be made the basis of our University. It must not only instruct, but live; not only think, but produce.

Our ancient tapovanas, or forest schools, which were our natural universities, were not shut off from the daily life of the people. Masters and students gathered fruit and fuel, and took their cattle out to graze, supporting themselves by the work of their own hands. Spiritual education was a part of the spiritual life itself, which comprehended all life. Our centre of culture should not only be the centre of the intellectual life of India, but the centre of her economic life also. I must co-operate with the villages round it, cultivate land, breed cattle, spin cloths, press oil from oil-seeds; it must produce all the necessities, devising the best means, using the best materials, and calling science to its aid. Its very existence should depend upon the success of its industrial activities carried out on the co-operative principle, which will unite the teachers and students and villagers of the neighbourhood in a living and active bond of necessity. This will give us also a practical industrial training, whose motive force is not the greed of profit.

Before I conclude my paper, a delicate question remains to be considered. What must be the religious ideal that is to rule our centre of Indian culture? The one abiding ideal in the religious life of India has been mukti, the deliverance of man's soul from the grip of self, its

communion with the Infinite Soul through its union in ananda with the universe. This religion of spiritual harmony is not a theological doctrine to be taught, as a subject in the class, for half an hour each day. It is the spiritual truth and beauty of our attitude towards our surroundings, our conscious relationship with the Infinite, and the lasting power of the Eternal in the passing moments of our life. Such a religious ideal can only be made possible by making provision for students to live in intimate touch with nature, daily to grow in an atmosphere of service offered to all creatures, tending trees, feeding birds and animals, learning to feel the immense mystery of the soil and water and air.

Along with this, there should be some common sharing of life with the tillers of the soil and the humble workers in the neighbouring villages; studying their crafts, inviting them to the feasts, joining them in works of co-operation for communal welfare; and in our intercourse we should be guided, not by moral maxims or the condescension of social superiority, but by natural sympathy of life for life, and by the sheer necessity of love's sacrifice for its own sake. In such an atmosphere students would learn to understand that humanity is a divine harp of many strings, waiting for its one grand music. Those who realize this unity are made ready for the pilgrimage through the night of suffering, and along the path of sacrifice, to the great meeting of Man in the future, for which the call comes to us across the darkness.

Life, in such a centre, should be simple and clean. We should never believe that simplicity of life might make us unsuited to the requirements of the society of our time. It is the simplicity of the tuning fork, which is needed all the more because of the intricacy of strings in the instrument. In the morning of our career our nature needs the pure and the perfect note of a spiritual ideal in order to fit us for the complications of our later years.

In other words, this institution should be a perpetual creation by the co-operative enthusiasm of teachers and students, growing with the growth of their soul; a world in itself, self-sustaining, independent, rich with ever-renewing life radiating life across space and time, attracting and maintaining round it a planetary system of dependent bodies. Its aim should lie in imparting life-breath to the complete man, who is intellectual as well as economic, bound by social bonds, but aspiring towards spiritual freedom and final perfection.

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## K.C. Bhattacharya's *Swaraj* in Ideas: Some Reflections

**Dharmendra Goel\***

Only rarely do we in India ever take other's work any more seriously than passing amusement: given this, I am glad that the guest editors have given me an opportunity to present publicly my response to Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya's (KCB's) *Swaraj in Ideas* (which I shall call SII). My presentation is organised as follows:

(1) I shall endorse the main thrust of SII concerning colonialism of mind and intellectual slavery that has eroded the autonomy of the colonized soul and which was so eloquently described and castigated in Frantz Fanon's autobiography *Black Skins and White Masks* in the sixties. Bhattacharya's ideas, though buried in his unpublished papers, and originally delivered to an obscure mofussil college audience, are lucidly clear; and no less perspicacious.

(2) I will examine SII in connection with KCB's theory of ideology, both ideas and ideals. He emphasizes the role of cultural symbols and metaphors in the articulation of concepts, in philosophical analysis, and in ideational criticism. I feel that KCB has not fully worked out, at least in SII, all the implications which may follow from the views he advocates, and that his views end up committing him to some uncomfortable consequences. Of course, SII itself as a text entails no formal contradictions. But KCB often demands that we critically compare, estimate, and appraise (accept or reject) western and Indian ideals (or ideas?); these activities, to my mind, presuppose a background logic of understanding: rules, norms, and principles which one is sure are not merely culturally determined artifacts of particular traditions. Is philosophy a product of a cultural milieu alone? Or can it, at least sometime, hope to liberate us from the bondage of the here and now,

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giving us insight into truths that are sub-specie aeternitatis? I have to record that wobbly hesitation and tentative inconclusiveness characterize SII on the matter of universality and cultural specificity in the exercise of reason. I think that SII is not representative of KCB's best work about the nature of philosophy as a critique or as critical inquiry.

(3) I must, reluctantly, point to a few blind spots of KCB leading to his uncritical non-discriminating sleepwalk through the long and hoary spiritual legacy and cultural identity of Indian society and his bland affirmation of its unique spiritual values. 'KCB obviously had little interest in cultural history or in any kind of social praxis or its understanding. He hardly ever took the trouble of grasping the non-ideational factors of Indian civilization. He is just a little too cocksure of so-called Indian ideals. A clear case of reification. Whose ideals, may I ask? Those of the Vedic Brahmanic orthodoxy of Sanskrit Pandits. Yes, but are these everybody's? If so, how about, pray, those millions of Moslems, tribals, Shudras, and unlettered peasants? I shall conclude by pointing out briefly the role of explanatory concepts like tradition and how one ought to avoid hypostatizing the very explanatory abstract categories as historical Agents.

## I

Much of SII (paras 1, 18, 22) is rife with KCB's remarkable spirit of critical inquiry and commendable freedom from the cant of his class of anglicized Babus that had come to live 'with an imaginary progressiveness merely imitative of the west' (para 6). He also disapproves of the new caste system of the westernized Bhadrakok, who, like the Brahmos of Bengali society in the second half of the nineteenth century, hoped to cure Indian society of its moribund ideals in such domains as caste, family ties, child marriage, dowry, etc. by legislation and administrative measures by the authorities and (para 22) refused to show sufficient humility and understanding of the entire cultural gestalt that India was. He rightly diagnosed the glibness of these diffident Indians, faced with the denigration of Indian ideals from the west, 'talking of a conflict of the ideas and ideals of the West with our traditional ideas and ideals' even where there is a fact and a confusion that has not yet sharpened into a conflict (para 15).

KCB notes, in this connection, that India's native soul gets twisted and warped by a shadow mind due to our western education: 'Our thought is hybrid through and through and inevitably sterile.' Slavery has entered into our very soul (SII, para 10).

Bhattacharya rightly and with insight regrets the fact that western education has not, even after more than a century, produced any original interpretation of western material in history, literature, or philosophy from an Indian standpoint (SII, para 4). He candidly remarks about his own tribe of Bhadrakok. "His judgment do not differ materially from the judgment of an English critic and that raises the suspicion whether it is his judgment at all, whether it is not merely the mechanical thinking of the galvanic mind induced in us through our western education" (para 8).

Lest it be thought that KCB is guilty of a form of cultural chauvinism, we must note his awareness of his own inability to 'deliver such a discourse as SII in his native language (para 11). He realizes (para 3) that many Indians positively accepted westernization as a talisman for the accumulated debris of a wounded Indian civilization. KCB only protests against brusque dismissal of the ideals of India without humility or even critical examination under the authoritarian denigration mounted by ill-disposed missionaries and champions of imperialism. I salute him for his courage of conviction that reminds himself and other Indians of their 'old immemorial habit of regarding what we are taught as sacred learning, and the habit is not easily altered even though the learning imparted is the mere opinion of others' (para 22). He contends that a negative opinion about our culture on the part of a foreigner 'should be a fillip to which we should react. I remember a remark of Sir John Woodruffe to this purpose. That our first impulse here should be one of self-defensive resentment is only natural and need not imply an uncultured self-conceit. Docile acceptance without criticism would mean slavery' (para 24). I fully uphold this principle of the dignity of the colonized and am glad to see that an academic philosopher of British India had the vision and courage to voice it. His thought was articulated not out of any morbid dogmatism but as a self-conscious stance of a cultural critique which was capable of remaining unswayed by the prevailing disparagement of our enslaved people and their civilization.

To make sure, I do not miss the critical and universalistic element in KCB's search for cultural ideas. I wish to note three points in his response to western ideals in his quest for swaraj in ideas: (a) 'it is wrong not to accept an ideal that is felt to be a simpler and deeper expression of our own ideals simply because it hails from a foreign country;' (b) 'Some foreign ideals have affinity with our own, and are really alternative expressions of them in a foreign idiom;' (c) 'and there are others which have no real application to our conditions' (para 19).

Of course, KCB desires a critical appraisal of all ideals on some supracultural touchstone, but above all he wishes, even here, to protect the rootless educated mind from losing ‘the distinctive values evolved through ages of continuous historical life of Indian society’ (para 21); on this points, I demur. Or, further, when he speaks of universal reason as involved in delineation of spiritual ideals, he seems to draw on some involuted form of justification of a tradition from the reverence one ought to have for its inner core. I, for one, happen to feel some hesitation in accepting such fetters, even when born of my own reverence towards my own cultural ideals, on any critical reflection. I shall elaborate on such issues in the next section. First, let me quote from SII on this crucial point: ‘It is sometimes forgotten by the advocates of universalism that the so-called universalism of reason or of religion is only in the making and cannot be appealed to as an actually established code of universal principles. What is universal is only the spirit, the loyalty to our own ideals and the openness to other ideals, the determination not to reject them if they are found within our ideals and not to accept them till they are not found’ (para 20, emphasis mine). I am puzzled by this unequivocal assertion of an orthodox position which takes the spiritual ideals of our culture as beyond all scrutiny. I wonder if KCB remembers that he has said in para 9 that ‘if the Modern Indian Mind is to philosophize at all to any purpose, it has to confront Eastern thought and Western thought with one another and attempt a synthesis or a reasoned rejection of either, if that were possible. It is in philosophy, if anywhere, that the task of discovering the soul of India is imperative for the modern India.’ Careful scrutiny is needed before one can know how KCB visualizes this relation of reason to values and ideals on one hand and philosophical criticism, required to appreciate this ideational effort, on the other hand. I may do that in the following section.

## II

KCB insists on the cultural predetermination of all concepts and seems to disapprove of universality of conceptual framework even in science. In para 24 he allows mathematics and science to be taken to be value-free and as such free of cultural appraisals as well, and yet in para 25 he enters a caveat about them as well. In contrast, all other ideas, if they happen to be ‘virtual,’ must be related to ideals, he claims: ‘All vital ideas involve ideals. They embody an entire theory and an insight into life. Thought or reason may be universal, but ideas are carved out of it differently by different cultures according to their respective genius.

No ideas of one cultural language can exactly be translated in another cultural language. Every culture has its distinctive ‘physiognomy’ which is reflected in each vital ideas and ideal presented by the culture’ (para 12). Paragraphs 12 and 24 appear almost mutually contradictory. They are not; yet nothing shows the deep crisis of KCB’s theory of cultural concepts better than this awkward hesitation on his part to acknowledge the universal nature of philosophical concepts. He certainly hopes authentically to render ideas from foreign cultures by reincarnation as our own indigenous concepts; and it is only this way that we can enrich the world’s thought, he strongly maintains in para 25; note especially the exhortation ‘Let us everywhere resolutely think in our own concepts.’

A study of para 25 shows how, in the context of his analysis of the cultural predetermination of ideas, KCB shuttles between his several perplexities with regard to what makes up different levels of critical human thought about ‘values,’ their applications, and their expression in particular languages; further, he was confused about the ideational episodes of conception and the core sense or the objective correlative of these acts, the sense-content or concept proper. KCB’s discussion does not distinguish clearly enough the inscriptions of a language we employ to think and the concepts. He also confused verbal tokens with concepts and propositions. In a certain sense no concepts could ever be exclusively mine. Concepts do not share the identity of their carriers (acts, inscriptions, or sounds). I can entertain the proposition that  $7^9 > 6^8$ . This does not depend on my words. Yet SII continuously dissolves all questions of conceptual validity into episodes from the intellectual biography of persons who think. This is a poor performance by KCB who had a well-earned reputation as a student of Indian epistemology,<sup>1</sup> particularly Abhāva.

This whole disinclination to attend to the universal conceptual order of ideas per se, and this insistence on conditions anterior to their maturation, social nexus, and on their plausible and imaginable remote and proximate consequences on the person who reflects, suffers, to my mind, from a serious lack of distinction which is sometimes seen as a failure to distinguish the context of discovery and the context of explanation. We know only men think; when they think at all, a vast accretion of accidents related to the socio-cultural mechanism essential to the activity of manipulating inscription – say, the presence of light in the library while reading or the supply of electricity for communicating on television sets – has nothing whatever to do with the respective thematic contents represented. The medium cannot and should not be

falsely believed to swallow the message (with apologies to Marshall McLuhan for twisting his now famous contrary epigram).

Let us get down to some hard facts of philosophical writing. I am asking KCB and his contemporary admirers to tell me: Did he or did he not recognize the occurrence of a body of basic questions and issues regarding categories, sense, negation, time, identity, prediction, causality, and others in several works of writers as widely differing in their cultural backgrounds as Shankara and B. Bosanquet, or Spinoza; a Vasubandhu and a Protagoras; Heraclitus or a Bishop Berkeley? If not, how can a modern professor of linguistics at MIT today hope to learn and share theoretical implications for the deep grammar of all languages by grasping the rules of basic stems as propounded in Pānini's *Ashtādhyāyī*? Is its logic truth-functional? A quest for the critical structures of all reflections, particularly concerning the nature of negation, has been carried out in the history of philosophy with various ontological, semantic, and dialectical and linguistic beliefs and assumptions. Yet, however much a Platonist, a Hegelian, a Sartre, a Marxist, a modern logician like Russell, or a Nagarjuna or a Gangesha from Mediaeval India may have differed, is it not possible, nevertheless, to decode their varied special idioms into a common theme and delineate the various dimensions of the problems tackled by them, which they can reformulate in disputing each other's work? That only proves that they do share a framework, however inarticulate it may be. I am prone to argue that this coincidence is neither fortuitous nor contingent. Human cognitivity cannot be denied its autonomy, and it is this universal conceptual framework which is very often ignored in the onrush of more engaging labour such as collecting factual generalizations about abstract and concrete entities. But the articulation of all possible discrete presuppositions of any argument or hypothesis related to a different variety of assorted entities is also an object of critical reflection. It may be the rock bottom of all other theoretical enterprise. The fact that most scientists and common-sense people do not acknowledge the need for such explorations or do not appreciate the universal validity of the results of such inquiries need not be counted as justification for not recognizing the very field of exploration that is rational discourse itself.

I wish SII had been based on a full appreciation of the multitiered levels of concepts, functions, rules, criteria, and axioms, and had concentrated on lucidly delineating the structures of some selected concept clusters, as well as noting the differing ranges of the applicability of such varied concepts. If this subtle schematic framework is

philosophically captured, the gross theory of cultural determinism falls into irrelevance by itself.

### III

In this last section, I am going to be somewhat critical of KCB's SII in general and his belief which he states in the following two passages<sup>2</sup> in particular and I will show how KCB is totally naïve about the concept of the 'real Indian people' and our evolving a culture along with them suited to the times and to our native genius, which he would regard as truly achieving 'Swaraj in Ideas' (para 26).

But let me quote a line even commented upon earlier in these reflections. The line is from para 16: 'the foreign ideal is to be assimilated to *our ideal* and not the other way (emphasis mine – DG). There is no demand for the surrender of our individuality in any case: Svadharme nidhanam sreyah paradharmo bhayāvha.'

KCB confesses his conservatism and traditionalism while he rejects the universalism of ideals. In the following assertion of his faith in the distinctive values of Indian culture he categorically argues, 'the stress I have laid on the individuality of Indian thought and spirit, on the conservatism of the distinctive values evolved through ages of continuous historical life of Indian society' (SII para 21; emphasis mine). I appreciate KCB for his candour, but I think him uniformed of historical truth. As far as his taken-for-granted attitude towards an integrated spiritualistic core of Indian culture is concerned, I find his uncritical assumption regarding the continuity, individuality, and distinctiveness of Indian mind, its thought, spirit, and values, totally untenable. I have to explain here, in the first instance, an interesting conceptual distinction that many working social scientists have also been often misled to ignore (and of course we know how philosophers are too prone to reify abstractions; consequently they mix theoretical explanatory concepts with those that are actual, real social historical agents). Let us scrutinize and reflect on 'Modes of Production', 'Relation of Production', 'Rule of Law' etc. which are being eagerly thought of nowadays as the 'real' objects of the study of civilization.

I know that one must idealize in order to handle the chaotic mass of vast cultural matrices. One must postulate basic principles underlying a multitude of amorphous instances. But one should not take models so proposed to be given entities themselves. That would be subversive of the very intellectual analysis of social reality. While we should not violate methodological good sense as embodied in strictures against

'the fallacy of misplaced concreteness,' one should not go to the other extreme of methodological nominalism, either, denying the utility of ideational paradigms in the study of concrete social facts. Without unifying individuating idealizations, we can hardly take any step; we might as well abandon cultural analysis altogether. So, unless the nominalist wishes to leave rational understanding alone, he should allow us to idealize about a large body of dissimilar particular events, beliefs, attitudes related to social phenomena, logically subsuming them under a few basic ideational paradigms. I will not digress too far into the unceasing debate between holists and individualists in methodology, but I will offer the following example.

Let us, for a moment, forget Indian culture and talk instead of a vast mango grove which is very old. Periodically, some of its old trees and plants die, and some new saplings grow; new ground is acquired, and old areas are cleared up and built upon for other purpose. Suppose that, at a particular point of observation, it had most numerous ungrafted simple indigenous mango trees, as well as many other prized fruit trees like, say, Alphonso and Dasheris, well-known for rich texture and flesh flavour in Alphonso's case and unbeatable sweetness in the case of Dasheris, respectively. If, now, a philosophical taxonomist wishes to find out the *real* and essential mango type in this grove, what would be the best bet and the most rationally acceptable 'paradigm' for the entire ongoing life of this grove? The ungrafted variety, since it is the most frequently observed one? Dasheris, because this variety is sweet? Alphonso, on grounds of flavour? Are all three answers wrong? Or is any of them right, depending on what you mean and why?

In Indian life and society we are faced, as we know, with all the diversity of civilizational levels that we can expect on the globe since the birth of culture in places and periods. In view of the continuous civilizational tremors and vast cultural and social structural fusions and refusions making our successive formations and disintegrations, KCB's naïve conservatism, however dear it might appear to the sacred custodians of our sanâtana traditions, seems to me to be totally stylized and innocent of vast discontinuities of period, place, mode, and convictions, involving a very large number of successive oral and literate traditions. I have discussed these matters of empirical fact in detail elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> It is not possible to demonstrate the lack of credibility that seems to ring in any reflections when I am unproblematically informed by KCB about the Indian mind, the vernacular mind and its spiritual ideals, being an unequivocally abiding underlying framework of Indian

civilization and our real people, with whom KCB (SII, para 26) wishes his educated generation to march in line to Swaraj in Ideas.

I feel that the panorama of India's past, extending for more than five millennia of a quest for culture, cannot be articulated easily within the limited perspective of Sanskrit traditions, even if we add to the Vedas the dharmashastras, epics poetic classics, theatre, dramaturgy, nitishastras, and attendant social institutions. Even a cursory acquaintance with some of these elements in the sanâtana traditions themselves reveals, to my mind, the well-known doctrine of adaptation and accommodation of varied principles and contingencies to each other, sometimes associated with the locality and tribe in the idiom of the universal symbols of Brahmanism, on the one hand, and sometimes even defying tribal symbols and practices in the total structure of Sanskrit Brahmanic orthodoxy on the other. The Ahimsa of medieval Brahmanic Vaishnavism is from Buddhist and other non-Aryan sources. The sexuality in Tantric Shaktism also very largely derives from primitive oral beliefs and rituals. Tribals had been carrying on Brahmanic texts in their oral myths. Examples are easy to multiply. I find it difficult to maintain, with KCB, that there is a homogenous and consistent identity of ideas and ideals throughout India's historical experience. To my mind, Indian traditions are highly eclectic and inconsistent. Let us consider one or two symptomatic examples.

Consider the amoral manual on politics written by Kautilya, the Arthashastra. It is incompatible with the usual advocacy of purusharthas and varnashrama principles as in the epics and the enduring dharmashastras texts. What is Dharma, one wonders? The Yaksha in Mahabharata asks this question, and gets no answer from Yudhishtira. 'Follow great men' – that is all.

We turn to the great grammarian, philosopher, and yogi Bhartrihari of the classical period. Like the great Shankara himself, Bhartrihari frequently wrote evocative erotic lyrics also, while of course he advocates rightly the purity of desire and penance as so much idealized cant in the tradition coming down from the Vedas to the Puranas!

The tantras and eroticism of mediaeval Indian life are a direct slap in the face of that fiction of highly austere and 'incorporeal paradigm' of Indian civilization, suggested by Hindu deifiers of the last one hundred years, led by such great savants as Aurobindo, Coomaraswamy, KCB and others.

Consider also the simultaneous existence of high elite Sanskrit cultures with the folkways of the common Prakrit, Pali, and Apabhraṅsha

mind, the pre-English vernaculars of India. How can one ignore the peripheral tribals who had been repelled and attracted by the high tides of refined civilizations as found in urban centres like those of ancient Kanyakubja, Kashi, Ujjain, Pataliputra, Nalanda, Kanchi, Taxila, and later Agra, Delhi, Lahore, Pune, Chittor and Lucknow. The vast peasant and working populations lived their small worlds of stereotyped roles and marvelous skills and motifs unbothered by tremors of political revolutions or artistic and moral upsurges, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Vaishnavism, Saktism, Sufism, the Bhakti cults of Nanak and Kabir, the rise of modern Indian languages poetry (Vidyapati, Chandidas, Ilango, Namdev, Tulsidas, Kabir, Tahim, Mira).

Which is representative of the Indian spirit, Professor Bhattacharya? A Pandit Raj Jagannath beating about the old poetic conventions in Sanskrit at the Mughal court? Or new emerging poetry in Punjab by Guru Gobind and in Avadhi-speaking villages by Rahim? Ghalib's Urdu, or the revivalism of Sanskrit karmâ-kânda in Sanâtana Indian cults of temple prostitutes?

A man of my cultural mix cannot disown one and identify wholly with Valmiki and Bharata. For my personal identity, Agra and Ghalib, Guru Gobind and Amritsar are as much part of my world-idea as Ramayana and Bhagwan Amitabha. It makes no sense for me to disown Ilango and Chandidas or Kamban just because I do not know their beautiful languages Tamil or Bengali. That is my limitation. It is emphasized that I would like to explore and consolidate my own world-view not only from the Sanskrit classics but equally from the rock etchings in central India and Mirzapur; not only from the temples of Kanchi and Bodhgaya or the painting and sculpture of Ajanta, Khajuraho, and Konarak, but also through the modern wonders of Amrita Shergill, M.F. Hussain, Jamini Roy, a Tansen or Ravishankar, Nandalal Bose, and of course Mohandas Gandhi. Examples could be multiplied indefinitely. The religion, sex and race of these people do not matter to me. For me they are mine; their images and memories have echoed long and me the man I am. I do not know, despite my desire to be representative of the working common people the peasant as well as the stone carver of modern India, if I have been unconsciously biased in favour of Hindu, Hindi, and North Indian sensibilities. Possibly, likewise, without offence to me, a Maharashtrian or a Bengali, a Kerala Moslem or a Panjabi Sikh, has the right to define his own tradition. The only thing we should jointly try to explore afterwards is how much we converge, without reification. That way lies a *real swaraj in ideas*

for us all. We the poor dehumanized wretched of this earth, who, if fired by the new Science and its inquiry, and moved by the spirit of Neo-Rationalism, are bound to inaugurate a new chapter of vibrant Indianism in the twenty-first century into a yet more glorious future.

## Notes

1. I have discussed some questions concerning philosophy as an expression of culture in one of my papers, 'Is philosophy culture free?' (Anviksisi 4:1-2.50-56, January-April 1971, BHU). I argue there that philosophical thinking could be systematic as well as critical; whereas systematic philosophy could be an ideational expression of cultural attitudes, beliefs, etc, at least the critical reflection on the very groundwork of all conceptualisations could not be so determined by anterior cultural metaphors. By these critical reflections we offer a set of plausible *Analysans* to our ideational matrix which we wish to comprehend as a mere *Analysandum*. How, then, can anybody hope to grasp an *Analysans* by the help of an *Analysandum*?
2. The author seems to mean paragraphs 21 and 26. Apparently paragraph 16 is not directly an issue in this section; the author quotes a passage from paragraph 16 by way quot(ing) a line'... commented upon earlier in these reflections'. – Editors.)
3. I have written on the 'Idea of tradition' in the Panjab University Journal of Medieval Studies (1980, pp. 85-89). There I have tried to suggest that one thinks of tradition only in the following scenarios: (a) seeking one's Ego-Identity; (b) apprehending the sense and meaning of a work of art in its period; (c) when a society wishes to undergo a state of radical transformation either as a whole or in one of its major dimensions, it defines its tradition. Further, I have emphasized that before the western intervention the real interaction between several insulated oral cultures in India was minimal and collective, maybe also fitful. As such, writing was very late to come and to characterize any pan-Indian stereotypes. Afterwards, crazy attempts to document Indian oral traditions bring a lot of distortions (other than those which sacred traditionalists in different ramified branches introduced about each other earlier). The entire corpus of Indian studies is full of these polemics and controversies. Compare a recent paper of mine, 'Contemporary interpretations of Indian culture – a note' (Visvabharati Journal of Philosophy, 1982, vol. 13, p. 65 ff.), where I criticize the Marxist, conservative, and idealist liberal interpretations of Indian life and culture, I very much wish to see the vast cultural matrix of India explored without ideological fixations. The task has not been done, partly because of the orthodox blinkers, some of which KCB applies.

## 'I Am'- Therefore I Think: Not the Other Way Round

Ramesh Chandra Shah\*

The unprecedented explosion of knowledge in all fields on the one hand, and the virtual magic of I.T. revolution on the other would appear to have changed everything in our life-world. Most of us remnants of the older generation feel somewhat dazed and challenged by the new dispensation, replacing knowledge by knowledge-industry; books by e-books; & education by the new-fangled phrase human resources. Management is the key word now: management gurus preside over all developments of culture today – rendering not only pure intellectuals, but even what was once called sage-mind irrelevant and superfluous. How with this rage shall Beauty or even what a great twentieth century poet called 'The commonsense of the soul,' hold a plea?

The rage is more rampant in India today than in Europe and America. We are a very chaotic and unorganised people; and individually too, we are accursed with immature and inflated egos. It was not an outsider and materialistic critic who said that "in this blighted country, even two or three persons cannot think and act together." The comment comes from Vivekananda – one of the worthiest representatives of the 'spiritual' genius of India, and a leader of our genuine though incomplete nineteenth century renaissance. So we did need to learn and imbibe these virtues from the West, which had conquered and subjugated us. Perhaps this was the cost we had to pay for our lack of a 'sense of history' as well as a 'vision of evil' terms frequently used by every western critic of Indian civilization. No doubt, we have learned a lot and are making progress: what seemed 'an Area of Darkness' to a very intelligent and famous writer-critic called V.S. Naipaul in 1963 is no longer that. Thirty years later the same critic is hopeful of a resurgent India competent to cope with all sort of inner and outer challenges. Think tanks – another western idea too, has found ready acceptance;

and the problem lies not in any lack of them, but in finding the best and the most efficient means to register and mobilise them in a closely co-ordinated and disciplined – orderly manner. So even our characteristic defects and deficiencies are by no means an insurmountable obstacle to progress. The agenda of development has now caught the public imagination and it's going to take hardly more than two decades for the Indian nation to bring its development at par with China and Japan. Even social justice and equitable distribution of wealth – apparently unattainable – are by means so – as the signs of the time clearly indicate. The real challenge and the real problem of India lies much deeper. It's what our greatest philosopher called KCB articulated as far back as 1929 as 'Swaraj in Ideas': That what we are sadly lacking even today – 80 years after that seminal lecture of KCB was delivered. It seems to have gone unnoticed then and even later.

KCB says in that essay that our native mind has been pushed underground by the colonially conditioned mind, and we are not even aware of this catastrophe. What I am going to speak of here is something that lies at the root of that malady itself – which according to KCB was lack of Swaraj in Ideas.

We have to question the very roots of thinking. "I think, therefore I am" said Descartes and that infact is the prime motive force of the world-conquering modern Western civilization. Why, why should an Indian mind feel so uncomfortable with this statement?

Heidegger, one of the most seminal philosophical minds of modern Europe made a clear distinction between two kinds of knowledge: one, according to him was meditative thinking and the other – calculative thinking. Today, we are witnessing the triumph of the calculative mind over the meditative mind. Let us also invoke Rene Guenon – another famous seminal mind of Europe, who spoke of the 'Reign of Quantity.' One can directly perceive the link of Heidegger's calculative mind with this 'reign of quantity'. This is exactly what has happened; and this is what has shaped the modern development of knowledge – industry.

And, what does a very Indian and very global mind has to say in this connection. This man was nurtured by the best western education and was on intimate terms with the most brilliant minds of the modern west. He too is, a fantastic think tank – perhaps the most original and revolutionary mind in dialogue with the most renowned intellectuals of the twentieth century – like Aldous Huxley and David Bohm. What does he think and say? Does he accept Descarte's 'I think therefore I am?' He doesn't. In fact he is the most-uncompromising and the most

consistent subverter of that presumption. 'Freedom to BE,' is the highest value for J. Krishnamurthy. And this freedom can never be attained through thinking. For, thought moves in set grooves. It is mostly repetitive, habitual, automatic. Nothing stays fresh: everything is riddled with 'before' and 'after'. Only the present moment – shadowless, pastless, future – free moment is self-born a new. There is another Indian seer for you, called Nisargadutt, who was with us right upto 1982, who tells you – "Now is the moment to be really free, to be really able to say – 'I Am'."

Well, you may laugh and say – 'what is so special about that'? All of us say 'I am.' But, ... wait. We never say 'I am.' Our 'I am' is never, never free of predicates. I am your friend; I am bored. I am going to change my messy life; etc. etc. So, you see, our 'I am' is invariably associated or 'Identified' with some state or mood or feeling or act. It is never pure or 'unidentified,' free 'I'. But after all, it is 'I', who identifies itself with those thousand things and conditions – isn't it? So, it's not hearsay, it's not illusion or mere assertion. It is no thing. You can't describe or place or pinpoint it. It's 'Being' reflected in and by being if you choose to put it like that. But it's the original as well as the final fact – isn't it? What you call 'thinking' or thought is by no means intrinsic to it. 'There's nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so' – says Hamlet in Shakespeare's play. How true! There's then a literary evidence for you if you care for it. If you don't then there is Gita – song -cum doctrine or, say, philosophy-cum-religion-cum-poetry. It says:

‘इन्द्रियस्य इन्द्रियस्यार्थे रागद्वेषौ व्यवस्थितौ ।  
तयोर्नवामागच्छेत् तौ ह्यस्य पारिपन्थिनौ’ ॥

*Raga* and *Dwesh*, attachment and repulsion, woven into the very fabric of our social existence are the enemies of free spirit. One should not allow oneself to be dominated or identified with them. The couplets that follow this describe 'desire' is the enemy which inhibits the mind as much as the senses. Mind – the so-called thinking instrument or organ is thus inherently inimical of freedom of the soul or spirit.

Then, why is mind given to man? After all, even the emancipated great ones – men of self-realization like Ramakrishna or Nisargadutt or J. Krishnamurthy – so long as they are embodied existences – do use their minds and do think and talk and write a lot – don't they? But, then, as yet another non-Indian twentieth century sage and mystic named Gundjieff says, 'self – remembering' means precisely that: Your body and mind belong to you; not you to your body and mind. You are the

master, not they. As an embodied soul, you have to use your body and mind to serve your fellow human beings with full undiminished awareness of being neither of them, of being master of both. So, our argument against 'I think, therefore I am,' is not at all a nihilistic argument. In fact, it is the most transparent and foolproof perception of what the mind as an instrument of the Self can and must do. All thinking which proceeds from the self-alienated primacy of the mind is – in spite of all its sophistication & result-oriented brilliance – a partial, self-obliterating thinking. You just can't expect soul-enhancing. All-oriented and All-inclusive. All-liberating vibrations from this mere functionary. That's precisely what J. Krishnamurthy has to tell us. Just listen to what he says:

Living means that everyday you are abandoning everything that you are attached to. Can you do this? A very simple fact, but it has tremendous implications – so that everything is a new day. Each day you are dying and incarnating. There is tremendous vitality, energy there because there is nothing you are afraid of. There is nothing that can hurt. All the things that man has put together have to be totally abandoned. That's what it means to die. Can you do it? Not for just a day, but everyday? But, no; your brains have been conditioned so heavily by your education, tradition, books, teachers. Love and Death go together. Death says – Be free, you carry nothing with you. And love says – love can exist only when there is freedom, not from your wife, but the enormous strength of complete freedom. Living and dying are together, always. It's not something to be frightened about. If the brain can do that, then there is a totally different quality to the brain. It has no hooks, it has no sense of past, future, present. It is living – endless way of living. Every day is a new day. The future is NOW.

Again, elsewhere, there is another related insight. Read it along with the statement of Heidegger, about meditative thought as distinguished from calculative thinking. Krishnamurthy goes much deeper. He says:

Meditation is space. We have no space in brain. If space contains time, it is no space. Can the brain be free of time?

Isn't that a crucial insight? No 'think tank' seems to have shown any cognizance of this reality. But we in India can't afford to lose sight of it – can we? Let me invoke him a little further: because here is something most pertinent to our theme. He says:

If life – all of life is contained in the now, all humanity is you, There is no you and me that limits space. So there is an end to time –

to the whole movement of time. Time is movement, a series of incidents. Thought is also a series of movements. So time is thought. Is there an end to time? To thought, to knowledge, to experience? Which is total freedom. And this is meditation. The physicist, the artist, the poet have limited insight. We are talking about a timeless insight. This is meditations, this is religion and this is the way to live if you want to, all the rest of your days.

‘Commentaries on Living’ – that is the title of one of the greatest books of Krishnamurthy – which he wrote at the instance of Aldous Huxley. All sorts of human problems and predicaments are confronted there. Every case is preceded by a wonderfully evocative description of Nature and human landscape. Then suddenly the focus turns on a particular human case-history. Thinking is there, but an altogether different-kind of thinking. It’s direct perception of the whole – the whole of human life and its conditioning. Why not consider this too as ‘think tank’? Where ‘being’ precedes thinking.

This is, as I said, not to deny the need for and usefulness of think tanks. Life needs organising ability; life needs historic sense as well-things which we are so deficient in. A thousand years of indifference and political slavery has emaciated and degenerated us. Our native mind – as KCB has so persuasively demonstrated to us, has been driven underground. It has to be brought to the surface; it has to be resurrected, which requires nothing less than what KCB himself has called ‘Swaraj in Ideas.’ But, simultaneously, we have to re-create that ancestral wisdom, that commonsense of the soul which is not at all ancient Indian history, but a living reality, a twentieth century phenomenon enacted and exemplified right before our eyes by persons like Krishnamurthy and Mangatram and Nisargadutt. We have already listened to Krishnamurthy. Let us hear him once again:

The root cause of all conflict is separative existence of an individual. Is that a reality or only an illusion. I’ve been cherishing, holding on to it without any validity behind it? Let us realize that my consciousness is the consciousness of the rest of the mankind. If I once realize it not intellectually, but in my guts, then my relationship with the other undergoes a radical transformation.

Isn’t that the urgent need of the hour? Thinking and think tanks can serve their purpose only after this need is met and answered fully. Otherwise we are bound to repeat the same vicious circle. In this age of internet we must realize that our minds too are computers. How can mind, which is itself the prisoner of inertia and automatic reactions

redeem man from this servitude to an endless cycle of self-reproductions? So, before we can reap the relative benefits of organising think tanks, we have to divest ourselves of all the illusions about the capacity of mind to liberate us and cure all ills. ‘I think, therefore I am’ means prolonging and persisting in that illusion. Let us remember that Krishnamurthy is very clear and very positive about man’s greatest asset – this Creativity, But, the way he understands and defines this creativity is unlike any other way. He says:

Creation is not invention. Creation is something that is most holy. That is the most sacred thing in life and if you’ve made a mess of your life, change it. Change it today, not tomorrow. Think straight, logically. Unless all that is prepared, you can’t enter this world – the world of creation.

So, you see, Krishnamurthy is not at all rejecting our life-world and its problems. He believes in creativity and seeks to transform our life-world through creativity. But, it has to be a world of creation, not a world of reaction and automatism – a computerised life and world. How modern and trans-modern (because trans-temporal) he is!

Man is a three-centred (‘three-brained’, as Gurdjieff puts it) being. But the development of modern man is lopsided: it is over-cerebral. It is divorced from the centre of sensation on the one hand, and from the centre of emotions on the other. This is the characteristic malady of our times: the tragic reduction of three – dimensional man to the intellectual part.

‘I am, therefore I think’ – that’s the truth; and that means – the quality and the comparative usefulness of thinking also emanates from the quality of our ‘being’. It is of the first importance to know in your guts who you are and to remember it. Here is Nisargadutt, another insider and propounder of ‘I am’. Let us listen to him also, as we listened to Krishnamurthy. His voice is even more compellingly direct:

“Without sleep” – Nisargadutt says – “the waking consciousness would be impossible. Why attach so much importance to waking consciousness, which is obviously dependent on the Unconscious. Not only the conscious, but the unconscious as well should be taken care of in our spiritual practice.” A disciple asks him – “how does one attend to the Unconscious?” Nisargadutt says:

Keep the ‘I am’ in the focus of awareness, remember that you are; watch yourself ceaselessly and the Unconscious will flow into the conscious without any special effort on your part. Wrong desires and fears, false ideas, social inhibitions are blocking – preventing

its free interplay with the conscious. Once free to mingle, the two become one, and the one becomes 'all'. The person merges into the witness, the witness into awareness, awareness into pure being. Yet identity is not lost; only its limitations are lost. It is transfigured and bears the real Self, the *Sadguru*, the eternal friend and guide. Give all your attention to the question "what is it that makes me conscious?" Until your mind becomes the question itself and cannot think of anything else.

So, our concern with thinking as such – with the urge to marshal all our intellectual resources towards the improvement of our collective and individual life must needs include this other basic urge also. We have to internalise this wisdom by practicing it. We have to come to terms with the fact that I can become conscious only when I feel a reality that is higher than myself. When I recognize that without it I am nothing and have no force to resist being taken by identification. I can open to this Reality, be nourished by it. This requires an attention I cannot maintain. I return to the feeling of my ordinary 'I' which does not understand that. I do not act; I only react. In reacting, I close; become prisoner of the same inertia and repetition. How can the 'thinking' of such a slave of automatism be creative?

We are conditioned by this lopsided development where words like self-remembering, spirituality and meditation have lost their real meaning. We have to cultivate a method that keeps our past from becoming our future. We have to ask the fundamental question again and again, because we become dulled to the old answers. That's why a modern mystic like Gurdjieff discovers a method for the harmonious development of man, which he calls 'WORK'. That's why he uses the word 'attention' instead of meditation. According to him, "attention is the conscious force, the force of consciousness – a divine force. Our search is for contact with Energy coming the Higher Centres. We are separated from those higher centres by our attachment to our functions." Actually the method called 'work' by Gurdjieff affects the body, thought and emotions simultaneously – giving rise to a new feeling. As we noted earlier, even to make proper use of our mental faculty, our thinking, feeling, and sensation must be together. They can be together only through this 'work' and 'attention', which was called '*Dhyan*' earlier. Our modern sages rediscover and reinterpret that wisdom in a language which is more accessible to us.

Unless one rediscovers and re-establishes the link between mind and higher energy centres, unless one reintegrates the three centres of

mind, heart and senses, and makes them work together, mere cerebral activity of think tanks is not going to transform human conditions. It's not mere theory, it's actual practice, actual 'work', that enables you to understand that without relationship with higher energy, life has no meaning. But we have no connection with higher energy – that's the tragedy of modern man and that's why Jung, one of the greatest psychologists of the twentieth century writes his "*Modern Man in Search of Soul*." But Yoga as well as the experiences of men like Krishnamurthy and Nisargadutt on the one hand, and the 'work' of Gurdjieff and Madame Saltzmann on the other, can help you to re-establish that connection. If one starts seriously to 'practise' their 'wisdom' and procedures, one begins to experience the 'change' in oneself. Infact, one finds that gradually, the desire of the mind for that relationship becomes an organic need. Of course, you cannot force it. Higher Energy, or *Mahashakti* – as one of the greatest twentieth century yogis called Vishuddhanand Paramhansa used to call it – cannot be forced. She is the Mother and you have to 'work' with single-minded dedication to receive her constant touch. Gradually you get more and more interested in it and are appalled by the lack when you are not in relationship i.e., in real touch with it. This practice has to be done alone and also in a group. Soon you realize that you cannot live without this 'touch', without this overwhelmingly close relationship. Nothing has significance or meaning without it.

So, 'I am' comes before 'I think'. Our deepest need is to remember ourselves. We are always dismembered, fragmented, never, never really integrated whole. To remember myself is to remember this dismembered self as well as the real self- i.e. Unity of Being. Of course this 'Self' is not ego. Self-remembering is not ego – gratification. After all, why did I come into existence? It's the wish 'To Be.' It's a universally verifiable and applicable wisdom; by no means a mere ideology or sectarian ritual or belief. For example, even in the Old Testament and New Testament, 'I am' is the most sacred name of God. Why?

There is yet another equally important fact we must recognise. One recognizes the presence of real 'I' from the fact that 'I' wishes to serve. Ego does not want to serve. Who am I? There can be no theology or cosmology without this autology. The soul is as infinite as God. Unfortunately, the so-called World religions in their expansionist zeal either forgot or forfeited this most important part of their original experience. They became 'political' with their missionary zeal of proselytization and conversion of others. They never realized that such

conversion is equivalent to murdering the lived past of a real human being. In their zeal for converting more and more people, they committed the unforgivable crime – of dividing humanity into too irreconcilably hostile camps: the so-called faithful and the so-called infidel or kafir. That indeed was the Original Sin, not the myth they concocted. Thus, their ideological adventure was vitiated at the origin itself. It was no longer and by no means an adventure of consciousness. It degenerated into a proselytizing ideology and praxis. Hindsight compels our common sense to designate this event as a tragedy for mankind. It's high time we understood, accepted and countered this misadventure. India – the one country which had to suffer the longest owing to this catastrophic historical event, known this fact in its guts. We Indians have had to protect our 'I am' intuition against the heaviest odds in human history. And that's how and why we could survive inspite of the zealots.

Now that we have won back our political independence, now that we are beginning to realize the ironies of our truncated renaissance, we have to regain and reassert our spiritual common sense in very sphere of our life. And, as I have been struggling to emphasize throughout this essay, it's not at all a question of re-instating or re-inventing some ancient Indian achievement. Contemporary sages like Krishnamurthy and Mangatram and Nisargadutt and Vishuddhananda – hundreds and thousands of them have shown us the way. To cut it short, we can understand only by actual experiencing, that without 'I Am', there is no consciousness to enable us to cope with the challenges staring us in the face and to redeem what is not only Indian, but actually, universal human condition.

## Thinking on 'Thinking, Thinkers and the Think Tanks'

**B.B. Kumar\***

The institution of a “think tank” is something new for India. We had thinkers, but not the think tanks. Our society always placed highest trust on its thinkers and their written words. This was, because ‘thinking’ in this country was a most rigorous process. It lacked self-centrism; for an Indian thinker, there was no conflict between the interest of the society (*paramartha*) and self-interest (*swartha*) of the thinker. The thought used to emerge from deep study (*adhyayan*), deep and intense thinking (*manana*) and contemplation (*nididhyasan*). Thinking was not only a rigorous, but also an open process. As the Rig-Veda said: ‘Let the noble thoughts come to us from every side’ (*A no bhadrah kratavo yantu vishvatah*; Rig 1.89.1), the noble thought from anybody and anywhere was welcomed in this country. The people’s trust in its thinkers was, any way, not a misplaced one; they did not feel deceived. The situation, however, drastically changed, when India was colonized. The colonizers came with a “true” ideology, which declared this country’s religion and culture “untrue.” They came with the “light” to remove our “darkness” and assumed the self-assumed “Whiteman’s Burden” to educate and civilise us. Colonial masters were expert myth-makers, which our English-educated intellectuals are still parroting. The myths and lies strengthened the colonial forces; they became excellent tools of social divide. And again, while the European powers were colonizing India and the world, they got a new weapon against Asia (and therefore, against others also), as Lohiya said, in the form of Marxism. After the arrival of British colonization and Marxism, perverse thinking, responsible for the colonial myths and lies, became an effective weapon

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\*Editor, *Dialogue* and *Chintan-Srijan*.

against this country. But the people continued to believe in their words, and be deceived.

For Marx, British colonization of India, which converted the country from the richest to the poorest in the world, left it hungry, naked, illiterate and diseased, was a progressive and most desired phenomenon; India was destined to be conquered, it being immaterial whether by the British or by the others. Asiatic mode of production was the primitive one for Marx, then how is it that out of the last two millennia, India remained at the top, and China the next, for eighteen hundred years in the scale of wealth? A recent statement by Shashi Tharoor (in a discourse in Oxford University) that the British owed a debt for impoverishing India, provoked a debate, with a number of apologists for the British rule recounting the benefits and the positives of the British rule in India. They were missing the cardinal point of subjugation, indignity and economic exploitation of a nation with a glorious past.

Marxist post-Independence dominance in the Indian intellectual arena brought certain undesirable changes in India. It resulted in weakening of nationalist forces; it also weakened our links with the tradition, culture, language and the religion. Indians remembered their thinkers and studied about them during the early phase of independence, and more so in pre-Independence phase. The writings of the thinker scholars were gradually removed from the course contents of the schools, colleges and the universities. What to say of the persons like Aurobindo, Dayanand, Raman Maharshi, Vivekanand and Savarkar, even Gandhi and Tagore were pushed to the margins, and the students lost intimate contact with them and their writings. Among our historians, Dharmpal, though not holding any Professorial post in any University, did the best in the field of historical research of the British period. The country should have been better acquainted with the brilliant scholarly works of the thinkers like Ram Swarup, Anand Coomarswamy, Professor Raghuvira, Professor K.C. Bhattacharjee, Professor J.L. Mehta, Professor A.K. Sharan, V.S. Agrawal, Krishnamurthy and Ajneya.

Thinking on thinking, thinkers and Indian think tanks is a mind-boggling phenomenon. The problem is that there may be proper think tanks only when there is original and proper thinking; and there may be original, proper and authentic thinking, at least, and, only when (i) undesirable ideational and ideological linkages are severed; (ii) proper parameters of thinking are set; (iii) thinking is not made a tool of deception, exploitation, social divide, self-promotion, and, for neo-colonial purposes; (iv) an established writer/intellectual/thinker does

not trespass the boundaries of his knowledge; he avoids indulging in childish and irresponsible remarks, and thereby creating confusion; (v) the others, and especially the enemies of India and our society, should not set the agenda of our think tanks; the deconstructionist researches conducted by our institutions of research and higher learning, following the lead of Euro-American institutions, certainly need in-depth inquiry. It is here that the researched by our institutions and the ideas generated by them under the direction and framework developed by others, need probe; and (vi) ideas, rather than the self-interest of the individual, is at the centre of concern of the person expressing the opinion. The reality is that the Indian intellectuals, while analyzing Indic phenomenon, situate the country in different ideological rigid frameworks, and such frameworks were usually developed in the West, based on their social realities and needs rather than ours. Moreover, when certain scholars try to fit the facts in the given ideological frame, they either distort or ignore the inconvenient facts.

Many of our scholars have developed the perverse habit of frequently trespassing the boundaries of their knowledge. They may be experts in one field, and yet may have weak knowledge base in another. In such cases, if they give wrong statements, pass wrong judgments, then the society gets confused. In intellectual arena, lack of capacity to separate chaff from grain is a serious weakness, and the society pays heavily for that lapse. Getting, or managing to get, an internationally recognized award in a particular field, or receiving a literary award, does not entitle one to claim knowledge in all other fields. But that is exactly happening in India. Now, as people, in general, believe recognized scholars as the source of authentic ideas, they believe even in their inauthentic statements.

In many a times, non-deserving persons manage to occupy scholarly chairs; such persons openly favour and help more of their ilk to occupy positions in the scholarly fora. With scanty information base and total lack of analysis, their writings have highly diffused focus and rampant generalization. Pamphleteering and sloganeering also goes as scholarly works. As Raj Thapar in *All These Years* has elaborated, the Marxists managed to occupy scholarly fora, and some of the topmost bureaucrats of Indira Gandhi era helped them in the nefarious game. The Congress, after mid-1960s, allowed Marxists to manage and dominate the social sciences and humanities departments of the universities and the scholarly institutions; the Communists occasionally reciprocated by helping the Congress in Government formation. Here, it needs mention that

Communist infiltration in Congress organization, and in country's intellectual fora, started even earlier in a subtle way during Nehruvian era, just after *Randive phase* of violent activities of the Indian Communists. The socialists, unlike Lohiya, did the opposite of all what Lohiya did and stood for. Marxists also infiltrated in Gandhian forums. They even tried to appropriate Gandhi, and were partially successful in their effort.

India was a great nation with the oldest tradition of scholarship. As stated above, India remained the richest country of the world for 1800 years during the span of the last two thousand years. The paradox is that this country's rich scholarly tradition and wealth could not prevent the long spell of 1300 years of foreign and colonial rule. It is true that Islam, which spread from the border of India to Spain and from Egypt up to the Oxus River within only 80 years of its origin, took almost six hundred years to enter India. Nevertheless, a part of India, the Sindh and Multan, was colonized and brought under Arabian rule within the very first century of Islam. Obviously, this happened due to our lapses and stagnation in the field of scholarship. Is it not strange that the Hindus, with such a long period of their contact with Islam, have failed to produce a single authentic scholar on Islam or on Arab world? There is evident dearth of authentic scholarship in any field in this country, say, on China, or on Pakistan, with whom we remain in conflict mode, or on Iran, Africa, or on many others and on many subjects.

India has a large number of think tanks. United Service Institute of India (USI), established in 1870 is perhaps the oldest one. Some of them, such as the Centre for Policy Research (CPR), Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA), TERI, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Vivekanand Kendra Foundation (VVKF), Observer Research Foundation (ORF) and many others, are well-known. Wikipedia has listed 24 Indian think tanks. Madison University has published detailed information about important think tanks of India, which we have summarized in the paragraphs given below.

University of Pennsylvania, U.S.A. under its 'Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program' under 'International relations program' has processed valuable information about the best think tanks of the world, in its publication *2014 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report*. Among 100 best think tanks of the world, only five Indian thinks have been listed. There is no mention of any Indian think tank working in the field of culture, religion, languages, etc; no Gandhian think tank is listed. Needless to say that there is much information to share. I

therefore, wrote twice to the institutions and the individuals for necessary input.

In this case, I would like to share some of the views/suggestions made. Rajiv Malhotra writes: "Make sure you examine the serious problem of plagiarism among them." Navratna S. Rajaram writes: "... I agree with you that most of them are not think tanks that advance frontiers of knowledge but NGOs that are engaged in advocacy of a particular viewpoint or even interest." Prakash Singh has sent his paper and pointed towards certain basic flaws of the think tanks. He writes: "While it is true that some think tanks within the country are doing commendable job and are engaged in quality research, it is unfortunate that a majority of them suffer from certain basic flaws. These are:

- Basing their output on available literature and not doing original research
- Representing vested interests
- Having an agenda
- Projecting views of foreign lobbies."

The inference, one may draw from the letter of Professor J.S. Rajput, is that there is dearth of think tanks in the field of education. He writes:

I write with a sense of guilt, and seek your forgiveness for having failed to respond to your earlier communication.

Now, the situation is more clear to me to respond.

As you may probably recall, I needed individual and 'Think Tank' inputs in preparing curriculum frame works for teacher education (1998) and school education in the year 2000. I conducted nation-wide consultations, met individuals and wrote to organizations. I fail to recall having received any comprehensive input from any organization, either the government funded or a voluntary one! All I could manage was from individuals (on request and persuasion), and through meetings conducted in states and institutions. On both of these occasions, the documents finally prepared were made available to governments at centre and in states. Will these be called think tank inputs?

Normally, institutions like the NCERT, NCTE, which I headed for five years each are expected to function as think tanks and provide institutional consultancy to the state and others in need. Government seeks their 'comments' on specific issues and these do respond. There, however, are serious limitations in the process. Their dependence on the government directly impacts their autonomous status. In May 2004, I witnessed how government gagged these, and other institutions, purely on political considerations.

Hence, my experience could be only limited. I had, for several years supported Hoshangabad Science Education Project as head of the Regional Institute of Education, Bhopal. At some stage I withdrew as I experienced considerable 'lack of willingness to discuss new inputs and ideas.'

I wonder how I could contribute to your proposed publications!"

When I asked a top scholar in the field of culture, his remark about the situation was shocking as well as revealing; he said: "I would like to avoid controversy." Clearly, things in the field of scholarship are messy.

Here, I would like to sum the assessment of the Pennsylvania University listing. Among the 100 Top Think Tanks Worldwide (Non-U.S.), listed in the report, India has only three. I wrote to large number of organizations with a view that many among them may be playing useful roles which we do not know. A point to ponder here is also that whereas we have few think tanks counted among the best, some foreign think tanks, such as Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Brookings Institute are also opening their offices here, and are managing to get funds from Indian sources. The three best think tanks listed in document mentioned above are:

- i. Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA)
- ii. Centre for Civil Society (CCS)
- iii. Observer Research Foundation (ORF)

India has only five think tanks among 160 top think tanks of the world including that of the U.S., which are:

- i. Centre for Civil Society (CCS);
- ii. Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA);
- iii. The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI);
- iv. Observer Research Foundation (ORF);
- v. Development Alternatives (DA).

At the regional level among the top 50 think tanks of China, India, Japan and the Republic of Korea, the following 15 are from India:

- i. Observer Research Foundation (ORF);
- ii. Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA);
- iii. Centre for Civil Society (CCS);
- iv. Centre for Policy Research (CPR);
- v. Delhi Policy Group (DPG);
- vi. Development Alternatives (DA);
- vii. The Energy and Resource Institute (TERI);
- viii. Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP);

- ix. National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER);
- x. Gateway House; Indian Council on Global Relations (ICGR);
- xi. Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS);
- xii. Indian Council for Research in International Economic Relations (ICRIER);
- xiii. Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS);
- xiv. Institute of Economic Growth (IEG); and
- xv. United Service Institution of India (USI).

Among the 84 think tanks, three, namely IDSA, CLAWS (Centre for Land Warfare Studies) and ORF are from India. Among the 80 top 'Domestic Economic Policy Think Tanks' and 55 'Top Education Policy Think Tanks,' India has none. Only TERI is listed among 30 top think tanks in the field of energy and resource policy. Similarly, in the field of environment, only the names of CSE (Centre for Science and Environment), ATREE (Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment), DA and IRADe (Integrated Research and Action for Development) is listed among 65 institutions. IPCS (Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies) and ORF find place among 85 institutions working in the field of 'Foreign Policy and International Affairs.' EIG is the only Indian think among 30 working in the field of 'Domestic Health Policy' and 25 in the field of 'Global Health Policy.' 80 International Development think tanks are listed; the Indian representatives are CFDA (Centre for Development Alternatives) and ICRIER. There are 50 top international 'Economic Policy' think tank; India has two, namely, ICRIER and IEG. TERI, TCOE (Telecom Centres of Excellence) and CSSP (Centre for Studies in Science Policy are Indian ones). Among 50 top 'Policy Think Tanks,' India has CPR as the only representative. DA and PAC (Public Affairs Centre) are working in the field of transparency and good governance; total number of institutions listed is 40. The best advocacy campaign Indian think tank is IPCS, the number of think tanks working in the field are 75. IDSA is the only Government affiliated think tank in India; the global listing is 45. In the field of international collaboration involving two or more think tanks, CEEW (Council on Energy, Environment and Water) is the only one in India; globally there are 75. Out of the 65 listed as best managed think tanks, India has none. TERI and the 'Fields of View (India), are among 40 'Best New Idea or Paradigm developed by a Think Tank.'

The publication *2014 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report* also lists the "Best New Ideas or Paradigm Developed by a Think Tank (40 entries), where TERI and 'Fields of View (India)' are listed. None of

the Indian think tanks has come out with the best policy study/report produced, while 47 such reports are listed. Out of the 55 best think tank conferences, none are from India. Only 'International Economics Associates (IDEAs)' is listed among the 60 best think tank networks. There is no Indian think tank among the 30 best think tanks with political party affiliation, 45 best university affiliated think tanks, and the think tanks established between couple of years. Two Indian think tanks – CSDS and DA – are among the 60 best trans-disciplinary research programme conducting think tanks and another sixty think tanks with outstanding policy-oriented public programmes. Sixty think tanks are listed for best use of social networks, which includes 'Gateway House: Indian Council on Global Relations' and DA. DA is also listed among fifty think tanks with the best external relations/public engagement programme, and Gateway House among forty think tanks with the best use of the internet. Only IDSA is listed among forty think tanks with the best use of the media (print or electronic), ORF among thirty with the most innovative policy ideas/proposals, ICRIER among 70 think tanks with the most significant impact on public policy. CSDS and DA are listed among sixty think tanks with outstanding policy-oriented public programmes. There are eighty listed as 'Thinks Tanks to Watch,' which include ORF, IDSA, CCS, VKIT (Vivekanand Institute of Technology), CPR Gateway House and CEEW.

While concluding, it needs mention that the University Grants Commission, different central and state universities, various scholarly research organizations, the Central and State Government departments, and many others are spending millions of crores on research. Some State, public and private funded organizations are also awarding fellowships and funding research projects. It will help us to know about the status of the output in terms of the quality of their work and the benefits percolating to the nation and the society from such research work. We are entitled to receive commensurate returns from our gigantic research industry run at huge public cost.

The nature of huge foreign funding to our think tanks, and whether such funding is aimed at influencing our policy initiatives need in-depth probe. In this regard disclosures in an extensive article in New York Times "Foreign Powers Buy Influence at Think Tanks (Sept. 6, 2014) by Eric Lepton, Brooke Williams and Nicholas Confessor is an eye opener as to how foreign governments/organisations are using funds to procure tailored views, even from well-known Think Tanks. It alleged that money is increasingly transforming the reputed Think Tanks, to

subserve the interest of foreign govts, reflecting "the donors' priorities" and straying from the path of providing independent policy analysis, input and scholarship. The article claimed that more than a dozen prominent US research groups have received tens of million dollars in recent years from foreign governments and many scholars admitted being pressured to reach conclusions friendly to those financing the research. Such arrangements included some big names like Centre for Global Development; Brookings Institutions, Centre for State and International Studies, and the Atlantic Council. The financing countries included European Countries, UAE, Qatar, Norway and Japan with varying lobbying interests from highlighting them to purveying half truths. It claimed that since 2011 atleast 64 foreign government or controlled entities have contributed a minimum of \$ 92 million to 28 major US based research organisations. The article quoted a number of instances of influence peddling. It as a worrying aspect as a number of our own think tanks receive foreign funding from various non-government. entities. In the absence a targeted study the issue remains open and indeterminate.

While unsubstantiated allegations are plenty, but considering the well researched revelations above in the US call for similar audit in India. Before that we should refrain tarring with the same brush all the think tanks/research groups and projects receiving foreign funding. Foreign influence peddling in the Third World countries is an acknowledged fact of life in the field of scholarship, politics and economy. And India is not an exception. The best way to combat the threat is to expose it, considering its subtlety and gamut of interests involved. If it can happen in the affluent USA, poor Third World countries are more vulnerable. There is an apparent need of an inbuilt intellectual audit system in respect of individuals, institutions and projects receiving foreign funding, either from governments/government supported entities or private foundations etc. It will help in both clearing the air as well as alert the targeted entities. It is essential as the role of think tanks in providing the policy makers independent analysis, policy input and scholarship is an important component of governance.

## Think Tanks of a Strange Kind

Shankar Sharan\*

When the first government led by the BJP was established at the centre in 1998, there was a spurt in establishing think tanks, presumably of a nationalist or Hinduist kind. With time it went to an embarrassing level as many Union ministers helped to create their individual think tanks. This apart from various trusts, memorial fund and foundations started by middle level BJP-RSS functionaries. Most of them also quickly applied to the government for allotting land and funds for their respective foundations. It is futile to research as to how many were registered during those years or since then, what they received as government grant, etc. Suffice to say that the very meaning of a think tank was quite eluded most of them.

There is such a foundation for which an important RSS functionary made elaborate preparations for years. It was announced to be a global foundation devoted to accord among civilizations. For its 'soft launch' several national and international level meetings were organised, here and abroad. However, as many years passed after its inauguration in New Delhi with huge pomp, today hardly any scholar or student or media-man seems to have any idea whether such a foundation exists, and if it does, what is it doing? The website of this foundation is a show of absolute futility as far as its stated goals and actual deeds are compared. This is not an isolated example of a think tank being caricatured.

What it suggests? First of all, we the people of India are yet to mature as thinking people in the current age. Yes, we were *jagadgurus*, teachers of the world, once upon a time. But since the last few centuries

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we are in the reverse position. Being habitual imitators and pretenders, especially, especially in the arena of thought, has become our lot. This is the greatest stumbling block for us as a country, a sad fact long identified by our many great men during the freedom struggle.

For instance, Swami Vivekanand or Sri Aurobindo constantly exhorted us to be mentally free and independent. In fact, Sri Aurobindo mentioned 'unwillingness to think' as the central weakness of our country. His words are worth pondering:

**... the main cause of India's weakness is not subjection, nor poverty, nor a lack of spirituality or religion, but a diminution of the power of thought, the spread of ignorance in the birthplace of knowledge. Everywhere I see an inability or unwillingness to think, incapacity of thought or thought-phobia. This may have been all right in the mediaeval period, but now this attitude is the sign of a great decline. The mediaeval period was a night, the day of victory for the man of ignorance; in the modern world it is the time of victory for the man of knowledge. He who can delve into and learn the truth about the world by thinking more, searching more, labouring more, gains more power.**

Thus, in the case of recent mushrooming of so-called think tanks yielding nothing, we can see the same weakness. The ascendancy of BJP and RSS to political power does not repudiate it. Rather it is a matter of concern that a party and an organisation with so much trust of millions of our country is so inane in thought and still in the grip of thought-phobia. About the phenomenon, this writer asked a senior ideologue of the RSS: why so many big leaders of BJP, trained in the RSS, have started their individual think tanks without any preparation at all? Especially when all these announced similar goals objectives for their respective Foundations, Trusts and think tanks by other names. If they are indeed serious about the objectives, why not they all pool their abilities and resources to make at least one think tank worthy of the term? The ideologue answered with a thoughtful smile saying nothing.

To take another example, when yet another new think tank was established with RSS support, the newly appointed chief approached a young scholar inviting him to submit research proposals. The scholar dutifully proposed a small project to study the syllabi and course contents of *madarsa* education in the country, taking a State or area as sample. The idea was to have an authentic, updated knowledge so that the much touched modernisation programme of Muslim education can be helped in an informed way. But the proposal went as if to a deep, dark

well, with no response from the foundation. What is interesting is the chief continued interacting with the scholar as if nothing had happened.

It is but a confirmation of the thought-phobia Sri Aurobindo so rued. The minds running the think tank could discuss it with the scholar, and let him know about their reservations, doubts or whatever. But dumping it by silence and pretending normality gives the game away. That it is not so much a project of really establishing a genuine think tank, but only a prop to support some different goal. Perhaps a wish of someone to rise in political status, or to propagate the ideological line of an organisation.

In fact, the latter, in itself not a big drawback. We know the great think tanks of the USA (whence the very term originated) also had political agendas to serve, RAND Corporation or Brookings Institution or great journals like 'Problems of Communism' did work to weaken the Soviet Union in the cold war era. But the point is: they did it with utmost professionalism. They followed a high standard of objectivity as to the facts and scholarship. The articles, books and scholars were published not on the basis of their affiliation to ideology or conformity to this or that organisation or leader, but strictly on merit. That proved decisive for the name and fame of a think tanks. Indeed, some best books about the Soviet Russia and Eastern Europe in that era came from such think tanks. It not only helped the US and European leaders and policy makers to fine-tune their initiatives and response towards the Soviet blocks, but also helped the people of the communist countries in various ways. Not to say the intellectual development of the countries that supported such foundations.

The think tanks of our nationalist/Hindutva kind look miserable in contrast. It is not a matter of lacking in financial resources in comparison to the American or European ones. Some of the newly established foundations in Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore etc. are comfortable in funds. The embarrassing part is the lack of academic focus as well as academic resources. The very element of a think tank – the thinkers – are conspicuously missing among them. Worse, they don't even care for this want. So many such think tanks have offices or buildings, furniture, equipments and staff but hardly serious or capable scholars. Besides, in some cases, the chief himself is invariably preoccupied with administrative and political responsibilities. What is inexplicable though in such foundations lacklustre attitude towards finding serious researchers to undertake an original study.

As a result, even well-endowed foundations do not have a well-thought objective or even a focussed programme. So much so, that sometimes they do not seem to know what to do for a whole year! Ultimately, it results in organising a routine lecture, i.e., a lecture for the sake of a lecture or a mundane book-release, not exciting to anyone except perhaps the author. The lectures are organised with little contemplation of theme or speaker or the target audience. Invariably the same people are the speakers and listener all over again and again at different think tanks. The only thing such activities achieve is spending a tidy sum of money, so that it could be said that such a foundation is doing some work. That it organised, say, ten lectures in a year. A work that hardly requires establishing a foundation or a think tank. In places like Delhi, hundreds of such non-event lectures are organised daily at various places. How a lecture by the said think tank or foundation was different remains nobody's concern. And this points to the strange state of such think tanks.

For many middle level political aspirants, keeping or running a think tank seems no more than a calling card, that he may be recognised by their senior power-holders as doing some work on the ideological front thus, a candidate for a suitable reward in due time. It is natural, then, that real objective of such a foundation is not towards the stated goals of the foundation, but to seek attention from the powers that be. That is why they never sit in contemplation, silent or loud, as to the achievements of their think tanks so far, or how to move ahead, or the problems, if any, it faced.

The surmise, that many think tanks established by the BJP-RSS men are just a show behind which real purposes are ordinary, gets further confirmed by various other indicators. First, the selection of personnel for advising, directing and supervising the work of a think tank. It was curious to see that a well-endowed foundation, with its impressive multi-story building in the most expensive area in the national capital had in its board of governors mostly retired army, police and civil servants. That could be understandable had the objective of the foundation been army or administrative studies. None of it. The stated goals of the foundation is to contribute on the same civilizational, philosophical and political issues, that many of her sister foundations also profess. But its governing board members are conspicuous by lack of well-known intellectual names among them. Even those names associated with the BJP for a long time.

Therefore, it becomes another riddle: why the very thinkers available to the party are never entrusted with the responsibility to try achieve the goals of a think tank, and thereby earn a good for the party itself? Especially so as in recent times, at least since 1998, the dominant left-liberal academics and journalists of the country kept ridiculing the BJP-RSS incessantly on the very intellectual front. As a matter of fact, the reason for establishing their 'own' think tanks by the BJP-RSS functionaries was to answer back their critics. Still they seem to defeat their purpose by keeping the activities strictly to yes-man kind of persons. There is no other plausible reason for packing a think tank with intellectual non-entities, old party functionaries or tired bureaucrats.

One more example may help illuminate the point. The peculiar selection of personnel for running or guiding an intellectual foundation is not a chance mistake. The very selectors are worse in some respects. It so happened that once a writer, considered RSS-friendly and branded an 'RSS-man' in the media circles, wrote a book on a literary issue. The book was well-researched. But knowing that the left-liberal circles would do its best ignore or bury it, he sent a copy of his book to some RSS ideologues and their leading persons having responsible educational assignments. He hoped they might help it reach a wide readership. To his amazement, he hardly got even an acknowledgement from them, despite his name being fairly well known. One response he received from the chief of a large educational network run by the RSS. The chief tersely wrote, 'Dear so and so, I received your book. Let me know how much discount you can give if we buy it. I will talk to you only after getting an answer to this point. Thank you.' This, while the book was not published by the poor author, but by a reputed publishing company! The old and experienced education man of the RSS does not know whom to talk what. True to his word, he never reverted to the author. A person who genuinely believes being a great torch-bearer on education-intellectual front. He is still busy saving education from enemies.

Looking at it all in a detached way points to a simple conclusion: such think tanks are just a fashionable name for another party organ. It also reflects in their style of functioning. A secretiveness and at the same time also seeking publicity can be noticed there. For instance, a foundation publishes a very useful digest of press reports focussing on a particular issue. It is undoubtedly a good academic material for researchers, scholars and even for administrators and policy makers. But the foundation keeps it strictly private, just providing it to its own

people and sympathisers. Despite suggestion that such a publication would be welcomed by scholars and help further research, thus earning a good name for the foundation, it refuses stolidly (without saying so, of course). On the other hand, unnecessary efforts and expenses are incurred to seek publicity and visibility. Both these traits at once point to the un-intellectual urges guiding the movement.

It is almost a thumb-rule that genuine institutions almost never go after praise or reward as their first priority. We do have some first rate organisations working arduously for their stated thinking goals. The best example was the 'Voice of India,' established to articulate Hindu views on the line of sages like Sri Aurobindo and Sardar Patel. It was founded by late Sita Ram Goel and Ram Swarup with no property, infrastructure or donations at all. Many path-breaking publications were brought out by them. They were not only pioneers in this country on a range of burning issues, but remain unsurpassed till date. True to being a think tank it attracted and cultivated many scholars, researchers and readers, here and abroad. It worked with no funding or even organisational support from any quarters. Although a nationwide large semi-political organisation was friendly to them, but it desisted from active support or collaboration in any way.

Another example is 'The Institute for Conflict Management,' also known by its South Asia Terrorism Portal (<http://www.satp.org/>). It was founded by K.P.S. Gill, well-known for his knowledge and experience about terrorism. The documentation and analyses presented by this think tank during the last one decade is exemplary. It would have been in order, if others could have learnt from it and likewise at least documented systematically focussing on a distinct issue, arena or a problem. That would have earned any foundation a ready respect from many quarters. Instead, as discussed above, we see a plethora of foundations so poor in abilities and rich in pretensions. Most of them are not capable of even writing a coherent objective for their institution, or even a sound invitation card for a seminar. The declared objectives of many think tanks are such platitudes that even the chiefs of such foundations hardly bother to recall or mention it. For most of them, activity for the sake of activity seems to be the *raison d'être*. Organising some lectures and occasional seminars are the beginning and the end for them.

Of course, this sorry state is not the preserve of a particular kind of political group. The hallmark was established from the very top since the independence. The new rulers of India, led by the intellectually

oriented Jawaharlal Nehru, willy-nilly subjugated intellectual-educational objectives under narrow political considerations. That a particular ideological policy would guide the research, and not research and knowledge would guide the government policies, was the great mistake committed in the very beginning of independent India. Socialism, progressivism, anti-imperialism, etc. were taken as agreed principles to be respected by the intellectuals and academics alike. With time it was hijacked by more radical political elements and, armed with the state-support, they transformed it into a total conformity to politically correct givens.

The sorry result in our country of so many well-funded State academic bodies and universities becoming established dens of petty propaganda is thanks to the initial mistake. Ordinary publicists donning the attire of 'eminent historians' and social scientists set the standard so low that their contestants too fall prey to it.

True, some of those left-wing eminences have been very articulate, with good command of language and clever enough to make a show of academic resourcefulness. But it was just that: a show and a veneer under which the overriding political activism, superficiality, meagreness of content and inevitable arrogance was there for all to see, that is, if only they refused to see. Despite their superficiality if the lot of political activists remained occupying top academic seats for a long time, it made a bad precedent. Therefore, if their challengers show little tact in pronouncing their mere officers as think tanks, it is also because of the effect of a poor tradition set in the intellectual arena.

Mentioning a current example of this poverty may be in order. Since the Modi government came to power at the centre many such foundations have become more active, which is natural. What is not is that they organise seminars on the same theme, inviting largely the same speakers, in the same city – and perhaps very similar list of invited listeners too. All this with no little cost, but with full paraphernalia. The theme, as could be anticipated, too was not some burning problems or stimulating issue before the country or the world. It was just a celebration of the memory of a long deceased BJP leader. He is being presented as a great thinker and visionary. But nowhere any of his book, if at all he wrote, or article or speech is even mentioned. Just a proclamation, and then its repetition through various media, has been a typical communist intellectualism. The challengers seem to have unwittingly copied the same. As to real thinkers and scholars, such as Sita Ram Goel and Ram Swarup, no brotherly think tank so far gave

even a token attention to even acknowledge their contributions, let alone organising seminars to honour their work and learn from it.

The stray observations made in this article may not be accurate, conclusive or exhaustive. It only points to a basic lack of sense in establishing think tanks by some good people as if it is a common hobby. What makes the scenario really sad is that many of such think tanks were established with the blessings of well-meaning leaders of the BJP-RSS. Add to it the fact that genuine scholars available to them are seldom roped in for intellectual-educational tasks, and the conclusion become inescapable: most of these think tanks and foundations are not worth the name. the urge and the protagonists are missing.

## Think Tanks in India

**Prakash Singh\***

There has been a proliferation of think tanks in India in the recent years. According to a recent estimate by the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP) at the University of Pennsylvania, there are 192 think tanks in the country as against 1830 in USA, 429 in China, 287 in UK and 194 in Germany. It is a sad commentary on the quality of our think tanks that only six of them figure in the top 150. These are: the Centre for Civil Society (CCS, rank 50), Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA, 100), Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER, 105), The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI, 107), Observer Research Foundation (ORF, 114) and Development Alternatives (DA, 129).

China has the second largest number of think tanks in the world next only to the United States. On October 27, 2014, at the sixth meeting of the Leading Group for Overall Reform, Chinese President Xi Jinping gave a call for a new type of think tank. He said that the think tanks should have “Chinese characteristics,” promote China’s modernization and governing system as well as strengthen China’s soft power.

The University of Pennsylvania Report highlights the valuable role of Think Tanks in society:

“Today, many politicians choose to focus on short-term issues and crises, rather than addressing the large looming crises that are just ahead... like aging or declining populations, climate change, and sovereign debt... (Politicians) put their nations at risk because they would rather dodge and defer the issue in order to ensure their re-elections.

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\* The author, a recipient of Padmashri, was DGP UP, DGP Assam and Director General BSF.

Think tanks can alter their tendency for short-termism by determining realistic measurable targets for combating long-term transnational problems. In conjunction with NGOs, they can also function as watchdogs and apply more pressure to governments to act in the long-term by producing reports that discuss the grave consequences of inaction.”

Think tanks provide intellectual inputs to government and the people on matters of public and national interest. In some Western countries, they have a very high profile presence. Whatever they write or the views they express are taken serious notice of by the policy makers. In fact, members of think tanks are at times co-opted at high levels in government. It is actually a two-way traffic. There are also instances of high government dignitaries, after demitting office, occupying positions in recognized think tanks of the country. This trend is now becoming visible in India also. Following the installation of Modi government in the country, we have seen distinguished members of the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) occupying important positions in government.

While it is true that some think tanks within the country are doing commendable job and are engaged in quality research, it is unfortunate that a majority of them suffer from certain basic flaws. These are:

- Ø Basing their output on available literature and not doing original research.
- Ø Representing vested interests.
- Ø Having an agenda.
- Ø Projecting the views of foreign lobbies.

The Intelligence Bureau recently submitted to the government a report identifying several foreign-funded non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which are “negatively impacting economic development”. According to the report, “a significant number of Indian NGOs (funded by some donors based in US, UK, Germany, Netherlands and Scandinavian countries) have been noticed to be using people-centric issues to create an environment which lends itself to stalling development projects.” These issues include agitations against nuclear power plants, uranium mines, coal-fired power plants, genetically modified organisms, mega industrial projects (POSCO and Vedanta), hydel projects (at Narmada Sagar and in Arunachal Pradesh) and extractive industries (oil, limestone) in the North-East. The report further said: “Identified foreign donors cleverly disguise their donation as funding for protection of human rights, ‘just deal’ for project-affected

displaced persons, protection of livelihood of indigenous people, protecting religious freedom etc. These foreign donors lead local NGOs to provide field reports which are used to build a record against India and serve as tools for the strategic foreign policy interests of Western governments.” What the IB said about the NGOs would also apply to a number of think tanks currently operating in India.

An investigation conducted by Millennium Post revealed that Indian NGOs received funds through Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) channel to the tune of Rs 47,000 crore during 2002 to 2012 and US topped the list with Rs 20,000 crore donations followed by UK and Germany with Rs 8,000 crore each. The investigation further revealed that a fund of Rs 11,070 crore was received by Indian NGOs during 2013-14 and again US topped the list with Rs 4,491 crore followed by UK, which donated Rs 1,347 crore.

A brief review of some of the think tanks of the country is given below:

### **Patriots’ Forum**

Registered in March 2006, Patriots’ Forum has mostly senior retired government servants, academics, social scientists and friends from other fields including journalists. Its motto is to uphold and protect the age-old Indic civilization.

One of its priorities has been to create awareness about the consequences of fast-changing demographic composition of the country with its adverse impact on our civilizational ethos. The Forum filed a PIL in the Delhi High Court in January 2008, challenging the setting up of Sachar Committee as a religion specific body in violation of the Right to Equality enshrined in Article 15A of the Constitution of India. The PIL is now in the Supreme Court, waiting to be listed.

Some of Patriots’ Forum’s other activities include: Lodging protest against the unbecoming conduct of the then Vice Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia in extending legal protection to the students of the Institute involved in acts of terrorism; presenting a Memorandum to the Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister, offering concrete suggestions in the wake of 26/11 terrorist attack in Mumbai; sending an open letter to the US President over his ignoring India’s important role in promoting global peace in his speech at the Al Azhar University, Cairo on June 4, 2009.

The Forum has been bringing out a quarterly magazine, *BHARAT SPEAKS*. It has received recognition even at the international level.

The Forum is patriotic in the true sense of the term. At times however it becomes paranoid in its views on Islam.

### **Observer Research Foundation**

The Observer Research Foundation (ORF) was established on September 5, 1990 as a private, not for profit, think tank. It is supported by many of India’s leading intellectuals, academics, public figures, social activists, business leaders and institutions of higher learning. It seeks to aid and influence the formulation of policies for building a strong and prosperous India. The Foundation believes that by 2020 India will be one of the world’s great economic powers and contribute to a significant transformation in the quality of life of humanity.

The objectives of the ORF are to:

- Ø aid and impact formulation of policies and evolve policy alternatives.
- Ø create a climate conducive to effective implementation of these policies.
- Ø strengthen India’s democratic institutions to enable coherent, reasoned and consistent policy-making.
- Ø provide reasoned and consensual inputs representing a broad section of opinion to improve governance, accelerate economic development, and ensure a better quality of life for all Indians.
- Ø monitor strategic environment.
- Ø work towards achieving international peace, harmony, and co-operation.
- Ø give direction to India’s long-range foreign policy objectives.

The Foundation’s activities can be neatly divided into two categories: Projects and Events. Both are an intrinsic part of the Foundation’s objective in shaping, influencing public opinion and creating viable, alternative policy options in areas as divergent as employment generation in backward districts and real-time strategies to counter nuclear, biological and chemical threats.

The ORF is funded by Reliance. Its views on economic matters therefore cannot be considered objective. In strategic matters, however, it has done valuable research.

### **Vivekananda International Foundation**

The VIF is an independent, non-partisan institution that promotes quality research and in-depth studies and is a platform for dialogue and conflict

resolution. It strives to bring together the best minds in India to ideate on key national and international issues. Its objectives are to:

- Ø promote initiatives that further the cause of peace and global harmony;
- Ø monitor social, economic and political trends that have a bearing on India's unity and integrity;
- Ø analyse the causes for social and ethnic conflicts leading to extremism and offer policy alternatives;
- Ø interact with civil society and offer institutional support for exchange of ideas and interaction among conflicting groups;
- Ø critique public policy and the working of democratic institutions and constitutional bodies; and
- Ø evolve benchmarks for good governance and efficiency in public institutions.

These objectives broadly fall under the broad head of 'nation-building' and often come within the purview of universities and institutions of higher learning. Unfortunately, according to the VIF, these academic bodies have not been able to attend to these tasks. VIF believes that many of these institutions – which are central to our democratic existence – cannot be expected to work better, unless academia, think tanks and civil society engage with them and critique them on a regular basis. Given its deep and abiding commitment to the deepening of democracy and to the emergence of a strong and self-reliant India, VIF has embarked upon quality research and scholarship in a host of areas in the hope that such studies will improve governance, strengthen national security, integrate India's foreign policy to the nation's long-term objectives and bring about the much-needed functional efficiency in parliament and other representative bodies and in public institutions.

The Foundation seeks to meet its objectives through six Centres of study, viz

1. Centre for National Security and Strategic Studies
2. Centre for International Relations and Diplomacy
3. Centre for Neighbourhood Studies
4. Centre for Governance and Political Studies
5. Centre for Economic Studies
6. Centre for Historical and Civilisational Studies

The VIF has done excellent work within a short span. It has emerged as one of the leading think tanks of the country.

## **Takshashila Institution**

The Takshashila Institution, based in Chennai, is an independent, non-partisan and non-profit organisation. It seeks to contribute to building the intellectual foundations of an India that has global interests. Its mission is to:

- Ø study and develop public policies with a view to promoting the well-being, prosperity, happiness and security of all Indians
- Ø promote responsible citizenship, economic freedom, realism in international relations, an open society and a culture of tolerance
- Ø provide advisory services for government agencies, non-governmental organisations and corporations on matters of public policy and governance.
- Ø increase public awareness and education on strategic affairs, international relations, national security and economic policies, through the publication of articles, periodicals, books and online activities.
- Ø conduct seminars and conferences towards the furtherance of these objectives.
- Ø to grant aid or render assistance to other public charitable trusts or institutions having similar objects.

The Takshashila Institution has been trying to establish itself as one of the most credible voices in India's public policy discourse, known for its unambiguous pursuit of the national interest, through consistent high-quality policy advisories.

## **Funding**

Transparency is critical to the functioning of think tanks. It is important for the public to know who has funded the think tank and what its leanings are. A number of think tanks are funded by groups or lobbies in foreign countries. These generally have an agenda. It could be ostensibly to promote the cause of human rights but actually to tarnish India's reputation on that count. It could be to take up the cause of a separatist or insurgent group, etc. A couple of think tanks in India are even suspected to be funded by the CIA.

“Who is funding, and why, becomes critical, especially while engaging on decision making related to sovereign functions of a state,” as stated by Nitin Pai, co-founder of The Takshashila Institution.

A large number of Christian NGOs are active in India. Some of them pretend to be think tanks undertaking research on tribals and ostensibly working for their welfare. While it is true that their activities are partly philanthropic, it is also true that these NGOs are primarily engaged in conversions. It is significant that these NGOs have been receiving the maximum amount of foreign exchange over the years. According to MHA's Annual Report for the year 2011-2012, the following NGOs received remittances of more than 1000 crores:

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| World Vision of India, Tamil Nadu -                                    | 233.38 crores |
| Believers Church India, Kerala -                                       | 190.05 crores |
| Rural Development Trust, Andhra Pradesh -                              | 144.39 crores |
| Indian Society of Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Delhi - | 130.77 crores |
| Public Health Foundation of India, Delhi -                             | 130.31 crores |
| Aga Khan Foundation, Delhi -   | 110.26 crores |
| Caruna Bal Vikas, Tamil Nadu -   | 109.50 crores |

The present NDA government has however tightened the screws and the inflow of funds to Christian Missions is likely to dip in the coming years.

The think tanks are making significant contribution in diverse spheres. However, it is also true that many of them lack objectivity and reflect the vested interests of their financiers, who in many cases are based abroad. It is perhaps time that our Indian think tanks also develop "Indian characteristics."

## Thinking in a Vacuous Present

**Bhagwan Singh\***

We may admit it or not, but we have gradually become intellectual parasites of the West. Most of the field work in the Third World countries is undertaken by western countries and the scholars of the Third World depend on them without suspecting the intent of the authors, their selection and presentation of data and even conclusions drawn. In our haste to "CATCH UP WITH THE WEST," we did not learn from the West, but emulated it, and in our desperation became its shadows – neither equal, nor different nor self-sustaining. Information in possession of the West is a tool for dominating the rest of the world, rather than understanding it. In ideal epistemological estimation, western literati is more ill-informed and indoctrinated than we ourselves are.

Our predicament is that our main source of information is archival material prepared by the western scholars, or under their guidance, or with their support. We have been so mesmerized that even eminent scholars sought *their* certification to be acceptable among their own people, oblivious of the sordid truth that most of their studies are either polluted or diluted schematically. We twitter of scientific thinking and of belonging to the scientific age, but we forget that even science is not scientific in a society governed by notorious self-serving groups and states dominated by such groups. Be it mass media or archival wealth, in its vehemence to dominate and conquer, western scholars have been deliberately polluting, subverting and cooking data to serve their personal and collective interests and vainglory. As such our prime requirement is not that of gathering information but of filtering and refining the information available to us, and exhuming suppressed or

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ignored data that may change the picture. It is a stupendous task. It demands courage of confidence – the property that most of us lack.

I have problems communicating with brilliant and over-informed friends around me, who cherish the good belief that knowing more amounts to being more discerning, and knowing from western sources amounts to gathering from modern, objective and rational sources – a sure remedy of our individualism, obscurantism, irrationalism tagged to Indian approach in general in western assessment, imbibed by us innocuously through the written words and tutored lessons.<sup>1</sup>

Pathologically obstinate and ill-informed<sup>2</sup> are our communist and leftist friends forming the majority of modern Indian intelligentsia. They avoid reading other philosophers, other than the Marxist ones, because they are bound to be idealist and useless. They do not study psychology as mind is product of matter and material changes may change the mindset. Behavioural psychology is the only branch and salvation on real or possible loaf the ultimate truth. They do not read history books written by non-Marxist scholars and consciously avoid or ignore primary sources, written by those who could not be Marxist. Few have access to subjects not usable as fuel to real politics, such as anthropology, philology, culture. Their knowledge is mostly superficial and very few have a deeper study even of Marxism, otherwise they could avoid digressions into subjectivism, empiricism and idealism in their writings.

But the irony is that others are far less informed and no less hard-headed than even the ‘communists.’ This is not the place to examine the cause but if the ‘enlightened’ section of a society suffers from blight, we may not have a very good opinion of the intellectual health of the society in general. Confident of their noble intentions, masking their petty self interests, the communists hide the fact that they have caused irreparable damage to the goal they held so high, to our society,<sup>3</sup> economy,<sup>4</sup> history<sup>5</sup> and culture.

In order to win support of Muslims for their ‘revolutionary’ cause, they fell prey to the design of westernized Muslim elite following Muslim League’s agenda wearing Marxist cloak.<sup>6</sup> This was prompted by a lack of understanding of Hindu Value system, which is in its essence polycentric, synthetic, inclusive, and full of despise for excesses as was vindicated in free India. Right from the day Indian Communism became the face of Muslim communalism lurking behind it, it has defended or ignored unprovoked vicious acts committed by hyperactive Muslim masses and organizations whereas it has been vehemently and

viciously, attacking Hindus indiscriminately for reckless utterances of the social misfits striving to attract attention through irresponsible media looking for sensations at any cost.

It is primarily the ‘communists’ who bred, fostered and fortified communalism in India to fight it on the wrong front. The result is enormous and irreversible upsurge of fundamenatalism, communalism, sectarianism, previously unknown. Their propensity to raise and rejoice loudest noise at shrillest pitch (*halla bol*), on slightest pretext, gives them a sense of belonging, bond and self-righteousness, blocking their mind to re-examine themselves and check the balance sheet of losses and gains. Consensus hides the sordid fact that none of them thinks; they collectively believe and like all believers follow a Semitic faith, not a rational philosophy.

Thinker (intellectual/middle class) figures in their list of suspects. Think of a party organized and controlled mostly by siblings of landlords, bureaucrats fighting the cause of the nominally visible proletariat, discrediting the middle class intellectuals, the ultimate obstacle to ensure absolute control of power by the elite. Communism in India did not rise out of a cause but out of opportunism, to cut and collect the ripe crop grown by Indian National Congress, in one sweep.

In such a deceitful environment rationality and rethinking had to be crushed or exterminated. No wonder, new researches and findings in history and archaeology were thrown to dustbin, in order to retain a vulgar version revengefully written for a price on the pretext that any change, even updating history amounted to revisionism. Revisionism is not such a tainted word except in Marxist practice. Learned in their own selective way they did not ever care to explain what revisionism, and for that matter what their pause words – communalism, secularism, and even Marxism, is, and how can we free ourselves from revisionist history taught as genuine history written by historians claiming Marxist credentials. In fact revision is another name for eradication of false notions and misplaced theories.<sup>7</sup> But there is another mischievous account termed as revisionism by those who are determined to perpetuate status quo. In that it stands for ‘illegitimate distortion of the historical record,’ a sin committed by themselves with vengeance. They had themselves replaced old history books by their own and had committed in guidelines to review and revise the texts from time to time.

It is this revisionist history that was followed by Germans to ‘glorify’ an imaginary, ferocious, rapacious Aryan race and it was this image of ‘Aryans’ that was catapulted to Indian history by ‘communist’ historians.

As expected, it promoted hatred, derangement, anarchy and revived and fostered rightwing Hindu activism right from its ashes which had emulated the Nazi outfit at a time when they were not hated and derided even by Communists. What a meeting point of hate campaigners! Marxist historians introduced the German breed of Aryans into Indian history to kill RSS and the latter inherited NAZI uniform to pose for 'real Aryan.' It was this history that destroyed Indian cultural ethos; it was this history that targeted Indian past subverting its positive gains. It was this history that was thrust with absolute control over textbook trade, education from primary level to that on research level. For the first time educational level fell so steeply that the distinction between higher secondary, postgraduate and competitive levels almost disappeared. Candidates preparing for Central Services prepared for history papers with books written for higher secondary children. They knew nothing more, they taught nothing more, they saved enough time for leisure and politics, both synonymous in India. When I charge, it was history written on the line of Muslim league historiography, I have among other things the powerful divisive speech of M.A. Jinnah to rely on:

The Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, literatures. They neither intermarry nor inter-dine together and, indeed, they belong to two different civilizations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions .... It is quite clear that Hindus and Mussalmans derive their inspiration from different sources of history. They have different epics, different heroes, and different episodes. **Very often the hero of one is a foe of the other and, likewise, their victories and defeats overlap.**<sup>8</sup>

Even a cursory look at the Marxist historiography of Medieval and ancient periods of India may prove our apprehensions true.

Equation of Muslim League with elite Hindus was much better. Likewise, Hindu Mahasabha and RSS being manifestations of the interests of elite Hindus had no problem with Muslim League, their twin. It was Indian National Congress (INC) striving to promote communal harmony and social amity that appeared communal to Muslim League and was perceived by RSS and HMS, inimical to Hindu interests. None of the two represented Hindu society or served Hindu interests, despite sending alarming signals through their thoughtless utterances and emotive slogans. None of them was popular among the Muslim or

Hindu masses, which had developed exceptional maturity to reject irrational proposals, whosoever made it on whatsoever pretext.

So the communal divide is another name of strife for racial and cultural superiority, rather than belief systems.<sup>9</sup> Common men on both the sides of the religious divide were fodder and fuel for those who played the game – they fought, they killed, they died, serving the 'noble cause' and took pride in the fact that ultimately it is they who have shown courage to save the faith. This rare opportunity of heroism and martyrdom in abominable disgraceful living added to their fire and ferocity. 'Communists' were equally thoughtless to fall prey to Muslim League's design<sup>10</sup> and in the process leave a trail of arsons, mutilations, mass murders and untold miseries. It resulted into split of a great nation into three pieces with singular objective to fight each other till their decimation. But so savage was the leadership that it relished even such killings and arson.<sup>11</sup>

Indian communism was typically Indian, different from all the other communist countries and parties in the sense that it hated itself being over shadowed by the affluent and westernized elite miming and chiming the proletariat (mill workers) whom they knew not, whose problems they imagined but never faced.<sup>12</sup> They staged revolutionary plays, sang revolutionary songs throwing thousands of their audience into frenzy, wrote revolutionary poems which needed elaborate footnotes to be understood by even the literati. It is a moot point whether Nazis made more effective use of verbosity, eloquence, art forms, specially song, music, dance, drama, movies and oratory, or the Indian Communists.

Communism in India has been more chaotic, more exotic,<sup>13</sup> more self-serving than even the worst political or cultural organizations, but as it used fascist tools of hate-campaign against those who dared to differ, even tallest figures were reduced to pygmies by its rumor mongering and open boycott. As a result, most of the aspiring intellectuals acted auto-suggestively to make themselves acceptable in learned circles and as such literati in India is by and large leftist in orientation and avocation. It is a movement of the faithful, who have lost faith in themselves, suffer from self-hatred expressed in denial of the very nation to which they belong, to pretend internationalism, a feature specific to Indian communism, for all other communist parties are firmly rooted in their people and soil and take pride in their national identity. Indian communists are rarely conscious that their denial of nationhood and effort to become international is close to pan-Islamism, and its refusal to be loyal to an un-Islamic country. Only a seasoned

psychoanalyst can reach the bleak areas in communist psyche which concedes Hindu parentage but feels ashamed of being Hindu, as it has, in its frenzy painted it in ugliest colors or looked only at its seamier sides to justify its self-hate. This differently oriented intelligentsia has made us clamorous halfwits, who not only know nothing in depth but also discourage any in-depth exploration.

One thing that they lacked from the very inception was serenity of mind, and use of their own head and sight to directly see and judge the reality. They were guided and goaded through remote controls. But the greatest damage they did was creating an intellectual vacuum, with no one knowing anything deeply and authoritatively to count as an intellectual.

The primary data on which we depend is mostly available or compiled in the studies conducted by those who aspired to dominate and control us. This generally applies to the Third World countries, but particularly to the erstwhile colonies of Britain, and more abysmally to India, wherein communism destroyed intellectual pursuits convincing us that everything emanated from and culminated to real-politics, all the rest is redundant. It re-introduced colonial language and historiography with regard to ancient past, the fountain-head of Indian value system. European historians tried to maintain a balance in their distortions as well, so they could not afford to present it in as ugly a form as our Marxist historians did blissfully, of course for a price. Look at the dastardly act of converting the Vedic period into a period of buzzing beef industry advertised as 'original' contribution by suicide prone scholarship besides slanderous presentation as scientific history, gullibly consumed by left oriented intelligentsia. They did not intend to teach but to hurt the Hindu and ridicule it. Even proactive Hindu rightist have never been as basely corrosive as commissioned pseudo-Marxist propagandists have been.

During colonial days we were left with little option but to work on lines suggested by those who controlled our education and researches. They took upon themselves to decide the areas and topics for exploration and utilized our mental faculties to their ends. Deprived of the positions of authority, feeling overawed by their sincerity and scientific methodology, even our orthodox Sanskrit scholars mostly sang to their tunes.

Those who keep and control animals or slaves, try to understand their nature and habits, teach them many things and train them for

many excellences and in the process make them all the more dependant. The services rendered by a master to his dog could give the impression that the dog is his master's master, but for the obedience demanded in return. The policy and common intellectual practice of the West towards the Third World had been fashioned on this very line. This comment may appear abrasive, but is not misplaced.<sup>14</sup>

As a saving grace we talked of *Whiteman's burden* to mask our inferiority complex. Masters do not mind, rather enjoy, casual expressions of anger and even kicks and jolts from their domesticates, so long there is no alarming change in their reactions and behaviour presaging a parting of ways. Gesticulation apart, we never did much to relieve the Whites of the burden they so fondly carried by choice and design. Even today they happily carry all our intellectual burden and keep us in good supply of cooked food for our 'brainy maneuvers.'

Freedom is not a wish to be fulfilled through whatever means. It entails industry, dedication, risk, forbearance and self sacrifice. Culturally, we were not as bankrupt even during colonial days, as we became after winning political freedom. To work is slavish: masters do not work, they take work from others, rang the unsung music. We became idlers, opportunists, cash-croppers and resigned from hard work to enjoy our easy gains, and as such virtually became intellectual parasites of the West. Freedom for most of us was an opportunity to press for our share in the BOOTY. Idlers we are, eager to grab, much like loaf-pickers, and this is our comparative status *vis-à-vis* the West. We depend on them and are not dependable. It is pathetic that those who boast of loaves and laurels thrown to them as international recognition for services rendered by them, are held in esteem by the 'learned,' aspiring to follow in their footprints.

Western scholarship has been careful not to allow the Third World intellectuals to be self-conscious and self-searching. They discourage independent surveys and researches by ignoring or ridiculing them, pressurizing them, as such, to follow their hints and dictates. They work hard and work overtime to gather information and create an impression that they know us more intimately than we, because of our love of ease, care to know ourselves. They are more concerned about our dismal future, towards which they push us through their analyses and advices, than we ourselves are.

The simple fact that *the other* knows more about you than you know yourself, leaves you naked and disarmed. In short, West has all

along been hegemonic, dishonest and had done immense damage to epistemology in general, misguiding and misinforming even its own people as much as ourselves. Tactical approach to epistemology has no less harmed western intelligentsia than our own selves. Lies, even if profitable, do not make us wiser, and profit-booking fool has ultimately to lose if satisfied with wrong inputs. Complacency created by false notions is, in the long run, no less harmful than the frustration suffered by targeted lies.

Our knowledge gathered through English renders us more vulnerable unless we make concerted effort to come out of the gaseous chamber of British pedagogy and reject the inferences that are mostly wrong or misleading. In fact, there is a private understanding commonly shared by all the western scholars, apart from that which is allowed to be part of public discourse. Our scholars are fed and fattened on the latter.

How much precious time was lost in pretentious search of the cradle of the Indo-Europeans, precluding India from probable loci, is anybody's guess. But which of the European scholars did not know what Sintasta and Andrnovo the sole claimants of the cradle from which the 'Aryans of European scholarship proceeded' to overtake India through whatever measure meant verbally? We may remind that the two recall the Sindhis and Andhak Vrishni, in short Animal breeding Sindhis and Gujaratis, both known for animal domestication (*vr̥sa*>*vr̥sni*) and initially excelling in cattle and horse domestication respectively to the rest of India. They knew that Aryans did not come from those areas but Sindhis (Sindois) and Andhakas formed part of Indian *diaspora* that was responsible for onward diffusion of Indian link language and culture. But they unanimously concealed it, then distorted it, and finally reversed it.

It is not only in our interest but in the interest of entire humanity, including the West, that we mend our ways and unlearn the lies piled in different branches of human sciences – history, anthropology, sociology, culture, archaeology, philology – and raise them to scientific candor. We reiterate that it is high time to realize that tactical use of epistemology has dehumanised civilization and one miscalculated step can annul the entire progress made through science and technology over millennia.

The difference between science and humanity is that the former adds to our knowledge and prosperity, the latter to our understanding and responsibility. In a scientific Age the two must run undisturbed by meanness and mischief to build a sustainable pyramid of human glory.

## References:

1. What a travesty of truth and what a rare foolhardy. The country which was harbinger in modernizing the west through Arabs in mathematics, geometry, chemistry, astronomy to say the least was obscurantist, and the continent which killed its right-thinking men and lynched its innocent girls for their fault of being charming as their charm aroused passion, was propagated by the West and accepted by our brilliant men to be rational. The religion which taught to criticize and ridicule even their gods was deficient in secularism and the religions that punished blasphemy were rational and secular. It was inferiority of west on cultural front that canalized all its reserve energy to fight and silence the opponent that silently could evaporate Christianity from its soil.
2. Most of the Indian Marxists made it a point not to learn Sanskrit, not to read original texts in Sanskrit even if they had some smack of the language before their conversion to Marxism, and held very poor opinion of ancient literature and despised even Hindi when it came to its comparative status among languages, as it appeared parochial to show their love for the language as it formed part of a string- Hindi- Hindu-Hindustan- with foreboding consequences. They disbelieved anything written by a non-Marxist and discredited all the scholars who stood for freedom of expression. This shocking realization smarted me so quickly that I chose to part ways from the organization, to save my Marxist leanings.
3. Strikes with attendant violence, go-slows, pen-downs so enthusiastically promoted by left organizations of India resulted into destruction of work culture – the backbone of any progressive nation and society.
4. They almost ruined national capitalistic growth adding to unemployment, drought of industrial researches, forcing foreign collaborations and enormous imports of goods and machines. This almost destroyed our immune system. The fence was grazing the farm to the doom of the peasant.
5. They reverted to colonial historiography decrying the national self-search which initially had some limitations because the basics were flawed. The call of a resurgent nation was to devote maximum time and energy to basic researches and rejecting that part of a thesis that had inherent flaws and yet was imposed because of racial or colonial concerns along with those rejected by new surveys, fieldworks, researches and new interpretations. Marxists refused to update their history books as it amounted to revisionism, while they revised entire medieval history to a worse historiography than that resorted to by court historians.
6. Jinnah pleaded, "It is extremely difficult to appreciate why our Hindu friends fail to understand the real nature of Islam and Hinduism. They

are not religions in the strict sense of the word, but are, in fact, different and distinct social orders, and it is a dream that the Hindus and Muslims can ever evolve a common nationality, and this misconception of one Indian nation has gone far beyond the limits and is the cause of most of your troubles and will lead India to destruction if we fail to revise our notions in time. The Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, literatures. They neither intermarry nor interdine together and, indeed, they belong to two different civilizations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions .... It is quite clear that Hindus and Mussalmans derive their inspiration from different sources of history. They have different epics, different heroes, and different episodes. **Very often the hero of one is a foe of the other and, likewise, their victories and defeats overlap.** To yoke together two such nations under a single state, one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be so built up for the government of such a state ....” (*Sources of Indian Tradition*, Vol. III, p. 502) and Communist party of India agitated alongside Muslim League for referendum and has all along followed Muslim League line vis-à-vis Hindu society, culture and history. Communists in India have been honest enough to admit their past mistakes when pushed to corner, but not sensible enough to change the course which led to the mistakes and gave rise to series of mistakes.

7. Pulitzer Prize winning historian James McPherson, writing for the American Historical Association, described the importance of revisionism: The 14,000 members of this Association, however, know that revision is the lifeblood of historical scholarship. History is a continuing dialogue between the present and the past. Interpretations of the past are subject to change in response to new evidence, new questions asked of the evidence, new perspectives gained by the passage of time. There is no single, eternal, and immutable “truth” about past events and their meaning. The unending quest of historians for understanding the past—that is, “revisionism”—is what makes history vital and meaningful. ... Without revisionist historians who have done research in new sources and asked new and nuanced questions, we would remain mired in one or another of these stereotypes. Supreme Court decisions often reflect a “revisionist” interpretation of history as well as of the Constitution. *Wikipedia*.
8. Jinnah, *Some Recent Speeches and Writings*, ed. [amrl-ud-drn Ahmad (Lahore: M. Ashraf, 1942), 1:174-180], cited in *Sources of Indian Tradition*, Vol. III, p.501
9. It was the Muslim elite which not only formed the LEAGUE, and made claim that the British were duty bound to return the empire to the Muslims

from whom they had usurped it, but aware of ultimate fate tried to overtake Congress to convert it into Muslim majority organization, thanks to Gandhi’s experiments in Indian politics and raising Khilafat issue to attract Muslims with disastrous consequences. Chauri Chaura was not an act of Congress agitators, but of the Muslims in the lead and that gave Gandhi a chance to retrace his footsteps. It was this elite in concert with English mantra that found expression in Rahmat Ali’s proposal (*Now or Never; Are We to Live or Perish Forever*, 1933), and it was this elite that took fanatical lead in communist party convincing it judiciousness of referendum. In short, the elite obviating democratic system in a country with Hindu majority, that experimented for power-control. We forget these glaring facts which expose the communal character of Communist party. Majority or minority it had to stick to its guns and others had to bend to keep them with them, as slightest accommodation amounted to perishing in Muslim psyche.

10. Sleeping, walking, dreaming, I was tormented by the precipitous edge that Jinnah had brought to the country to. And when Mohan, communist and dedicated, produced a string of defences for the term, day in and day out, I found myself wanting to throw things at him and everyone else for not being able to see that self determination could not be based on religion; culture and religion were not synonymous terms....  
... And of all people, Mohan, who then I though had devoured all the basic writings of Marxism, how could he hold, support and supply Jinnah with intellectual arguments he so urgently needed? (Raj Thapar: *All These Years: A Memoir*), Penguin Books, 1991, p. 8.
11. News of the riots began to filter through. I remember meeting S.A.Dange around then. He was the legendary leader of the Bombay working class, slight in frame, charismatic, but permeated with Maharastrian cynicism....He was then in the throes of a grand romance with a Czech girl and there was much gossip flying around about the two. Anyway he came, and I poured out my anguish at being thousands of miles away from home, when home, which was to be Pakistan, was burning away with the angry frustrations of many life times finding fulfillment in brutal distortions, using revenge and religion to wash down the horrors. Dange looked at me impassively, with almost a gleam of secret delight. ‘Don’t worry, Raj,’ he said, ‘Let our people taste blood, let them learn how to draw it. It will make the coming revolution easier.’ *ibid*, 43.
12. “We divided the areas and Shaila, wife of one of our Foreign Office secretaries, was to join me in New Delhi section. We were really like babes in the wood, not knowing how to begin and what to do, surrounded as we were with bungalow dwellers and diplomatic missions. Surely there must be people, actual people, somewhere. But where? After lunch

the first day, we abandoned Shaila's Mercedes, it wouldn't be an appropriate image, got into my bedraggled Fiat and drove to the taxi stand which was but a furlong from my house. There was an elderly, rather stout man sitting under the tree by the taxis. We stopped, approached him hesitatingly. 'We have come for the elections,' we said, 'Where does everyone live?' A question to which he gave one of those looks which of course we richly deserved, as if to say, these poor little rich women. *ibid*, 321

13. Ajoy Ghosh was in the process of formulating a more acceptable line than Randive's, but was shaken by those few words that his thinking had come to a grinding halt. Day after day, he would ring our doorbell at ten in the morning, settle down with Romesh in study and start, Romesh, what do you think they mean by all the peasantry?

I was now beginning to react unfavourably to what I considered was the abysmal incapacity of communist 'leaders.' I kept questioning this business of receiving orders from abroad, formulations from abroad, all related to the very remote Indian village, while those who were supposedly in the 'vanguard of the working class' had no say in the matter.<sup>93</sup>

I went on, Ajoy wants to know whether "all the peasantry" means all the 'peasantry.' There was a moment's incredulous silence on the other end. I explained further that I was referring to the Cominform article. 'Oh,' he (RPD) said, Naturally all the peasantry means all the peasantry! What else could it mean, my dear.' Raj Thapar: *All These Years: A Memoir*, Penguin, 1991, 92-94.

14. Sir Sayyid Ahmad went ahead to admit it in no uncertain terms: "Without flattering the English, I can truly say that the natives of India, high and low, merchants and petty shopkeepers, educated and illiterate, when contrasted with the English in education, manners, and uprightness, are as like them as a dirty animal is to an able and handsome man. The English have reason for believing us in India to be imbecile brutes." But the irony is that in Indian context Syyyid Ahmad placed Muslims and Muslim culture in the same relation as he permitted Englishmen *vis-à-vis* all Indians.

## Indian Think Tanks and their Challenges

### Delhi Policy Group\*

India is ranked fifth on the list of countries with the highest numbers of think tanks,<sup>1</sup> a surprising statistics given that most Indian think tanks are less than twenty years old. That such a large number of think tanks have been created in two decades is a tribute to the vitality of Indian civil society. However, the quality of Indian think tanks is highly uneven, and the obstacles they face are considerable.

Despite their numbers, Indian think tanks struggle to effectively penetrate policy-making networks and have their voices heard. While the primary role of think tanks is to urge governmental and societal stakeholders to critically debate India's options and choices in foreign, security and public policy, the impact of Indian think tanks on policy-formulation circles and the public's mindset is generally weak. Security and foreign policy debates tend to be led by retired military officers and diplomats rather than analysts, and thus can function as government outreach rather than informed discussion. On the other hand, primary influence on public policy in India – for example, on health, education, gender – tends to come from social movements and activist groups, instead of think tanks.

If government remoteness is one obstacle, Indian think tanks face a number of others, most notably in funding, space, clearances and availability of policy-oriented researchers. The extent of each think tank's problems varies according to whether it is government-supported or independent. Broadly speaking, Indian think tanks fall into four main categories: government-run and/or supported; security and/or foreign policy centred, economic policy focused, and a handful that cover a wider gamut of issues in security, foreign and public policy.

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Unlike independent Indian think tanks, government-run and/or supported think tanks do not face funding or clearances problems, and they generally have space granted by the government ministries that fund them. Most of them are security-related. Some of the economic think tanks also get reasonably large government funding, unlike the broad-spectrum independent think tanks. All think tanks in India however share one common problem, which is growing – the lack of trained and policy-oriented researchers.

This paper will discuss the challenges and opportunities for Indian think tanks through the experience of the Delhi Policy Group, a mid-size, independent, broad-spectrum and non-partisan think tank, which completed twenty years in existence in 2014.

### **The Evolution of Indian Think Tanks**

When the Delhi Policy Group was founded in late 1994, it was one of the only two independent think tanks in India, the other being the Observer Research Foundation. The Centre for Policy Research, today an independent think tank, was at that time quasi-independent – it received government-allotted space and funding, but it was not run by government ministries. Much smaller in size than the Observer Research Foundation, the Delhi Policy Group ran out of an office in the India Habitat Centre, with severely limited space.

Though the founders of the Delhi Policy Group had envisaged four major areas of research for the think tank – security, foreign policy, science and technology and the political economy of India – in practice the Delhi Policy Group under the able stewardship of its first director, General V.R. Raghavan, was best known for its work on regional security. Such single basket focus was common in the 1990s-2000s. In the same period, the Observer Research Foundation developed around area studies, while the Centre for Policy Research was known for its work on local governance.

Indeed, in these years the majority of independent think tanks were one-man shows with programmes run by a single person, in most cases the director. It was only at the beginning of the twenty-first century that this situation began to change. Though the number of think tanks that have a broad canvas of research remains small, most independent think tanks now have a range of programme directors and senior researchers, covering a mix of issues. In the case of the Delhi Policy Group, we began with a sole focus on regional security, then broadened to include

peace and conflict studies, and today have four developing programme areas: national security, peace and conflict studies, foreign policy and governance.

Our choice of focus areas and issues was largely determined by our assessment of their preeminence for domestic and international policymakers. Thus, there were two major areas of focus under the Delhi Policy Group's national security programme, regional security and nuclear non-proliferation. The former was launched at a time when India's 'neighbourhood first' policy was developing and the latter was launched soon after India and Pakistan's nuclear tests. The work done in those years (1999-2004) by Indian think tanks to reassure the international community that India adhered to its long-standing nuclear doctrine – of no first use combined with universal nuclear disarmament – helped lay the building blocks for the landmark civil nuclear cooperation agreement between the US and India in 2005.

Similarly, the Delhi Policy Group's peace and conflict programme began with a focus on Pakistan and Jammu and Kashmir, and was able to input into both the India-Pakistan and Jammu and Kashmir peace processes as they developed from 2002-7. With an emphasis on Track II dialogue, the Delhi Policy Group was able to connect analysts, activists and policymakers in a closed door setting, and because these Track IIs were persisted with over a period of years, they were able to formulate feasible options and/or measures that could be, and in some cases were, adopted.

Though the majority of the Delhi Policy Group's programmes focused on identifying opportunities for policy impact and seized the moment, there were occasions when we chose to research issues that we believed should be high on Indian policy agendas, even if they were not as yet so. Thus, for example, we discussed the lessons learned from the peace process in Andhra for tackling 'left-wing extremism' in Chhattisgarh at a time when the government was focused on military/police solutions; similarly, we flagged the Naga peace process as a critical missing piece for resolving the Manipur conflict, when the latter was at its height and was viewed primarily from the counter-insurgency aspect. Similarly, we began to work on Afghanistan and with Afghan institutions, earlier than most other Indian think tanks, and with an eight-year programme continuity, became the 'go-to' think tank for Indian views on Afghanistan. This did not, however, result in significant policy impact, since successive Indian governments had very clear red lines on the extent of the strategic partnership with Afghanistan,

as did successive Afghan governments. In the exceptional case of Afghanistan, international geopolitics, driven by the centrality of Pakistan, acted as a major policy constraint on Afghan-Indian relations.

The range that Indian think tanks research is, quite obviously, hemmed by limited resources, not just financial but also physical and human. Unlike most other think tanks, the founders of the Delhi Policy Group decided that the organization would not seek or take government funds, as a mark of its independence. This meant that the Delhi Policy Group was dependent on other traditional donors, such as foreign foundations, and the private sector. Both had their own problems. Foreign funding was viewed with suspicion (as it has been since the days of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi). Private sector funding was hard to come by. By and large India lacks a tradition of philanthropy in policy research. Industry did not fund think tanks unless they were part of industry bodies such as CII or FICCI. When they did, it tended to be a single industrial group or family that would support a particular think tank, and this trend continues till today.

This view altered to a considerable extent in the late 1990s and early 2000s, first under NDA 1, then under UPA 1 and 2. Foreign funding became more acceptable, though still within fairly narrow boundaries. Thus, funding from large donors such as the EU or US foundations was allowed but from some of the smaller or more rights-oriented donors, such as the Scandinavian countries, it was allowed only under strict permits. At that time, the Delhi Policy Group made two decisions: the first, to continue to apply for project funding from the EU and US foundations, and the second, not to take foreign funding for research on domestic issues. The latter remains a Delhi Policy Group principle.

Recognizing that diversity in funding was an asset, the Delhi Policy Group's trustees also decided in the 2000s that government funding for specific projects was not only acceptable but necessary: it meant that we would be more widely heard on those issues that the government commissioned us to research. The problem we found was that government funding was as hard to come by as private sector funding: though we did get funded for a few projects, these were limited in scope and time, with little continuity.

On the plus side, we did not encounter any attempts to control or influence our work by government ministries that funded the occasional Delhi Policy Group project. What we did encounter was endless bureaucratic delays in getting clearances for conferences to which

international participants were invited. Under the Indian system conferences, Track IIs or meetings that involve international speakers require clearance from the Ministries of External and Home Affairs, without which visas will not be granted. This rule was introduced by former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi during the Emergency, and has not been rolled back since. Though think tanks and universities have regularly and monotonously protested the rule – which certainly does not belong in a democracy with free speech – it remains ubiquitously on the book, and can always be used by a government to prevent meetings that for one or another reason it may frown on.

To be fair, the Delhi Policy Group only experienced the misuse of the rule once, in 2005, when an official of the Ministry of External Affairs indefinitely delayed clearance for a conference because, as he later confessed, he 'did not want to hear Northern Ireland and Kashmir discussed in the same room.' Most of the time the rule serves only as an additional burden for both think tanks and the bureaucracy. Think tanks have to constantly nag and remind a bureaucracy which has more important matters to attend to; the bureaucracy has the additional work of issuing clearances for activities which contribute to knowledge generation and should be encouraged.

### **The Situation Today**

For most Indian think tanks, including the Delhi Policy Group, the shortage of human capacity is growing to be an acute problem. Indian universities have traditionally not focused on policy-oriented research, and though some of the new private universities have begun teaching policy-relevant courses, it will take a few student generations before they produce researchers who can be employed by think tanks without having to be trained in situ from the ABCs up. Indeed, there is also a shortage of teachers: international relations departments have yet to recover from the long isolation imposed by India's estrangement from the US and European knowledge generation during the Cold War, and public policy teaching is, to our knowledge, yet to be instituted in Indian universities (what little is taught is fragmented into sociology and political science).

The human capacity problem was not so acutely felt in the early years of think tanks in India. As most of them were one-man shows of retired officials, with Research Associates whose tasks were primarily organizational, the need for graduates with policy training was not

immediate. As think tanks have sought to expand, however, the paucity of young policy analysts has become a grave problem. This gap is gradually being filled by graduates returning to India with US or European degrees (where policy analysis is part of their courses), but those who choose to apply to think tanks are few and far between, since the salaries on offer are low compared even to government fellowships.

Most think tanks are aware of the need to offer more competitive salaries, but only a tiny number are able to muster the funds to do so. As stated above, while the Government of India has liberalized funding to some extent, so that some independent think tanks do from time to time receive government funds for specific research, the numbers that receive such grants from government are relatively few, and the amounts given are pathetically small. The US approach, of seeking several studies on the same issue from different think tanks, is yet to take hold, even though it produces the most grounded policy research.

There is moreover a sustainability issue. With over-dependence on project-wise funding, many think tanks are not able to ensure continuity in their programmes, though continuity is key to developing a body of work with policy impact. The Delhi Policy Group's solution has been to put a small percentage of overhead from each project into a core programme fund, so that work can continue even when specific project funding is not available. This policy also reinforces the independence of our research.

More long-term, the human capacity problem is set to grow rather than diminish. In the Delhi Policy Group's experience, our best Research Associates tend to leave within a year or just over, not only or even chiefly because of the low salaries but because the career path is unclear. They get to interact with policy or decision-makers only very rarely and for brief periods of time, such as an occasional round table. Though they may be set to policy-oriented research, they rarely get to work on policy formulation because the task of training them has to be undertaken by the think tank and it takes time, especially because most academic or public discussions of policy issues tend to be primarily moral and opinion-based. Interestingly, those Research Associates that leave us tend to go abroad: for most of them a stint with the Delhi Policy Group looks good on their Ph.D applications.

That the Government of India is aware of the problem is heartening. Government institutions have begun giving fellowships and internships to students or young graduates; Ministries such as the Ministry of

External Relations are also taking young researchers on short-term contracts. Such initiatives will certainly help build a small pool of policy analysts and are a good beginning. From the think tanks' point of view, however, a more useful measure would be for the Indian government to route fellowships through think tanks, where young researchers could be trained in policy analysis, and then employed by government on short-term contracts.

The Delhi Policy Group's space constraint remains a major obstacle, as it does for many of the small and mid-size think tanks in India. Though more recently founded think tanks received government-allotted land in the 1990s and 2000s, the Delhi Policy Group rules made it difficult to apply. Today what is affordable is too far away from Delhi's center, where all the government offices are. Finally in 2014 we decided to rent another space close to our main office, partly solving our space problem, though only temporarily. In the long run, renting space is not sustainable, as many of the smaller think tanks are finding. One solution would be for government to allot an existing building for think tanks and allow those that do not have their own buildings to occupy a floor each (building upwards if necessary). There are plenty of partially occupied government buildings in Delhi – for example, only part of the Doordarshan complex is occupied. There are also one and two-storied buildings taking up prime central Delhi slots, which could easily expand upwards, such as the National Commission for Human Rights or the Indian Council on World Affairs.

### **The Policy Impact Conundrum**

The Government of India has often been held to be one of least open amongst democracies to think tank ideas. In fact, Indian think tanks are more networked to policy, decision and opinion makers than are most European think tanks (both are exponentially outstripped by US think tanks), and the Indian government does occasionally adopt policy frameworks and/or measures formulated by think tanks. Thus, for example, the Delhi Policy Group was able to input into policy on nuclear non-proliferation in the late 1990s and on Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan between 2002-7; subsequently, we were able to contribute on Afghanistan, Bangladesh and counter-extremism.

Moreover, starting from the mid-2000s, the Government of India began to induct members of think tanks into advisory groups, special panels and government policy boards. For example, the former Chairman of the Delhi Policy Group was appointed head of the National Security

Advisory Board (NSAB) for a two-year term and several Delhi Policy Group trustees have been member of the NSAB. The current Director General of the Delhi Policy Group was appointed member of a 3 person Group of Interlocutors in 2010-11 by the Home Ministry. Delhi Policy Group trustees and staff have been members of the government-sponsored India-UK Round Table and the Track 1.5 Council on Security and Cooperation in Asia.

This experience of working short-term with government is not unique to the Delhi Policy Group, though we may have had a slightly larger proportion of such appointments than other mid-size think tanks, having been in existence longer than most. Why then do most independent think tanks bewail an unresponsive government attitude?

One reason is that only a few government departments engage with think tanks and/or their outputs, and even fewer political leaders do. At the Delhi Policy Group we find it easier to meet and discuss issues with officials of the Ministry of External Affairs than with Parliamentarians. If we have only been asked for our research on x issue once or twice by a bureaucrat, we have never been asked by a Parliamentarian – not even those on the Parliamentary committees for external affairs or home.

As far as the Ministries are concerned, it is always think tankers who approach the concerned officials, not they who contact us, and by and large their attitude is one of gracious condescension, that they know it all and we are fortunate to be heard. This attitude has begun to change over the past few years but seemingly in an ad hoc way, depending on the individual officer. While we can be grateful that officers now have the freedom to engage with policy analysts – they did not have such freedom 15 years ago – it is still frustrating to find that the doors to input which were open have closed merely because of a change of officer.

## Emerging Challenges

It is now widely accepted that think tanks can act as important catalysts for policy reform and social action by producing and disseminating persuasive evidence-based research. Working outside the system of governance, think tanks have a wider perspective and objectivity on the domestic and international issues faced by the country. Unlike government agencies, think tanks do not have to grapple with the cumbersome details of administration and have the opportunity to delve into long-term research projects that seek to improve policy planning and impact assessment. If

provided with appropriate resources, think tanks have the necessary expertise to carry out extensive fieldwork for identifying and evaluating current policy issues, proposals and programmes.

Yet, it is precisely in the area of resources that Indian think tanks may be further squeezed. With foreign funding coming under the scanner, the Ministry of Home Affairs has imposed new and more restrictive measures on it and revoked the licenses of nearly 9000 non-governmental organizations.<sup>2</sup> While the bulk of these revocations might be well-founded given the propensity to corruption at every level in India, it appears that some at least were on ideological grounds. It should, however, be noted that there are no think tanks on this list.

The Indian debate on alleged repercussions of the undue influence of foreign funders on think tanks is not a new one. Critics of foreign funding often make the following arguments:

1. Foreign funders tend to have their own agendas and attempt to forcefully negotiate with think tanks to balance between the funders' priorities and what is important for the country.
2. They demand excessive and often unnecessary paperwork, monitoring and evaluations.
3. They are unreliable and often reserve the right to withdraw support whenever they deem fit.
4. They are not going to be available in the long run, hence dependency on them can be crippling for an organization.

How far these criticism are well-founded is debatable. As far as the Delhi Policy Group is concerned, we have not encountered pressure from any one of the donors that have funded or commissioned research from us, whether they were government, foreign or private sector. Perhaps they do not consider us important enough to pressure. True, there is a lot of paperwork, but that actually helps us to maintain accurate and transparent records. Unreliability applies to all donors and is often a response to the unreliability of the donee; and whether foreign funders are available or not depends on government rules and the global economic situation.

Indeed, Indian think tanks are not unique in accepting foreign funding. Both US and European think tanks accept funds from donors all over the world, but are rarely accused of therefore acting against their national interests. Partly because of lack of government and private sector funding, many Indian think tanks rely on grants from foreign foundations to maintain their programmes. In fact, it has been argued that the Indian government's and investors' negligence and apathy

towards creating a strong culture of policy research in India has pushed think tanks to rely on funding from foreign government agencies like Canada's IDRC, multilateral financial institutions like the Asian Development Bank and foreign foundations like Ford, Rockefeller, McCarthy and Sasakawa.<sup>3</sup>

The Delhi Policy Group is fortunate in not having to depend on funding to maintain its programmes, since it has a core endowment that will permit the organization to continue to work. However, the size of its endowment is not sufficient to permit it to work at capacity or to run the Track IIs that feed into its scholars' analyses. We do thus have to seek funding. Our approach has been to seek a portfolio of donors that combine government, industry and foreign funders. A multiplicity of donors prevents think tanks from depending on any one particular donor and protects against undue donor influence.

An equally worrying new development is the emergence of partisan think tanks, affiliated to one or another political party. Most of the first-generation think tanks were either liberal or government, but being politically non-partisan was an article of faith for both. A new breed of right-wing think tanks rose around five years ago, and could be seen as a welcome development insofar as they could force liberal analysts to test their concepts and methodology. Thus far, however, the milieu is one of opinion, bias and misrepresentation rather than factually-grounded debate and analysis. Policy experts whose knowledge and capacity are recognised both nationally and internationally are sidelined because they are considered to be ideologically 'wrong' or merely because they do not have influential patrons; conversely, those with influential patrons are not questioned on their knowledge or capacity. The threat of Indian think tanks lapsing back into mediocrity or worse, propaganda driven research, looms.

### Emerging Opportunities

The high concentration of think tanks in Delhi was becoming counterproductive due to competitive non-communication amongst them and continued scarcity of funds. However, over the past year they have taken a number of joint initiatives, from forming a network of 'Heads of Think Tanks' to sponsoring joint task forces and/or conferences. For instance, the Delhi Policy Group and the Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis published a joint report on *West Asia in Transition* in 2015 with authors from both the institutions contributing to the report,<sup>4</sup>

and the Delhi Policy Group and the Ananta Aspen Centre set up a joint Task Force on India's policies in Afghanistan, whose report was published in 2013.

Some think tanks have also started focusing on state-level policy formulation. We expect to soon see joint activities, including publications, between state research organizations and/or think tanks and capital think tanks. Given the size of India this is a long overdue development. It is both timely and inevitable given that India is now in its third phase of federalization, with the centre and states having to work far more closely but also far more consultatively on issues of security, foreign policy and peacemaking.

### Conclusion

For the Delhi Policy Group, the next few years look exciting. Over the past three years we have trebled in size and should soon have active Fellow's programmes as well as core programmes. New opportunities for joint research and activities with state organizations are on the horizon.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> [http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1008&context=think\\_tanks](http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1008&context=think_tanks) p. 54
- <sup>2</sup> <http://in.reuters.com/article/2015/04/28/india-charities-funding-idINKBN0NJ15J20150428>
- <sup>3</sup> [http://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/sanjaya-baru-indian-minds-foreign-funds-110080900083\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/sanjaya-baru-indian-minds-foreign-funds-110080900083_1.html)
- <sup>4</sup> "Vice President releases Delhi policy group-IDSAs report on West Asia", ANI News, April 24, 2015, <http://www.aninews.in/newsdetail2-story213236/vice-president-releases-delhi-policy-group-idsa-report-on-west-asia.html>

# Gandhian Think Tank: A Case Study of Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha

Ram Chandra Pradhan & Siby K. Joseph\*

## Introduction

The idea of modern think tank is largely a western concept. Historically, its roots could be traced in the British society, which gradually extended to the United States of America. Subsequently, it has spread all over the world, predominantly in Europe. It is to be noted that even in the ancient world of the Orient and Occident have had their own think tanks like Kautilya, Platonic Academy and Ashrams of Vedic and Upanishadic sages. Old academia largely grew around the thought processes and personality of a single individual like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Kautilya and a number of saints and sages. The saints and sages of the medieval times also fall in the same category. Some of the great thinkers, whose thought processes led to transition of Europe from medieval to modern times, had their own contributions in the entire process. In the subsequent period, some of the discoveries and inventions, which led to the emergence of modern industrial civilization, were also the result of individual efforts. At still later stage, seminal thinkers like Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, Gandhi et al influenced the minds and hearts of the people and to a great extent the policies and actions of governments at a universal scale.

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## Origin of Think Tanks in Great Britain

The present connotation of think tanks is actually rooted in altogether a different context. Making a departure from individual initiative, a think tank in present times actually symbolizes collective thinking and effort in the formulation of public policy. To be more specific, its origin may be traced from The Royal United Service Institute (RUSI) for defence and security studies founded in Great Britain as early as 1831.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the modern version of think tank has initially had very close connection with war and security matters. These concerns continued and dominated the scene during the Second World War and later in the cold war period. In fact, it continues till date. But even from the initial stages there was another dimension attached to the idea of think tank. In the wake of the industrial revolution, when the problems became more complex and challenging, it became evident that think tanks would have to go beyond their initial dealings with mere problems for war and security. They have also to tackle the new problems thrown up by the industrial society. This new trend could be traced from the Fabian Society, which was founded in England in 1884<sup>2</sup> and its earlier version the Fellowship of the New Life, which included the membership from prominent figures like Edward Carpenter. These societies tried to meet the challenge of modern industrial civilization by suggesting a more simplified life and the revival of some of the major ethos of Renaissance. Their emphasis was more on gradual transformation of society, rather than a sudden revolutionary and radical change. Later, the Fabian society attracted some of the best contemporary writers and thinkers like Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Annie Besant, Graham Wallace and others.<sup>3</sup>

## Think Tanks in USA

The idea of think tank soon caught the imagination of some of the leading industrialists, businessmen and philanthropists of USA. The first major initiative in USA was taken by Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage, widow of railroad magnate and financier Russell Sage. She founded Russell Sage Foundation in 1907 for the improvement of social and living conditions of American people.<sup>4</sup> In the initial stage, it focused on projects like low income housing, urban planning, social work and labour reform. Later, it exclusively devoted itself to research in social sciences, as a means of diagnosing social problems and improving

social policies. Another major initiative in the area of think tank was undertaken by Andrew Carnegie, a Scottish American industrialist, who played a leading role in American steel industry. He founded Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in 1910 with the high objective to “hasten the abolition of war, the foulest blot upon our civilization,” with a gift of 10 million dollars.<sup>5</sup> All these years it has remained committed to changing the global scenario in favour of peace and improvement in public policy. This was followed by another initiative by Robert S. Brookings, a leading businessman in 1916. He founded the Institute for Government Research with the primary objective of undertaking fact based studies on public policy issues. He followed it up with another institution in 1922 known as Institute of Economics and a graduate school in 1924. The present day Brookings Institution was the result of a merger of these two institutions in 1927, with the objective of promoting research “in the broad fields of economics, government administration and political and social sciences.”<sup>6</sup> In the wake of the Great Depression of 1930s, scholars and researchers of Brookings Institution played a very constructive role in the formulation of economic agenda to deal with the crisis for the Federal Government led by President Roosevelt. To sum up, the first wave of think tanks continued till the Second World War, which was aptly described by some commentators as ‘Universities without students.’<sup>7</sup> In the course of the Second World War, think tanks started playing bigger role in the war processes by contributing towards war strategy. This may be termed as the beginning of the second wave of think tanks in American history. In the post war period, think tanks like RAND Corporation, an offshoot of Douglas Aircraft Corporation, emerged in the year 1948.<sup>8</sup> It basically sought to connect military planning with research and development decisions, with the aim of furthering and promoting public welfare and security of USA. In this period, these think tanks focused on the military agenda of the Federal Government. Similarly, a number of government supported think tanks came up in the subsequent period.

By 1970s, a paradigm shift in the history of think tanks took place in USA as number of think tanks instead of being funded by government started receiving funds from private organizations. It widened the focus and scope of think tanks and they started concentrating on issues of larger interest with wider policy implications. Advocacy on different

issues also came under the purview of think tanks, thereby catering to the needs of different interest groups. Heritage Foundation, established in 1973, with the avowed purpose to formulate and promote conservative public policies, based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense<sup>9</sup> was a representative organization in this category. Cato Institute, founded in 1977, drew its name from Cato’s letters published in the eighteenth century England, which projected a vision of society free from the excessive government power.<sup>10</sup> It is dedicated to the principles of individual liberty, limited government, free markets and peace.

### **Spreading Net of Think Tanks**

Afterwards, the idea of think tank gathered greater momentum, which led to the mushrooming of such organizations not only in USA but also in other parts of the country, including Europe and even Asia. There are 6,618 major think tanks currently operating all around the globe.<sup>11</sup> The distribution of think tanks in different regions is presented in the Table-1. In the process, even the academic institutions got involved in a big way. The University of Pennsylvania launched the Think Tank and Civil Society Program in 1989 to conduct research on the role of policy Institutes and civil societies around the world. In 2007, it started a global index of think tanks, which was designed to identify and recognize centres of excellence in all the major areas of public policy research and in every region of the world. The *2014 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report* of the University of Pennsylvania, Think Tank and Civil Society Program, published in March 2015, points out a new trend of decline in the rate of establishment of think tanks in recent years and also cites the main reasons for the said phenomenon. It says: “While there are many contributing factors to this decline, there are certain key elements: increased political and regulatory hostility toward think tanks and NGOs in many countries, decreased funding for policy research by public and private donors, the increased tendency to fund short-term projects as opposed to institutional contributions, underdeveloped institutional capacity and the inability to adapt, increased competition from advocacy organizations, for profit consulting firms, law firms, and electronic media, and, finally, the fact that institutions have served their purpose and discontinued their operations.”<sup>12</sup> This report also analyses the current trends and emerging issues faced by these think tanks. (See Table-2)

**Table -1 Think Tanks in the World in 2014**

| Asia | Central and South America | Europe | Middle East & North Africa | North America | Sub-Saharan Africa | Oceania |
|------|---------------------------|--------|----------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------|
| 1106 | 674                       | 1822   | 521                        | 1989          | 467                | 39      |

Source: *Global Go To Think Tank Index Report*, University of Pennsylvania, Think Tank and Civil Society Program, March 2015, p.53.

**Table -2 Current Trends and Emerging Issues Facing Think Tanks**

| <b>Current Trends</b>                                     | <b>Emerging Issues</b>  |
|---|---|
| Globalization   | Dramatic shifts in funding patterns                                 |
| Growth of international actors                            | Increased specialization  |
| Democratization   | Increased competition   |
| Demands for independent information and analysis          | Influence and independence  |
| Big data and supercomputers                               | Outputs vs. inputs  |
| Increased complexity of policy issues                     | Phantom NGO think tanks   |
| The Information Age and the rate of technological change  | Hybrid organizations  |
| Increasingly open debate about government decision making | Impact of the internet, new media, social networking, and the Cloud |
| Global “hacktivist,” anarchist, and populist movements    | Action vs. ideas  |
| Global structural adjustment                              | Greater emphasis on external relations and marketing strategies     |
| Economic crisis and political paralysis                   | Going global  |
| Policy tsunamis   | Leadership and managing tensions                                    |
| Increasing political polarization                         | Decentralization of power   |
| Short termism   | Blurring of the lines between think tanks and journalism            |
|   | Global Gridlock   |
|   | Crisis Fatigue  |

Source: *Global Go To Think Tank Index Report*, University of Pennsylvania, Think Tank and Civil Society Program, March 2015, p.7.

The report also attempts to define think tanks as follows: “Think tanks are public-policy research analysis and engagement organizations that generate policy-oriented research, analysis, and advice on domestic and international issues, thereby enabling policymakers and the public to make informed decisions about public policy. Think tanks may be affiliated or independent institutions that are structured as permanent bodies, not ad hoc commissions. These institutions often act as a bridge between the academic and policymaking communities and between States and civil society, serving in the public interest as independent voices that translate applied and basic research into a language that is understandable, reliable, and accessible for policymakers and the public”<sup>13</sup> As per the report, USA stands first (1830) followed by China (429), United Kingdom (287) Germany (194) and India occupies fifth position with 192 think tanks.<sup>14</sup>

### Think Tanks in India

As stated earlier, with 192 think tanks, India stands in fifth position in the world ranking. Out of 150 top ranking think tanks in the world, 6 Indian think tanks find their position in the list. Indian think tanks include both government and private funded institutions. Most of the top Indian think tanks in terms of funding and manpower are located in Delhi, the capital of India. The prominent five Indian think tanks are Centre for Civil Society (CCS), Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and Observer Research Foundation (ORF).

The Centre for Civil Society (CCS), established in 1997, is one of the prominent think tanks in India, dedicated to the core principles of individual rights, freedom of exchange, rule of law and limited government. Its motto is social change through public policy.<sup>15</sup> It works in the field of education, livelihood and policy training and promotes choice and accountability across private and public sectors. On the other hand, the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), which was established in 1965, is primarily concerned with the objective assessment of issues relating to national and international security.<sup>16</sup> This institution has had the patronage of the government. Its primary mission is to promote national and international security through the generation and dissemination of knowledge on defence and security-related issues. The Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), established in August 1981, is a policy-

oriented think tank focusing on economic policy.<sup>17</sup> Its main focus is to enhance the knowledge content of policy making by undertaking analytical research in the area. It also aims to improve the interface with the global economy and to bring its research findings with policy makers. The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) was established in 1974 with initial focus on documentation and dissemination and started concentrating on research towards the end of 1982.<sup>18</sup> Its vision is to offer creative solutions for a sustainable future. TERI believes that efficient utilisation of energy and sustainable use of natural resources would propel the process of development. The Observer Research Foundation (ORF) was founded in 1990, basically to influence public policy formulation.<sup>19</sup> It brought together a number of leading economists and policy makers to push forward an agenda for economic reforms in India. All these organizations have been active in their respective areas and have done considerable research and produced substantial literature which could serve as guidelines for the policy makers.

### **Is there a Need for Gandhian Think Tank?**

As emphasized in the beginning of the paper, Gandhi belonged to that category of world thinkers, who work as their own think tank. In fact, even the prominent think tanks could hardly match with a man of prophetic vision like Gandhi in terms of creation of seminal ideas. Gandhi lived and worked in the span of time when the world was changing at an unprecedented pace, confronted by some of the most intricate problems. It may be noted that, that was the period when ideological movements like colonialism, imperialism, fascism, Marxism, and democracy were working as contestants at the international level. A number of thinkers and activists and revolutionary leaders were struggling to find solutions for the problems faced by the people. Among all these thinkers and leaders, Gandhi stands out unique in terms of creative ideas. He could anticipate the nature of the coming problems by his sheer observation and analysis of current trends. His seminal work *Hind Swaraj* written in 1909 is nothing short of repository of original ideas which are turning out to be more and more relevant, instead of getting outdated. Some of his basic ideas like *Satyagraha*, Trusteeship, Eleven vows, Constructive Programme, *Swadeshi*, *Swaraj* and many other principles and concepts are attracting the attention of people who are looking for alternatives and sustainable way of living. There is space for creating a Gandhian think tank to guide the government and civil society in the light of Gandhi's ideas and principles.

### **Gandhian Institutions in India – An Overview**

There are different categories of Gandhian institutions working in various fields spread all over the country. They can be broadly classified into four major categories viz., traditional Gandhian institutions, constructive organizations, government or government funded institutions and academic institutions in the university stream and outside. Traditional Gandhian institutions are like *Gandhi Smarak Nidhi*, Gandhi Peace Foundation, Gandhian Ashrams, *Sarva Seva Sangh*, *Harijan Sevak Sangh*, *Navajivan* Trust, Kasturba Memorial Trust, *Gandhi Seva Sangh* and many other local, regional and national level organizations. There are a number of constructive organizations engaged in *Khadi*, prohibition, education, communal harmony, promotion of *Rashtra bhasha*, nature cure and so on. There are other categories of institutions either set up or substantially funded by government which include *Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti* and International Centre of Gandhian Studies and Research, National Gandhi Museum, Khadi and Village Industries Commission and similar other organizations. The fourth category is the regular University schools/departments offering courses of studies on Gandhian/ Peace Studies. The important among them are Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad; Panjab University, Chandigarh and a number of others. It may be worth mentioning that in the State of Kerala, Gandhian Studies has been taught at the Higher Secondary level for a long time.<sup>20</sup> Outside the mainstream educational institutions there are also a few institutions engaged in the dissemination of Gandhian thought and values like the Gandhian Institute of Studies, Varanasi; Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha; Gandhi Research Foundation, Jalgaon and others.

### **Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha - A Case Study**

As discussed above, there is no dearth of Gandhian institutions spread in different parts of the country. It could be legitimately asked why Institute of Gandhian Studies could be taken as a case study as Gandhian think tank? Most of the Gandhian institutions have their own limitations. For example, traditional Gandhian institutions are used to working in certain specific areas of their interest and as such they have limited area of operation. They could hardly be expected to have any innovative approach and new initiatives in the changing circumstances and emerging challenges. Similarly, constructive organizations limit themselves to their specific areas of operation. The organizations controlled and funded

by government suffer from all limitations from which any government agency does. They have too much of constraints and their programmes and their implementation largely reflect government priorities and initiatives. Some of the Departments of Gandhian Studies of different universities consider it the end of their job by teaching some aspects of Gandhian Thought in a very traditional way. They have neither the resources nor the mindset to engage in any kind of innovative research or to contextualise Gandhi and his ideas to the needs of the changing times. Besides, in the scheme of entire university set up, they remain virtually at the periphery, hardly getting a core position. The Centres for Gandhian Studies are mainly established by universities and colleges from the financial assistance given by the University Grants Commission under the XI plan scheme for promoting the contributions of epoch making social thinkers of India. Most of these are routine and they hardly lead the promotion of independent Gandhian scholarship. Among the three main centres of Gandhian Studies, outside the university stream, the first one that is Gandhian Institute of Studies, Varanasi, though a prominent institution founded by Jayaprakash Narayan, is currently in the midst of crisis due to various reasons. Among the three, Gandhi Research Foundations, Jalgaon, is a new institution engaged in the process of establishing itself in the field both in terms of teaching and research. The museum and documentation constitute the main stay of their strength. It is in this context, the Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha, could be singled out for the purpose of analysis.

The Institute of Gandhian Studies (Gandhi Vichar Parishad) is an educational and public charitable institution that has been set-up as one of the commemorative projects of the Jannalal Bajaj Centenary Year. The main object of the Institute is to promote, organize, sponsor, and undertake the study of the life and thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi, as well as the predecessors of Gandhi and contemporary thinkers and social revolutionaries, who have drawn inspiration from Gandhi, or arrived at similar views as a result of their own experience and reflections, as also, to undertake comparative studies of the philosophy and methodology of Gandhi and other thinkers and social revolutionaries. It was established at Wardha on October 7, 1987. Late Shri Ravindra Varma, freedom fighter, Gandhian activist and a well known scholar was the founder Chairman of this Institute. The establishment of the Institute was the result of vision and work of Shri Ravindra Varma, along with the active interest and full support of Shri Ramkrishna Bajaj, the then Chairman of the Jannalal Bajaj Foundation. Initially,

the Institute started its activities within the Campus of Mahatma Gandhi's Ashram at Sevagram. In the course of time, it has moved to its new campus at Gopuri.

### **A Brief Review of Activities**

In pursuance of the objectives of the Institute, it has been organizing a series of courses of different durations oriented towards the academic community, including the Department of Gandhian Studies in Universities, workers among unorganized labour, workers of voluntary/ grass root organizations, women, youth, students and other similar groups. The activities of the Institute are so diverse and comprehensive that all of them could not be covered in this brief review. Hence, the authors have not only summarized but also omitted major chunk of activities, though important in their own way, including the annual memorial lecture, programmes in connection with international non-violence day and similar other activities.<sup>21</sup>

The Institute has been offering a long-term/one year Post Graduate Diploma Course in Gandhian Thoughts since 1988. The curriculum of the course covers the life, thoughts and methodology of Gandhi and his thinking in various fields. The unique character of the curriculum is that it was prepared with the aim of contextualizing Gandhi in the light of emerging challenges in the fields of economics, politics and social issues. It also covers the modern trends in conflict and peace studies. It also includes practical work including spinning and agriculture and field work. Besides students from different parts of India, the course has attracted the participation of students from other countries including Japan, the Netherlands, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand, Indonesia, Mexico, both north and south Sudan and Brazil. The course has produced a group of socially committed intellectuals and social activists. Some of them have been heading leading Gandhian and constructive work organizations both at the national and international levels and their work has been appreciated, recognized and even been awarded the prestigious International Jannalal Bajaj Award for spreading Gandhian values outside India.

Since its inception, an annual feature of the Institute has been the short-term camp (8-10 days) that it runs for graduates and post graduate students, drawn from different universities in India, on Gandhi's philosophy and method and their relevance in humanity's current predicament. The faculty for the course includes some of the most outstanding academicians, activists, freedom fighters and leaders of

constructive work. These camps are generally attended by 40 to 60 students from different universities in India. Although the course is meant for students of universities of India, it also had participants from the USA, Australia, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Canada, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Sweden and Thailand. Drawing inspirations from this camp, many students have organised Gandhi Study Circle in their colleges and respective universities. These study circles remain as vibrant bodies discussing the current issues from a Gandhian perspectives and they even undertake social activities and actions.

The Institute has also been running regional camps in different States for University students and youth from its inception and organizing regularly regional camps for University Students of Maharashtra from 1990 onwards. These are conducted in the language of the region and for university and college students/youth who can not travel to attend programmes at the all India level. In many cases they are conducted in collaboration with regional institutions. From 1990 onwards, the Institute has been organising a short-term course on Gandhian thoughts for workers from trade unions and unorganised labour, social activists and constructive workers. Consultative meets for *Panchayat* workers and special courses for women members of the *Panchayat* are important areas of its activities. Though the Institute started courses on religions from 1990 onwards, the short-term courses on the spiritual practices and beliefs of different religions has become a regular feature of the Institute from 1995 onwards. It was organized mainly to understand the core of main religions in the Indian subcontinent and with the purpose of promoting communal harmony and inter-religious dialogue. Widely recognized scholars and spiritual practitioners of different religious faiths, including venerable His Holiness The Dalai Lama, Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, Acharya Srivatsa Goswami and many others delivered the discourses for these courses. These courses were attended by college and university students, research scholars, college teachers, religious leaders and students of philosophy and theology and the general public.

The Institute also organizes a number of national and international seminars, workshops on themes related to Gandhi, peace and non-violence and offers number of academic courses for universities from abroad. It included in the 50<sup>th</sup> year of Gandhi's martyrdom and the 50th year of India's independence, the Institute organised an International Seminar on "Gandhi and The Twenty-first Century" in January-February 1998 which was inaugurated by His Holiness The

Dalai Lama. More than hundred and fifty participants including eminent academicians, activists and thinkers from India, Russia, Finland, the United States, Germany, Mexico, Pakistan, Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand took part in the seminar.

In October 1999, the Institute in co-operation with the Gandhi Peace Foundation, Delhi, organised an International Workshop on "Non-violent Struggles in the Twentieth Century and Their Lessons for the Twenty-first" in Delhi which was inaugurated by Shri Arjan Sulak Sivaraksa (winner of Right Livelihood Award) of Thailand. Similar international and national seminars are being regularly organized by the Institute on peace, conflict resolution and non-violence, including on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of martyrdom of Mahatma Gandhi in 2008.

The Institute published selected papers on Gandhian thoughts and peace studies as tracts and produced valuable literature in the form of books. The following are the important publications of the Institute published either individually and or in collaboration with other organisations. Ravindra Varma: *Five Fallacies and the Future* (1991); Ravindra Varma: *Gandhi's Theory of Trusteeship* (1993); Ravindra Varma: *Is There an Alternative to a Non-violent Revolution?* (1993); Ravindra Varma: *Gandhi and Fundamentalism* (1996); Ravindra Varma et al.: *Essays on Gandhian Thought* (2004); Siby K. Joseph (ed.): *Explorations in Culture of Peace* (2006); Siby K. Joseph; Bharat Mahodaya (eds.): *Essays on Conflict Resolution* (2007); C. S. Dharmadhikari: *Khoj Gandhi Ki* (2008); Kanti Mehta: *My Life; My Story* (2008); Sheshrao Chavan: *Rule of the Heart – The Justice of Chandrashekar Dharmadhikari* (2009); Siby K. Joseph, John Moolakkattu, Bharat Mahodaya (eds.): *Non-violent Struggles of the Twentieth Century: Retrospect and Prospect* (2009); Siby K. Joseph, Bharat Mahodaya: *Contemporary Perspectives on Peace and Non-violence* (2010); Siby K. Joseph, Bharat, Mahodaya (eds.): *Reflections on Hind Swaraj* (2011); Siby K. Joseph, Bharat Mahodaya (eds.): *Gandhi, Environment and Sustainable Future* (2011); C. S. Dharmadhikari: *Gandhi Meri Nazar Mein* (2011); Siby K. Joseph (ed.): *Contextualising Gandhian Thought* (2012); Siby K. Joseph, Bharat Mahodaya (eds.): *Continuing Relevance of Swadeshi* (2012); C. S. Dharmadhikari: *Contemplating Gandhi*.

## Conclusion

From the review of the activities of the Institute, it is clear that it has become a nucleus for Gandhian think tank. Though the Institute has done considerable amount of work on Gandhian themes, but a lot remains to be done to emerge as a powerful Gandhian think tank which can make

significant contributions to influence the policy makers and the government. Gandhi's ideas are proving to be quite relevant to work as an alternative system for survival of humanity and for a sustainable future. The Institute stands committed to focus its energy and resources to such a challenging task in the near future.

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## A Note on the Background and Work of the Centre for Policy Studies

**J.K. Bajaj\***

The Centre for Policy Studies is an institution committed to a serious study and comprehension of the classical Indian ideas and institutions in the context of the current reality of India. The Centre grew out of the passionate concern of a few bright scientists and engineers with the inadequacy of the practice of sciences and technologies in India. Their concern arose mainly from a strong feeling that the practice of the sciences and technologies in India had little resonance with the Indian tradition of different sciences and technologies or with the current situation and problems of India, and consequently these disciplines failed to develop an internal discipline and rigour of their own on the one hand and a significant stake in the economy and society on the other. This concern later expanded to include other fields of social and academic endeavour, especially history and social sciences.

### Background 1: The PPST Effort

The beginnings of the Centre may be traced to 1978, when a group of young Ph.D.'s in Physics and different disciplines of engineering, working in various institutions at Chennai, came together to discuss and deliberate upon the state of science and technology in India. While working as intensely active researchers in different disciplines and thus having the opportunity to watch the modern scientific and technological community of India from within, the members of the group were struck by the inability of even the most brilliant of the Indian scientists and technologists to make really significant contributions to their chosen

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field of study and work. It seemed that however bright and hard-working the Indian scientists and engineers might be, leadership in every field of scientific and technological endeavour remained outside their grasp; it seemed that the Indian scientists and technologists were merely tolerated as minor, and often dispensable, participants and even the best of us, did not really belong to the core of the tradition in any field of modern science and technology.

Members of the group felt that this marginalisation of Indian scientists and technologists happened because the disciplines they were practicing were anchored in the traditions and concerns of the West and had little roots in India. This had several consequences. One, the Indian scientists and technologists failed to develop integrated Indian streams with their own internal traditions and discipline. We remember that when we began talking about these issues, a very senior physicist told us that this lack of internal discipline was indeed serious; because there simply was no Indian roots of scientific practices with its own standards and discipline.

Second, the Indian scientists and technologists failed to relate in any meaningful sense with the ordinary people and even traditional savants and craftsmen in their respective fields. Thus, for example, an Indian metallurgist would hardly be able to meaningfully converse with a traditional ironsmith; and, an Indian doctor would find it nearly impossible to engage professionally with a traditional  *vaidya*.

This has partly to do with language, but it also has much to do with the self-understanding of the scientists and technologists as parts of an external non-Indian tradition. Thus, their learning does not add to the resources available with the practitioners of Indian tradition. An institute of metallurgy in say Jamshedpur learns nothing from the famed skills of smelting and steel-making available among the tribal communities in that region. And, the presence of an IIT or an engineering college in a district hardly adds to the skills, resources, tools and materials available with the local craftsmen and artisans.

With this understanding of the situation of modern science and technology in India, the group began an effort to understand the earlier traditions of science and technology in India and to investigate the possibility of connecting the scientific and technological activity of today with the earlier tradition and with the current practices and practitioners of those traditions. This led to the foundation of the Patriotic and People-oriented Science and Technology (PPST) Group and the PPST Bulletin at Chennai. The PPST Group ambitiously

proposed to work towards evolving a new stream of what it called 'Patriotic and People-Oriented Science and Technology (PPST).' This new stream would be patriotic in the sense of being rooted in and drawing sustenance and support from the Indian traditions of sciences and technologies, and people-oriented in the sense of being concerned with the ways, needs and aspirations of the Indian people.

This group was soon able to involve in its concerns scientists and technologists from several major institutions in the country. To build the case for PPST, the Group studied in depth several issues concerning the history, sociology and epistemology of sciences in India and the West, and also the current state of scientific and technological effort in core areas of Indian economy, like agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, architecture, energy conservation and health care, etc. The work of PPST was compiled in the 'PPST Bulletin,' which was published as a quarterly for nearly 10 years.

That work of the PPST Group is widely recognised as an unusually intense and academically rigorous intervention in the debate on the place and direction of science and technology in non-Western countries. Several papers of that period have become classics in the field and some of these are still taught in graduate courses in sociology and history of science in several universities. Given the strength of the westernising influences in the non-Western societies, including India, the PPST work was unlikely to have a serious effect on the course of the development policies of these countries; but, it offered a strongly and rigorously argued alternate view that emphasised the strengths of the non-Western traditions and at least gave a sense of hope and pride in their own civilisations to many people.

## **Background II: The Work of Shri Dharampal**

Shri Dharampal was a rare historian who investigated the state of society in India in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, just before the arrival of the British and their westernising influence in the country. Through his work, he was able to establish that India on the eve of the British intervention was a fairly functional and affluent society; India at that point of time was more advanced than Britain in terms of scientific and technological competence in varied fields, in delivery of social services like education and healthcare, and in economic affluence. Dharampal also showed that this competence of Indian society was anchored in

peculiarly Indian ways of comprehending reality and in organising social, economic and technological activity; and that these ways were largely contrary to the Western ways of thinking and functioning.

The work of Dharampal is widely recognised for its academic thoroughness and rigour. Some of his books, especially *Science and Technology in Eighteenth Century India: Some Contemporary European Accounts* and *The Beautiful Tree: Indigenous Education in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century* are classics in the field and are still widely read. The PPST Group came in contact with Shri Dharampal at an early stage, and this association added depth and vigour to the PPST effort.

### Centre for Policy Studies

Centre for Policy Studies was constituted in July 1990 by some of the founding members of the PPST in the background of the work of PPST and that of Shri Dharampal, with the objective of taking the PPST effort beyond the limited area of Science and Technology. The Centre proposes to study Indian civilisational ideas and institutions in diverse fields of public activity, and explore the potential of these ideas and institutions in alleviating the current situation of India. Such an exploration, we hoped, would help India in formulating a polity that shall provide *all* Indians with the challenge and the opportunity to get into the task of nation building with an abiding passion.

Invoking a passion for the rebuilding of India through the involvement of all her people and all her civilisational and natural resources is the main concern of the Centre. In this context, it is probably appropriate to quote from the founding note of the Centre, which began thus:

“In the task of nation building it is the spirit and the willingness of the people alone that matters. The tools and resources can always be generated once a nation decides to move ahead towards its goal with self-confidence and determination. Like other resurgent societies of the world, we too displayed the spirit and the determination that builds nations, when under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi we harnessed all our energies to reach our goals. But after achieving independence, we somehow lost that drive, and slipped into the old habits of mental sloth and mechanical imitation, which we had acquired during the long years of bondage. We have to somehow rekindle the national spirit and

determination, for India to forge ahead again. But for that to happen it is essential that we acquire a clear overview of ourselves and of our situation in the world of today, and evolve clear-headed policies for restructuring the Indian reality. To initiate this review of the Indian situation and to help in formulating a polity that provides all Indians with the challenge and the opportunity to get onto the task of national reconstruction with an abiding passion, we propose to set up the Centre for Policy Studies.”

That note further went on to recall the example of Japan which in fact built itself as a modern nation in the nineteenth century, largely by invoking the spirit and willingness of her people. As is known, after the conversion of half a million of its people to Christianity by the Jesuits in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Japan closed its frontiers to the people from Europe for over two centuries. It is only around 1860 that it reopened itself to the western world. It is said that in the intervening two hundred years, Japan kept very little contact with the Dutch, through which Japan could take note of what interested it and yet not be distracted by being exposed to what did not concern it.

Soon after Japan resumed links with the west in 1860, it sent some of its young men to the countries of the West. One of them was Maeda Masana. He went to France in 1869 and seeing the splendour of Paris felt very depressed for months, believing that Japan would never be able to match France. Somehow his spirits picked up from then on and he could write that “I felt confidence in our ability to achieve what the west achieved.” Maeda Masana returned to Japan in 1878 and became one of the major architects of *Kogyo Iken*, Japan’s ten year plan. The plan was completed in 1884 in thirty volumes. Discussing the various constituents required to make a country functional, the plan stated:

“Which requirement should be considered as most important in the present efforts of the government in building Japanese industries? It can be neither capital nor laws and regulations, because both are dead things in themselves and totally ineffective. The spirit/willingness sets both capital and regulations in motion.... If we assign to these three factors with respect to their effectiveness, spirit/willingness should be assigned five parts, laws and regulations four, and capital no more than one part.”

What Japan managed to achieve through its spirit and willingness, and its emphasis on creating organizational structures appropriate to the goals and the times is now apparent. The story of other nations that

have in history managed to break through their periods of sloth and decay is not very different from that of Japan, including Europe. It seems that in the task of national restoration it is the spirit and willingness that prove to be decisive, and not the tools and the resources.

It is the objective of the Centre for Policy Studies to invoke in India the spirit and determination that builds nations. Such spirit and determination arises from a clear understanding of ourselves, our traditions, our civilisation and of our people and their genius and preferences. In addition, it requires a clear and dispassionate understanding of our situation today and of the world around us. The Centre, through its academic work of the last 25 years, has been trying to evolve such an understanding in different fields.

### Work of the Centre

In accordance with its stated objectives, the Centre has consistently sought to understand different aspects of the Indian situation from the twin perspectives of, one, the classical Indian ideas, institutions and practices in a particular field, and two, the current situation of India in that field. In the 25 years of its functioning, the Centre has done pioneering and authoritative work in several fields. Some of the more significant research activities and publications of the Centre are listed below.

1. *Bharatiya Chitta Manas and Kala*: This was the first book that the Centre published after its inception. It was an attempt to offer a broad outline of the structure of Indian consciousness and Indian sense of time. The booklet, based on interviews with Sri Dharampal, relies heavily on the Indian classical literature, and offers a picture of how India and the ordinary Indians tend to think and believe on various issues of public polity and how their thoughts and beliefs seem to have no congruence with those of the educated Indians and Indian policy-makers. But, we need to undertake similar studies of other aspects of the Indian civilisation experience to fill in details of the overview presented in *Bharatiya Chitta Manas and Kala*.

2. *Ayodhya and the Future India*: This was a major intervention by the Centre to comprehend the Indian situation in the context of a critical event in modern Indian history. The Centre was able to involve and obtain the reactions of a broad cross section of Indian opinion in this comprehension. And the resultant compilation remains a significant record of the mood of the nation at that time.

3. *Chengalpattu Studies*: In its search for comprehending the Indian civilisational ways of organisation and functioning, the Centre has compiled archival information on about 2,100 localities of the Chengalpattu district from a British survey of 1764-1774. These archival records of the British administrators, and the corresponding village-accounts in Tamil on which the archival records are based, offer a comprehensive picture of the manner and effectiveness with which the Indians organised their society and polity before the coming of the British. The survey provides surprisingly detailed information about the functioning of these more than 2,100 localities around the time of the British conquest of the region. This kind of information is extremely rare. A preliminary analysis of the information suggests that the way the Chengalpattu society organized its affairs differed greatly from the kind of ways we have been trying to impose upon the Indian society. What is more, through their organizational genius and skills, the Chengalpattu localities seemed to have generated an amazingly high level of agricultural, industrial and cultural activity. All this activity was organized and governed through a political and administrative system in which the locality functioned largely as a self-governing corporate entity and interacted with other localities in the polity in widening circles that extended up to the immediate region and beyond in the manner of the polity of oceanic circles that Mahatma Gandhi articulated so evocatively.

4. *Annam Bahu Kurvita: Recalling the Indian Discipline of Growing and Sharing Food in Plenty*: One of the striking, and perhaps defining, aspects of Indian economy of today is the extremely low level of production of food per capita leading to large-scale hunger and malnutrition throughout India. We produce around or less than 200 kg per capita per annum of food-grains; this level of production is generally considered as famine level and is guaranteed to keep a large proportion of the population hungry and malnourished. Incidentally, per capita annual production in the Chengalpattu society that we have referred to above was nearer 800 kg. This situation of scarcity and hunger came to prevail with the establishment of British administration in India, and has improved only marginally during nearly the seven decades of our independent functioning.

But, our more important work has been the compilation of the classical Indian position on the issue of food and hunger. Through this book, published in Hindi, English and Tamil, we have conclusively established that classical India looked upon ensuring an abundance of

food and making it available for all as a fundamental discipline of human existence. This book has been widely acclaimed as a classic in its field. Studies in Agriculture and Food remain one of the areas of concern of the Centre, and we continue to compile detailed information on these issues. We have also been collecting data on the area, yield and production of major crops in India and the different states. For many regions, we have collected this information up to the district level.

5. *Religious Demography of India*: Another widely noticed research effort of the Centre has been on the changing religious demography of the Indian sub-continent and its various regions since 1881, when the first rigorous synchronous census began in India. Religious composition of the Indian population forms one of the fundamental realities of the Indian situation, which has determined the course of Indian history in the past and continues to determine social and administrative compulsions in different regions of the country. By compiling a comprehensive and long-term statistical picture of the changing religious demography of India, we have provided basic source material for thinking on these issues in a systematic fashion. Besides, the Scheduled Tribes and Caste factors are two abiding concerns of the Centre.

6. *Science and Society*: Study of the interaction between science and society is one of the original mandates of the Centre, which began with the PPST work. This remains an area of concern for the Centre. We have recently published a book on Science and Sustainability. Scholars associated with the Centre have done significant work on the epistemology and history of Indian Science, particularly of Indian astronomy and mathematics.

7. *Sanatana Bharat Jagrita Bharat*: In this book, which was also rendered into the format of an exhibition, the Centre has presented a simple, yet comprehensive and authentic, picture of the geography, climate, culture, science and technologies, history and the current situation of India. The book and the exhibition, presented in both Hindi and English, have been widely seen and appreciated.

This, however, is not a matter of a single compilation. It is the mandate of the Centre to continuously collect information on the different aspects of the Indian civilizational experience and on the current situation of India. We have made an effort in that direction through our work on District Resource Atlases that we describe below.

8. *District Resource Atlases*: The Centre has always sought to collect detailed information on different aspects of society and polity

in India. It has been our cherished hope that we should be able to compile such information for every district of India. During the last few years, we have begun this effort in earnest. We have compiled information on the geography, geology, climate, water resources, demography, land-use, irrigation, agriculture, industry, history and culture of all districts of Madhya Pradesh. Much of this information has been compiled in long time series of four decades or more. For this purpose, we have used all available sources of information, from the remote sensing satellite data to the revenue records.

On the basis of this information, we have produced comprehensive and extensively illustrated Resource Atlases of Jhabua-Alirajpur, Sidhi-Singrauli, Datia and Tikamgarh districts. We are in the process of publishing similar atlases for several other districts. We have also prepared a larger resource Atlas for the state and also an Agricultural Atlas of Madhya Pradesh.

We believe that bringing the specificities of the people and land of different areas to the attention of the people themselves and the policy makers shall be of great help in evolving development policies that are in tune with the aspirations, resources and skills of the local people, which has been the main objective of the Centre.

The experience of working on the district resource atlas programme of Madhya Pradesh indicates that it is possible and necessary to do similar work for other States of India. We are in the process of organising ourselves for this larger work.

9. *Mahatma Gandhi Studies*: The Centre takes Mahatma Gandhi to be a rare leader of modern India who had unqualified faith in the Indian civilisation and Indian people and who took these two as the main resources for the revival and rebuilding of the Indian nation. Study of Mahatma Gandhi has always been a part of the work of the Centre. In the centenary year of his seminal book, *Hind Swaraj*, the Centre published authentic editions of *Hind Swaraj* comprising: i) The original version of *Hind Swaraj* in Gujarati copied faithfully from the handwritten manuscript of Mahatma Gandhi; ii) The original Gujarati version in Devanagari script with a verbatim Hindi translation that runs parallel to the original; iii) Gandhiji's own English translation of *Hind Swaraj* as published in 1910 from the International Press, Phoenix.

The Centre for Policy Studies is thus engaged in multi-dimensional foundational research to understand the current polity of India in the context of the Indian civilizational traditions and resources with the objective of creating the basis for transcending our current situation and rebuilding a resurgent Indian nation in the modern times.

# United Service Institution of India (USI)

**Maj. Gen. P.J.S. Sandhu (Retd.)\***

## Brief History

The United Service Institution of India (USI) was founded in 1870 by a soldier scholar, Colonel (later Major General) Sir Charles MacGregor. It was established for the furtherance of interest and knowledge in the art, science and literature of National Security in general and of the Defence Services in particular. In order to ensure its autonomy, it was registered as a 'Society' in 1874 and continues to be so. Post partition of the Indian subcontinent in August 1947, the Institution continued to function as the United Service Institution of India and Pakistan for almost a year, till Pakistan disassociated itself in 1948 and the Institution reverted to its original name – USI of India.

It is one of the oldest institutions of its kind in the world and is more than just a 'think tank.' The growth of strategic thinking and writing in India can easily be linked to the growth of USI itself. The USI is an autonomous, membership based institution with over 14,000 members drawn from varied walks of life.

## Membership

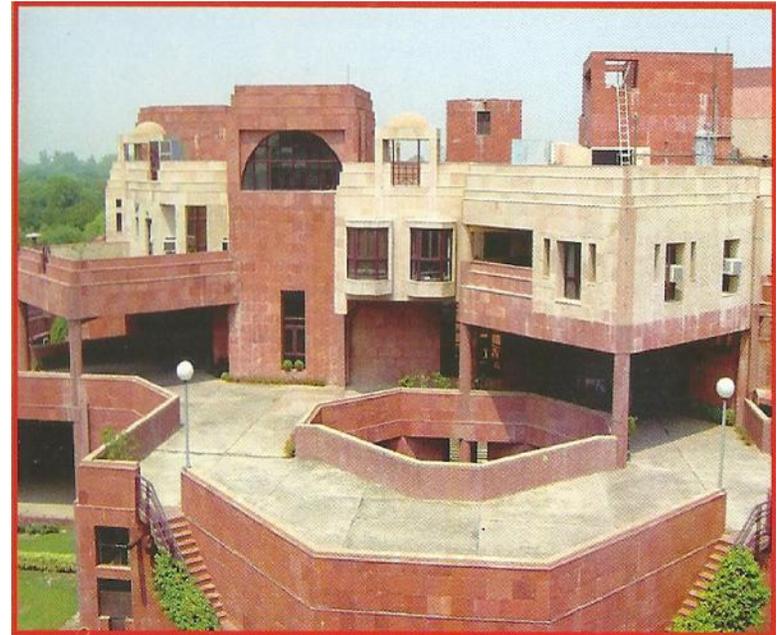
Membership is open to the following categories :

- (a) Serving and retired officers of the Armed Forces of India.
- (b) Serving and retired officers of Group 'A' Central Services like the Indian Foreign Service, Indian Administrative Service, and Indian Police Service etc.

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\*Maj. Gen. P.J.S. Sandhu (Retd.) is Deputy Director & Editor, United Service Institution of India (USI).

- (c) Cadets from the National Defence Academy, Indian Military Academy, Officers Training Academies, Service Academies and Midshipmen.
- (d) Eminent persons from the Academia, Industry, Research and Development and other walks of life can be granted Associate Membership, subject to approval by the Executive Committee.



*USI COMPLEX*

## Management

The three Service Chiefs are the Vice Patrons of the Institution. The Management is vested in a Council composed of 24 members, ten ex-officio and fourteen elected from the USI members for a period of three years at a time. The Chief of the Integrated Defence Staff to the Chiefs of Staff Committee (CISC) is the ex-officio President of the Council and the Director is the Chief Executive Officer of the Institution and the Member Secretary of the Council. In addition, there is an Executive Committee chaired by the Deputy Chief of the Integrated Defence Staff (Doctrine, Operations and Training) which is responsible for execution of policy guidelines agreed upon by the Council. Various

Centres of the Institution are managed by respective Boards of Management.

## Organisation

The Institution has the following centres/components :

- (a) Centre for Strategic Studies and Simulation (CS3).
- (b) Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research (CAFHR).
- (c) Centre for Distance Learning Programme for the Armed Forces (Course Section).
- (d) Editorial Section.
- (e) Administrative Section.
- (f) Colonel Pyara Lal Memorial Library and Reading Room.
- (g) Chairs of Excellence under various centres.

## Activities

The main activities of the Institution are as under :

- (a) Net Assessments on strategic issues
- (b) Strategic Simulation and Gaming for various institutions like; the National Defence College, Defence Services War Colleges, Foreign Service Institute and even some foreign institutions.
- (c) Research work on various subjects such as : national security, strategy, international relations, energy, nuclear issues, geopolitics, military history etc. under various Chairs of Excellence.
- (d) Seminars and workshops.
- (e) Lectures and round table discussions.
- (f) Interaction with similar foreign institutions.
- (g) To conduct correspondence courses for Armed Forces officers to prepare them for promotion examinations and Defence Services Staff College examination.
- (h) To undertake research projects and studies for the Armed Forces on strategic issues and matters related to national security.

## USI Journal

The USI Journal is the oldest surviving defence journal in the country and in Asia, having first appeared in 1871. It is supplied free to all members, and in an era when there is a feeling that free expression of views by defence personnel is not looked upon kindly by the

establishment, the journal in fact provides such a forum, without regard to seniority and length of service in the Armed Forces, subject of course to propriety and quality of the written work. 12000 copies are currently printed and subscribed by a large number of units and libraries.

## Essay Competitions

Every year the Institution organises Gold Medal Essay Competitions under two groups. These essays, were started in 1871 and constitute a barometer of opinion on matters that affect national security in general, and the Defence Forces in particular. A handsome cash prize and certificates are given. In specially deserving cases a medal is also awarded. From 2015 an essay competition on a historical subject has also been introduced in memory of Lt. Gen. S.L. Menezes, PVSM, SC (Retd.), former Vice Chief of the Army Staff (commissioned on 30 May 1943 and expired on 11 May 2012)

**Annual Events.** USI conducts the following annual events :

- (a) Major General Samir Sinha Memorial Lecture.
- (b) Colonel Pyara Lal Memorial Lecture.
- (c) National Security Lecture.

## Memorandums of Understanding (MOU)

USI has signed MOUs with the following foreign institutions :

- (a) Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies, Uzbekistan.
- (b) Cross Strat Interflow Prospect Foundation, Taipei.
- (c) Sejong Institute, South Korea.
- (d) Korea Research Institute for Military Affairs, South Korea.
- (e) Institute for Defence Studies, Vietnam.
- (f) Norwegian Institute for International Affairs ( NUPI ).
- (g) Military Strategic Studies Centre, Kazakhstan.
- (h) Jordan Institute of Diplomacy.
- (j) SIPRI, Stockholm, Sweden

## Projects/Publications

Some of the recent projects that have been completed are :

- (a) Comprehensive National Power.
- (b) China-India Military Balance Matrix - 2020.
- (c) The War Waging Potential of China - 2025.
- (d) Strategic Balance in South Asia.

- (e) Special Forces of India.
- (f) Integrated Maritime Security.
- (g) Coastal Security : Maritime Dimensions of Homeland Security.
- (h) The Dynamics of Preventive Diplomacy.
- (j) Complexities and Challenges of Nuclear India.
- (k) China and India : A Comparative Analysis of Approaches to Energy Security.
- (l) Inside ISI.
- (m) The Iranian Nuclear Conundrum.

The Institute has published 100 books/monographs on security related subjects since 2008.

The USI-CAFHR has undertaken the Project “India and the Great War 1914-18” in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs to commemorate the Indian contribution to the Great War. The following publications have been brought out by the Centre as part of the above project :

- (a) A large and well-illustrated coffee table book titled *India and the Great War* by Sqn. Ldr. Rana T.S. Chhina (Retd.).
- (b) A boxed set of eight illustrated booklets on the theme ‘India and the Great War’. The subjects/authors of the individual booklets are:
  - (i) Overview by Sqn. Ldr. Rana T.S. Chhina (Retd.)
  - (ii) France and Flanders by Tom Donovan
  - (iii) Gallipoli by Sqn. Ldr. Rana T.S. Chhina (Retd.)
  - (iv) Mesopotamia by Harry Fecitt
  - (v) Egypt and Palestine by Harry Fecitt
  - (vi) East Africa by Harry Fecitt
  - (vii) Indian State Forces by Tony McClenaghan
  - (viii) Indian VCs 1914-18 by Adil Chhina
- (c) Another illustrated coffee table book titled *Les Hindous: The Indian Army on the Western Front* is in the pipeline and will be published in the next couple of months.

**USI Publications.** A list of USI publications since 2008 is enclosed.

### Infrastructure and Facilities

The institution has been housed in its own building on Rao Tula Ram Marg, New Delhi since 1996. We have a well-appointed library and reading room, an auditorium, four seminar rooms (capacities – 75, 30, 35 and 16), working cubicles for scholars, hostel accommodation and some service apartments, a restaurant, a coffee shop, a small party room to host delegations, adequate office accommodation and sufficient parking space.

## Profile of CSTEP

**Annapoorna Ravichander\***

### Introduction

The Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP) is an Indian not-for-profit research organisation incorporated in 2005 u/s 25 of The Companies Act, 1956. As one of the largest think tanks in South Asia, its vision is to enrich the nation with technology-enabled policy options for equitable growth. CSTEP has grown to become a multi-disciplinary policy research organisation in the areas of Energy, Infrastructure, Security Studies, Materials, Climate Studies and Governance.

*CSTEP’s Vision: To enrich the nation with technology-enabled policy options for equitable growth.*

*CSTEP’s Mission: Impact policy at governmental and corporate levels by assessing and designing science and technology options with informed and systematic analysis for (equitable and inclusive) human development and economic growth.*

CSTEP is recognised as a Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation by the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India. The Center is supported by grants from domestic and international foundations, industry trusts and governments.

### Board Members

**(1) Dr. V.S. Arunachalam- Chairman and Founder of CSTEP Ph.D., FNAE, FNA, FASc, FNASc, FREng, Hon. FIETE**

**(2) Shri Prafull Anubhai B.Sc (Econ) - London School of Economics, PMD - Harvard Business School.**

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\*Dr. Annapoorna Ravichander Head, Communication & Policy Engagement CSTEP  
www.cstep.in

(3) **Prof. S. Ranganathan** Ph.D., FNAE, FNA, FASc. FNASc, FIIM, FTWAS

(4) **Shri S.V. Ranganath** Former Chief Secretary, Karnataka IAS (Retd.)

(5) **Dr. Anshu Bharadwaj** - Executive Director, CSTEP Ph.D (Carnegie Mellon), MBA (IIM, Kolkata), B.Tech (IIT, Kanpur)

### **Human Resource**

CSTEP strongly believes in developing a cadre of outstanding policy analysts and thought leaders in their respective domains. CSTEP has grown from four employees in 2008 to 70 employees at present. It has a relatively young workforce from various backgrounds, engineering, science, economics, development, management and public policy.

### **CSTEP's Research Expertise**

CSTEP's research primarily focuses on Science, Techno-Economic and Policy analyses in the broad areas of Energy, Materials, Security Studies, Infrastructure and Climate Studies. CSTEP's core strength lies in developing large number of policy options in techno-socio-economic systems. It extensively uses simulation tools and models for policy research and analyses. A short overview of the research work at CSTEP is given below:

### **Energy**

#### **I. Energy Efficiency**

CSTEP's effort in Energy Efficiency and Sustainability is to provide options for improving energy efficiency and lowering CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in several sectors of an economy. As part of the National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency under the Prime Minister's National Action Plan for Climate Change, CSTEP has worked with the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) and members of the industry to develop a methodology for setting targets in energy intensive industrial clusters for the Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT) mechanism. The group also contributed to the Industry Working Group of the Low Carbon Growth Expert Committee set up by the Planning Commission.

#### **Publications: Reports**

- Energy Efficiency of the Iron and Steel Industry
- Potential for Deepening the Scope of PAT
- A Study of Energy Efficiency in Indian Cement Industry

### **Outreach: Policy Impact**

CSTEP signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Planning Commission.

- CSTEP has been chosen under the Think Tank Initiative to produce a documentary on its work, in the area of energy efficiency.
- CSTEP examined the Cement and Iron & Steel Sectors in the context of Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT) mechanism for Bureau of Energy Efficiency to develop scenarios to provide energy efficiency options for these sectors.
- CSTEP has signed an MoU with ALLIANCE FOR AN ENERGY EFFICIENT ECONOMY

### **II. Nuclear Energy**

CSTEP focuses on technical, economic, regulatory and strategic aspects of nuclear power and its potential to meet India's aspirations for energy security. The viability of India's fast breeder programme and the desirability of nuclear power in India's future energy mix have been examined. CSTEP has also examined the desirability of the international nuclear agreement and concluded that global cooperation is necessary for the rapid growth of nuclear power.

#### **Publications: Reports**

- Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010: A Primer for the British Nuclear Industries
- Growth of Nuclear Energy in India: Industrial Challenges and Prospects
- Economics of Fast Breeder Reactors – Indian Scenario

### **Outreach: Policy Impact**

- CSTEP contributed in building support for the Indo-US agreement for Government of India for cooperation in civilian nuclear power.

### **III. Smart Grid**

CSTEP is working to develop a state-of-the-art smart grid that will integrate the renewable energy systems that are intermittent in nature and also provide fail-safe options.

#### **Ongoing Projects:**

- Design and development of a Smart Energy Grid Architecture with Energy Storage

- Roadmap for Conducting Energy Audits at Feeder Level for BESCOM

### **Publications:**

- Implemented India's first smart grid pilots in Mangalore.
- Developed a desktop toolkit model to evaluate the cost and benefits of smart grids in India.
- Contributed to a white paper on "The Smart Grid Vision for India's Power Sector."
- Prepared roadmaps for implementation of Information and Communication Technology in the electricity distribution companies in Karnataka.

### **Outreach: Policy Impact**

- Initiated the establishment of India Smart Grid Forum and Smart Grid Task Force of India at the national level.
- CSTEP was invited to be an associate member at India Smart Grid Forum by Ministry of Power for the Development of Smart Grids in India.
- CSTEP signed an MOU with BESCOM and IIT-Varanasi to develop the Smart Grid Architecture with relevant inputs and collaboration from BESCOM.

### **IV. Solar Studies:**

CSTEP is engaged in exploring the opportunities and challenges that lie in the development of solar technologies towards providing energy security in the country. Studies in these areas will benefit government, industry, policy makers, researchers, and the society at large. The research focuses on both – PhotoVoltaic (PV) and Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) technologies. The studies in this domain aim to provide valuable suggestions on innovations that are necessary to make solar energy options economically viable and sustainable.

### **Ongoing Projects**

- *SERIIUS* The Solar Energy Research Institute for India and the United States (SERIIUS) was launched to create a bi-national network for fostering new ideas and collaborations to expedite a sustainable solar energy industry.
- *SCOPEBIG*

Under the Indo European Co-operation on Renewable Energy Program, a consortium led by CSTEP along with its Indian (Thermax Limited

and Bihar State Power Generation Company Limited) and European partners (Energy Centre of the Netherlands and National Centre for Scientific Research) have been selected to promote development of clean energy technologies for sustainable and inclusive growth in India. Under this, the consortium will design and develop a 3 MW demonstration Solar-Biomass hybrid power plant in Bihar and study the related economic and employment activities.

- *Fixed Focus Dish* A novel parabolic dish system is developed to demonstrate the distinct advantages over the existing dish systems.

### **Publications: Reports**

- Engineering Economic Policy Assessment of Concentrated Solar Thermal Power Technologies for India.
- Harnessing Solar Energy.

### **Outreach: Policy Impact**

- CSTEP is a part of the SERIIUS consortium, which is virtual research centre under the Indo-US PACE partnership.
- CSTEP participated in the development of Version 1 of the India Energy Security Scenarios (IESS) 2047 with Planning Commission to address the need for ensuring energy security and long-term energy planning.
- CSTEP was invited to be a member of the Expert Committee to Study Various RE Laws and provide a draft RE Act by Ministry of New and Renewable Energy to help clarify the regulatory and policy environment and provide long-term assurance to investors

### **V. Energy Policy:**

CSTEP's work in Energy Policy has been focused on making energy planning and energy policies more sustainable, whether within the frame of energy security, low carbon development, green growth, or sustainable access. These issues are rigorously analysed from engineering, economic and social perspectives in an integrated manner. CSTEP collaborates with government agencies, industry bodies, think tanks and leading national and international research institutions in conducting detailed modelling and analysis using a variety of methodologies.

### **Ongoing Projects:**

- *Sustainable Growth Working Group*

The work on 'Geospatial Analysis of Renewable Energy' and energy modelling under the Sustainable Growth Working Group (SGWG), part

of the US-India Energy Dialogue, is being done in coordination with NREL, USA. This project is making use of GIS capability for sustainable growth modelling.

### **Completed Projects:**

- Karnataka's Power Sector Roadmap for 2021-22.
- India Energy Security Scenarios 2047.
- Sustainable Access for All: Building Sustainability into Universal Energy Access.
- Final Report of the Expert Group on Low Carbon Strategies for Inclusive Growth.
- RE-Energising Karnataka: An Assessment of Renewable Energy Policies, Challenges and Opportunities.

### **Outreach: Policy Impact**

- CSTEP signed a memorandum with Government of Karnataka, where it agreed to take into consideration all the recommendations mentioned in the report "*RE-Energising Karnataka: An Assessment of Renewable Energy Policies, Challenges and Opportunities*" for the next stage of Renewable Energy policy.
- CSTEP developed a roadmap for Karnataka's power sector to estimate future energy demand, evaluate existing plans for capacity addition and determine potential shortfalls in Karnataka.
- CSTEP undertook a study on 'Roadmap for 24x7 Power Supply in Karnataka' on request of the Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission (KERC) to assess the performance of the state's power sector, and recommend short and long-term policy options.

### **VI. Wind Power**

CSTEP has used Geographical Information System (GIS) to estimate the wind potential for Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. CSTEP has also examined the cost effectiveness of various electricity storage options such as batteries, to evaluate a sustainable integration of large-scale wind power in the electricity grid.

### **Ongoing Projects:**

#### **• FOWIND**

Under the Indo European Co-operation on Renewable Energy Program, European Union has funded a consortium led by the Global Wind

Energy Council (GWEC) and comprising the Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP), Garrad Hassan India Pvt. Ltd (GL GH), Gujarat Power Corporation Limited (GPCL) and World Institute of Sustainable Energy (WISE) to facilitate the development of offshore wind power in India.

- Analysing Central and State policies for incentivising the development of wind power and a roadmap to be rolled out to align with other existing renewable energy missions such as the National Solar Mission.

### **Outreach: Policy Impact**

- CSTEP is a member of a committee for the Reassessment of Wind Power Potential of the country by Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE). To revise the official wind potential in India taking into consideration advancements in technology at higher hub heights.

### **Infrastructure**

CSTEP has endeavoured to address the complexity of problems that form the spectrum of social infrastructures – physical and public services through knowledge from many perspectives and disciplines. With recent dramatic improvements in technology and computing power, we now have an unprecedented chance to aid and study the process of decision making by using computational models, simulations and serious games for analysis.

### **Ongoing Projects:**

- Decision Making Tool for assessing alternative strategies in Sanitation.
- Developing a Smart City concept.
- Understanding the Food Supply Chain: Examining the agriculture and food supply chain in India.

### **Completed Projects:**

- Saving Cities, Building Towns.
- Scenarios: Shaping India's Future.
- Agricultural Markets and Policy.
- Review of Urban Transport in India.
- Institutional Mechanisms in Urban Transportation Policy in India.
- Urban Poor: Linkages between Shelter, Mobility, and Livelihoods.

## **Outreach: Policy Impact**

- Mr. Panda Das, Warangal Municipal Commissioner chose wards 14 and 40 as pilot zones for the application of SanTool. The use of SanTool for the work on Faecal Sludge Management is initiated by Warangal Municipal Corporation in partnership with ASCI.
- CSTEP signed an MOU with Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok to finalise suitable and appropriate technologies for the Project Nirmal in Dhenkanal and Angul Cities of Odisha State.

## **Governance**

CSTEP has recently started research in the area of governance, which emerges as a distinct vertical, to primarily aid transparency, efficiency, accountability and participation through knowledge based research and technology. CSTEP believes that technology can play an anchoring role in strengthening the pillars of governance.

## **Areas of inquiry**

- Issues related to urban land acquisition for public infrastructure projects.
- Allocation and auctioning of natural resources.
- Issues related to skilling and training of India's workforce.
- Options for affordable housing in urban areas.

## **Security Studies**

CSTEP is actively involved in the development of models and simulation tools to analyse issues affecting national security including disaster management and cyber-security. Using emerging technology such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Agent Based Models (ABMs) and Gaming Engines with powerful computational and visualisation platforms, the team involved to create artefacts and tools, and develop exercises and policies recommendations to enable effective and efficient handling of problems in this area.

## **Ongoing Projects**

Developing a Platform for an Emergency Management System:

- Help refine procedures for institutional arrangements and asset management.

This platform, termed the Living Lab, can be the central location for the Emergency Management System where all major decisions are made.

## **Analysis of Large Scale Emergency Incidents**

CSTEP is developing tools to assist decision makers in simulating and assessing the extent of damage and identifying the vulnerable areas for large-scale incidents.

## **New Materials**

CSTEP is involved in integrating quantum mechanical simulations with data mining and the experimental validation of new materials. The overall aim is to develop substitutes that are more efficient and affordable for clean energy applications such as batteries and hence it focusses on:

- Batteries for transportation.
- Integration of renewable energy with grids.
- Strategic applications.
- Alternatives to rare earth and energy-critical elements are being addressed using the same methodology.

## **Ongoing Projects**

- *New Approach to Design and Development of Advanced Battery Materials.*

CSTEP's battery research aims at predicting new battery materials utilising multi-scale (atomistic–nano, meso and macro) material modelling and data mining methods with possible application in alternate clean technology areas.

- *Development of Energy Storage Technology and Electric Vehicles in Karnataka.*

As a member of the Hybrid Electrical Vehicles Programme task force of the Government of Karnataka, CSTEP actively advises on several issues.

## **Completed Project: Report**

- Roadmap for Rare Earths and Energy Critical Elements for India

## **Outreach: Policy Impact**

- CSTEP appointed member of a Steering Committee for Study the availability of Rare Earths and Energy Critical Elements. The final report of findings was released in 2013 by Ministry of Mines, Government of India to serve as a base document for future government policies.

## *Climate Studies*

CSTEP through various projects is engaged in climate modelling, mitigation, and adaptation as part of its Climate Studies initiative. The research includes exploration of options for India's low carbon energy growth as well as adaptation strategies. In recent work, CSTEP undertook the evaluation of green growth strategies for India using Karnataka as an example. CSTEP is also examining technology policy options for climate resilient cities with Karnataka as a focus.

### **Ongoing Projects**

- Establishing a Consortium for Peri-urban Research.

### **Completed Projects: Reports**

- Climate Change Vulnerability and Adaptation in South Asia.
- Low Carbon Strategies for Inclusive Growth.
- Green-Growth, Low-Carbon and Climate Change-Resilient.
- Development for Karnataka.

### **Outreach: Policy Impact**

- Initiated a project on Green-Growth, Low-Carbon and Climate Change-Resilient Development for Karnataka and released a report in 2014 by Bangalore Climate Change Initiative Karnataka (BCCI-K) to identify high priority areas from the State Action Plan on Climate Change and create a green economy strategy for Government of Karnataka. This is India's first state-level green growth strategy.

### **Policy Engagement and Outreach**

A dedicated team works towards bringing visibility to CSTEP and in the process also help build a brand name for the organisation. The team interfaces with the researchers to learn and discuss how to unpack information for the right audience at the right time. Infographics plays an important part of almost all the communication materials at CSTEP. Creating brochures, newsletters, reports, policy briefs etc., developing logos and icons, using tables, images are well thought of and supported by a graphic designer. In addition to this, the team also organises different types of outreach activities to ensure that information is shared on social media platforms, media and a regularly updated company website.

## The Grand Design of Stephen Hawking and Cosmology of the Upanishads

S P Rai\*

### 1

Stephen Hawking was born in 1942 on the anniversary of Galileo's death. He holds Sir Isaac Newton's chair as Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge University and is widely regarded as one of the most brilliant theoretical physicists since Einstein.

Suffering as he does from a motor neuron disease, it is a miracle of Nature that he has survived well beyond the most optimistic medical prediction. He visited India some time ago and is a familiar figure to the Indian intellectual. He has copiously written popular books, covering some most difficult concepts in modern physics. Meant for popular readership, I would strongly suggest every student of physics to go through them for clarity of concepts, which he is otherwise denied through the text books.

His first book, *A Brief History of Time*, was well received. He has since followed it up with similar books, one of them, *The Grand Design*, being an improvement upon the earlier. Going through this book I came across some provocative statements, non-scientific in nature, touching subjects like philosophy, concept of God and Man. It is this which prompted me to write this paper, aware as I am of my limitations in the face of Hawking's stature.

I reproduce a few lines from his introductory chapter:

"We each exist for but a short time, and in that time explore but a small part of the whole universe. But humans are a curious species. We wonder, we seek answers. Living in this vast world that is by turn

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\* S.P. Rai, Indian Postal Service (Retd.) is a post-graduates in Physics and is a keen student of Indian history and culture.

kind and cruel, and gazing at immense heavens above, people have always asked a multitude of questions; How can we understand the world in which we find ourselves? How does the Universe behave? What is the nature of reality? Where did all this come from? Did the Universe need a creator? Most of us do not spend most of our time worrying about these questions, but almost all of us worry about them some of the time.

Traditionally, these are questions for philosophy, but philosophy is dead. Philosophy has not kept up with modern developments in science, particularly physics. Scientists have become the bearers of torch of discovery in our quest of knowledge.....”

A careful analysis of the questions framed above would suggest that they are fundamentally flawed in so far as they are incomplete. I have underlined some critical words. “Gazing at immense heavens above” is only one half; the other half is looking within. There is a world inside of man as vast and complex as the one without. As to the next question, Did the Universe need a creator? Hawking’s answer is emphatically in the negative. He has denied a Creator God. But is that the only concept of God? His next statement, “philosophy is dead.” What philosophy? There are concepts of knowledge other than that experimentally gathered. So the knowledge of which he says science is the torch bearer is only one half; the other half is intuitively apprehended, which he has left out.

This paper is proposed to be presented in three parts. In part 1, these questions will be taken up. In part 2, cosmology as given in the Grand Design will be briefly summarized. In part 3, cosmology of Upanishads will be presented. A word of caution! Cosmology of Grand Design is largely experimental and partly speculative, gathered through sense experience. But that of Upanishad is intuitively apprehended by saints and seers, cutting across faiths, transcending time and space. Also there are two categories of knowledge – Para (Higher) and Apara (lower) as propounded by Upanishads. Even the lower knowledge is knowledge and not error or ignorance. This will be dealt with in part 3 in greater detail. No judgement is proposed to be pronounced. It is left to our discerning readers to take a view.

## 2

The word philosophy is derived from the Greek root –philosofe, which means love of wisdom. Traditionally the wise men, the thinking

individuals of the Society were known as philosophers. In its infancy science was inseparable from philosophy. Today, each branch of knowledge has multiplicity of sub-disciplines one impinging on the other making the boundaries blurred.

Specifically, philosophy means and includes five fields of study: logic, esthetics, ethics, politics and metaphysics. To borrow Will Durant’s summarization – Logic is the ideal method in thought, observation and introspection, deduction and induction. Esthetics is the study of ideal form, or beauty; it is the philosophy of art. Ethics is the study of ideal conduct. The highest knowledge, said Socrates, is the knowledge of good and evil, the knowledge of the wisdom of life. Politics is the study of ideal social organization; it is not, as is commonly understood, the art of capturing and keeping office. Metaphysics, the hard core of philosophy, is the study of ultimate reality; the real and final nature of matter (ontology), of mind (philosophical psychology), and last but not the least interrelation of ‘mind’ and ‘matter,’ in the processes of perception and knowledge (epistemology), Will Durant strikes a word of caution; These are the part of philosophy; but so dismembered, it loses its beauty and joy. Leonardo summed it up: the noblest pleasure, the joy of understanding.

Philosophy has been variously defined by some other thinkers also:

“Philosophy is the interpretation of knowledge through the synthesis of all sciences” – Durant Drake

“Philosophy is the survey of all sciences with the special object of their harmony and of their completion. It brings to this task not only the evidence of the separate sciences but also its own special appeal to concrete experience” – A. N. Whitehead.

“The object of philosophy is to take over the results of the various sciences, to add to them the various religious and ethical experiences of mankind, and then to reflect upon the whole”- C. D. Broad.

“Philosophy is the comprehensive sum total of all true knowledge. The sciences do not exist outside and by the side of it, they are part of it” – Paulson.

“Philosophy takes all knowledge for its province” – Bacon

“Philosophy or true knowledge, is the synthesis of Self and not – Self” – Bhagvadgita.

To borrow a phrase from Dr. Radhakrishnan, howsoever, high you rise the horizon is always above you. Howsoever, high the sciences rise, the horizon of philosophy is always above them.

How then has the great scientist erred in ringing the death knell of philosophy. I was trying to find a clue for this drastic judgement. I

could find it while going through the penultimate para of his 'conclusion' in the *Brief History of Time*. He writes:

"Up to now, most scientists have been too occupied with the development of new theories that describe 'what' the Universe is to ask the question 'why.' On the other hand the people whose business is to ask 'why' the philosophers, have not been able to keep up with the advance of scientific theories..... Philosophers reduced the scope of their inquiry so much that Wittgenstein, the most famous philosopher of this century said, "The sole remaining task for philosophy is the analysis of language." What a come down from Aristotle to Kant!"

What is Wittgenstein's contribution to thought to qualify him to be called the most famous philosopher of the century?

Ludwig Wittgenstein, an Austrian, lived for the greater part of his life at Cambridge University, where he first studied under Bertrand Russel and later taught, leaving England only long enough to fight for Germans against the British in World War I. He wrote only two major books, *Tractatus Logico – Philosophicus*, published in his life time, the other, *Philosophical Investigations*, published posthumously. It was essentially 'Analytic Philosophy' dealing with language.

Let me briefly mention A. N. Whitehead, who was a contemporary of Wittgenstein. He too was a student of Bertrand Russel, taught at Cambridge and later at Harvard. According to him, the world is composed of material objects – which he called "actual entities." There is a "nexus" between the actual entities. The world then is an "extensive continuum" having "extensive connections" i.e. overlappings. Actual entities perish sooner or later, that is to say, they disintegrate into their component parts. But their qualities and relations do not. Whitehead recognized this permanence by calling them "external objects." Actual entities are composed of sets of external objects together with the date and place of their assemblage. The realm of external objects and the realm of actual entities are both aspects of God's nature. The external object are called collectively the "primordial" nature of God and the actual entities are called the "consequent" nature of God.

This reminds me of the "Para" and "A para" Prakriti of the Supreme in the Bhagwadgita. I may revert to this when we take up the Cosmology of Upanishads. I wanted to bring out that Stephen Hawking chose the one that fitted into his own predilections ignoring the other, who tried hard to reconcile philosophy with the scientific findings.

There is another factor worthy of our notice – that is the great divide in Western Thought which began with Plato and Aristotle. Plato

learnt at the feet of the Great Master Socrates. He used to say: "I thank God that I was born Greek and not barbarian, freeman and not slave, man and not woman, but above all, that I was born in the age of Socrates." He remained faithful to the Mater till the end and left Athens, when he found the atmosphere incongenial for freedom of thought after Socrates was put to death, only to return after a lapse of more than a decade and founded the Academy. Aristotle was his favourite pupil, though a Macedonian and not an Athenian. Aristotle later developed what Will Durant calls "Oedipus Complex" against his spiritual father and began to hint that wisdom would not die with Plato. This provoked Plato to speak of him as a foal that kicks his mother after draining her dry.

This separation was not only physical but it brought about a total change in the perspective from ideas and ideals to logic and other sciences. His contribution to thought is immense but a permanent schism between ideas and ideals to materialism was the consequence. The entire Western thought was dominated by materialists till the German idealists led by Emanuel Kant revived idealism. Even today the course of philosophy at Cambridge is dominated by Aristotle and his logic. A detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this paper but, suffice it to say that Stephen Hawking's view of philosophy is in consonance with materialists.

Interestingly, there is a similar division among the scientists also- Positivists and Intuitionists, the former place reliance on experimentation only and the latter on intuition to be verified by experimentation. Einstein, the tallest of them all, is the greatest example of the intuitionists. A Jew in his mid twenties, unable to find a job in Germany at the peak of anti-Jewish sentiment, took up the job of a petty clerk in a patent office in Switzerland. He conceived the General Theory of Relativity with pencil and paper alone. It shook the World of Science so radically that nothing was the same again. Nearer home, the mathematical prodigy Ramanujan's Criptic Theory, worked out without any modern computing aids, was confirmed true by Sauder Zwegers in 2002 to be correct (TO1 Dec 30, 2012 page 22). Stephen Hawking is a positivist, though most of his theories are intuitive and still speculative in nature, including the Grand Design.

I conclude this debate of science and philosophy with some pithy analysis by Will Durant. Philosophy is the front trench in the siege of truth; Science is the captured territory. Science is analytical description, philosophy is synthetic interpretation. To observe processes and construct

means is science; to criticize and coordinate ends is philosophy. Science, without philosophy, facts without perspective and valuation, cannot save us from havoc and despair. Science gives us knowledge, but only philosophy can give us wisdom.

The fundamental difference between science and philosophy is one between means and ends. The aim of philosophy is not to settle a colony on moon but to bring the kingdom of God on earth. The aim of philosophy is not to conquer the Aliens and subjugate them but to conquer the self and rein in the wild senses. The aim of philosophy is permanently inscribed on the gates of Delphi – “Gnothi Seuton” man knows thy self. Philosophy believes in the evolution of man from his animal ancestry to godhood. Man is not a fallen angel but an evolved animal. That there have been men like Buddha, Socrates and Jesus shows that it is not only probable but possible. Philosophy as eternal wisdom will survive all odds and be a guide to ethical living.

### 3

The next question is – “Did the Universe need a creator God? And his answer is an emphatic ‘no’. God as a creator is a very limited concept of Him. In the six systems of Indian philosophy, we have Sankhya, which is generally accepted with minor modifications, by most systems as their metaphysical sub-stratum. The entire creation is conceived through the inter-active union of Purusha (Self) and Prakriti (Not self). Purusha is inactive consciousness and Prakriti unconscious activity. God is not a factor in the whole chain. Buddhism and Jainism also have elaborate theories of creation without God as a factor, though their founders themselves have the status of God. Bhagvadgita has beautifully synthesized the various concepts in verse IX.10. It states: under my guidance, nature (prakriti), gives birth to all things, moving and unmoving and by this means, O Arjuna, the world revolves. There is a beautiful imaginary in verse IX.6. It states: As the mighty air, moving everywhere, ever abides in the etheric space (akasa), know thou that in the same manner all existence abides in me. Illustrative examples are given from experience of daily life. Verse VII-7 beautifully portrays: There is nothing whatever that is higher than I, O Arjuna. All that is here is strung on me as rows of gems are by the string.

Scientists are searching for God – particle. I consider this pure scientific arrogance. God cannot be a particle. He is a Pure Principle. Asian Age, New Delhi, 19<sup>th</sup> December, 2012 reports that the Large Hadron Collider, at CERN has found 2 Higgs bosons of mass 123.5

GeV and 126.6 GeV. So now we have two Gods – particle! Don’t know how many will they discover in future? God is Existence (Sat) , Consciousness (Chit) and Bliss (Anand). He embodies in Him, Truth (satyam), Goodness (shivam) and beauty (sundaram). Human Society will be reduced to animals in a jungle without these principles. He is the Principle for which Socrates happily drank the Hemlock. He is the Principle for which Christ mounted the Cross. As Kant in his Critique of Practical Reason argues that, if there is none, we will have to create one because we need Him. Without Him societies will collapse. He is the largest Single Force, holding humanity together and not the forces of Gravity, Electromagnetism, or weak and strong nuclear forces. With profound respect for that faith, the world of Islam without Allah will burst forth into a Big Bang or enter a Black hole as a Big Crunch. It would be naïve if science attempts to dislodge faiths. Faith is far bigger than belief and has a huge social purpose.

### 4

Now the final point: Man is nothing but a collection of fundamental particles. How can collection of fundamental particles discover fundamental particles? I quote the following passage from Blaise Pascal: “In space the Universe engulfs me and reduces me to a pin-point; through thought, I understand the Universe. Man is consciousness, apart from the body. This will be dealt with at greater length when we take up the Cosmology of Upanishads. I leave this question open at this stage for part 3.

## II. The Grand Design

It is noted that in his representation of Laws of Science, Stephen Hawking has time and again denied any hand of God in their operation. I suppose this is because of the Church opposing all that was not in keeping with Biblical theories of creation and the extent of threat and suffering scientists like Galileo were subjected to. Post Newton and Darwin there was some relenting, but the opposition continued.

### (i) Nature’s Laws

Ignoring that part I take up the existing theories as explained in the Grand Design and the future projection of a possible theory of all theories. In modern science, Stephen Hawking argues, laws of nature

are usually phrased in mathematics. They can be either exact or approximate, but they must have been observed to hold without exception if not universally, then at least under a stipulated set of conditions. For example, we now know that Newton's laws must be modified if objects are moving at velocities near the speed of light. Yet we still consider Newton's laws to be laws because they hold at least to a very good approximation, for the conditions of everyday world, in which the speeds we encounter are far below the speed of light.

If nature is governed by laws, he formulates three questions:

1. What is the origin of the laws?
2. Are there any exceptions to the laws i.e. miracles?
3. Is there only one set of possible laws?

The first two questions have been variously addressed by believers including Kepler, Galileo, Descartes and Newton by defining God as the embodiment of all laws of nature. They also believed miracles are possible. Even Newton believed in a miracle of a sort.

It is Laplace (1749 – 1827) who is usually credited with first clearly postulating scientific determinism: given the state of the universe at one time, a complete set of laws fully determines both the future and the past. They would exclude the possibility of miracles or an active role for God. The scientific determinism that Laplace formulated is the modern scientists answer to question two. It is, in fact, the basis of all modern science, a principle that is important throughout the presentation in the Grand Design. He has quoted Laplace reply: "Sire, I have not needed that hypothesis" when Napoleon is said to have asked how God fit into this picture.

### ***(ii) Man a Biological Machine***

Stephen Hawking further argues that scientific determinism not only governs physical processes but also human behaviour; Descartes, who was an advocate of 'free will,' asserted that human mind was something different from the physical world and did not follow its laws. In his view, man consists of two ingredients, a body and a soul. Stephen Hawking totally denies the soul and asserts: It is hard to imagine how free will can operate if our behaviour is determined by physical laws, so it seems that we are no more than "biological machines" and that free will is just an illusion. This is a highly controversial assertion, not only opposed to Upanisadic view but a widely held view by those having spiritual experiences world over. He however makes a small

concession. He says, while conceding that human behaviour is indeed determined by the laws of nature, it also seems reasonable to conclude that the outcome is determined in such a complicated way and with so many variables as to make it impossible in practice to predict.

To tide over the un-predictability of human behaviour, Stephen Hawking suggests adoption of what he calls "effective theory." In physics, an effective theory is a framework created to model certain observed phenomena without describing in detail all of the underlying processes. For example, we cannot solve exactly the equations governing the gravitational interactions of every atom in a person's body with every atom in the earth. But for all practical purposes the gravitational pull can be linked to the person's total mass. Similarly, chemistry provides adequate explanation of how atoms and molecules behave without accounting for details. In the case of human behaviour, he feels, psychology provides effective theory for the will and behaviour. He considers economics also an effective theory. He, however, conceded that effective theory is only moderately successful in predicting behaviour because, as we all know, decisions are often not rational or are often based on a defective analysis of the consequences of the choice. In nutshell, he is prepared to concede everything except 'free will!'

He has posed a question: If we have free will, wherein the evolutionally tree did it develop? My counter question is: Has the development of evolutionary tree for humans stopped? Is it equal or even in all humans? Day-to-day experience points to the contrary. It ranges from saintly-godly to beastly-ghostly. Men ready to blow themselves up so that other fellow beings die! I quote a few lines from Sir Julian Huxley:

It is only through possessing a mind that, he ( man) has become the dominant portion of this planet and the agent responsible for its future evolution; and it will be only by the right use of that mind that he will be able to exercise that responsibility rightly. He could all too readily be a failure in that job; he will succeed only if he faces it consciously and if he uses all his mental resources of knowledge and reason, of imagination, sensitivity and moral effort. (The Evolution of Life: Its origin History, and Future Vol.1-p-252). The obvious conclusion is that man is more than biological machines, capable of guiding his own evolution, which is a continuing process. As pointed out elsewhere man's ultimate destiny is Godhood, which he must strive to realize; there is a divine spark in him, which he must ignite.

### *(iii) Concept of Reality*

Before presenting his Grand Design, Stephen Hawking, raises the fundamental issue of what “reality” is? Normally there should have been no need to define ‘reality’ if the basis is Laplace Determinism, as he has stated earlier. Laplace had asserted that things do and must happen in a ‘deterministic’ and ‘certain’ way according to the law of ‘cause and effect.’ This deterministic principle was expressed by Laplace in his off-quoted words as in the following passage:

“We ought then to regard the present state of the Universe as an effect of its antecedent state and the cause of the effect that is to follow. An intelligence, knowing at any given instance of time all forces acting in nature, as well as the momentary position of all things of which the Universe consists, would be able to comprehend the motions of the largest bodies of the world and those of smallest atoms in one single formula, provided, it were sufficiently powerful to subject all data to analysis: to it nothing would be uncertain, both future and past would be present before its eyes.”

If that be so, there is no need for Stephen Hawking to raise the issue of reality which according to the above principle could be simply defined as that which is scientifically determined is real and the rest un-real. But the future developments in sub-atomic and particle physics enunciated by Heisenberg in his epoch-making Uncertainty Principle knocked the two old pillars of classical physics: (i) Causality and (ii) the objective description of reality. It postulates that if we try to determine precisely the momentum or the velocity of the electrons, we will know almost nothing about its position and vice-versa. Heisenberg thought of using gamma rays because of their shortest wavelength in a super-microscope of extraordinary high power. He put the result in the following equation:

“ $QX \cdot Pe = h$ ”, where Q is the uncertainty about velocity and P is the uncertainty about its position and ‘h’ is planks constant ( $6.63 \times 10^{-27}$  erg.sec). This led to a new branch of knowledge called Quantum Physics.

It is because of this principle that Stephen Hawking has to re-define and enunciate his principle of reality which he names “model – dependent-realism.” He cites the example of goldfish in a curved bowl. The fish will have a distorted view of reality but that is the real view as far as the fish is concerned. He poses the question: might not we ourselves also be inside some big goldfish bowl and have our vision distorted by an enormous lens? He traces the historic development of pictures of reality beginning with Ptolemy (c85-c165). In this model

the earth stood still at the centre and the planets and the stars moved around it in complicated orbits involving epicycles, like wheels on wheels. It was not until 1543 that Copernicus in his book on the Revolution of Celestial Sphere put forward an alternative model called heliocentric model. Galileo supported this model, leading to his trial for heresy in 1633, famously muttering under his breath “Eppur si muove,” “But still it moves.” Stephen Hawking feels that one can use either picture as a model, for our observations of heavens can be explained by assuming either the sun or the earth to be at rest. He further states that despite its role in philosophical debates over the nature of our universe, the real advantage of the Copernicus System is simply the equations of motion are much simpler in the frame of reference in which the sun is at rest.

He gives another example viz. that which occurs in a scientific fiction film The Matrix, in which the human race is unknowingly living in a simulated virtual reality created by intelligent computers. If the beings in the simulated world could not gaze into the universe from the outside, there would be no reason for them to doubt their own picture of reality – a modern version of the idea that we are all figments of someone else’s dream!

From these examples he concludes that: there is no picture-or theory-independent concept of reality. He, therefore, proposes to adopt the view in the presentation of The Grand Design what he calls: model-dependent concept of realism, the idea that a physical theory or world picture is a model (generally of mathematical nature) and a set of rules that connect the elements of the model to observation. Looks like that his so-called scientific model is nothing but maya of science! Reality a mere projection of a mathematical model! I pose here a counter question: is reality in the above scenario model-dependant or observer dependent?

### *(iv) The Uncertainty Principle*

It would be useful to briefly recapitulate the consequences of uncertainty principle. The twin principles of causality and objective description of reality no longer rules the roost. Some scientists, who include Einstein, opposed it. Einstein’s opposition was based on his firm faith that ‘laws of nature are the same in all frames of reference.’ He famously asserted, “God does not play dice.” He said there must be some hidden variable. However, until the time of Einstein’s death no such hidden variable nullifying the uncertainty principle was found. In 1961 Nobel Physicist Winger proposed that it is the “consciousness of the scientist which is

itself the hidden variable.” He asserts that it is impossible to give a description of quantum mechanical processes without explicit reference to consciousness.” The “objective reality” became “omnijective” and the group subscribing to these principles was derisively called “atomystics.”

During the earth shaking epoch of physics, scientists, including Einstein were often asked questions regarding the nature of God and consciousness. In one such interview Max Plank, when asked whether consciousness can be explained in terms of matter and its laws, replied: “consciousness, I regard, as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing postulates consciousness.”

Stephen Hawking is stubbornly opposed to these concepts. He is reported to have said: “if you look though Eastern mysticism you can find things that look suggestive of modern physics or cosmology. I don’t think they have any significance.” Though he rejected the validity of all subjective experience and wanted to avoid any idea of God in science, he is reported to have said: “It is difficult to discuss the beginning of the universe without mentioning the concepts of God. My work on the origin of universe is on the underline between science and religion but I try to stay on the scientific side of the border. It is quite possible that God acts in ways that cannot be described by scientific laws.”

### ***(v) Universe is Comprehensible***

Einstein is reported to have said: “The most incomprehensible thing about the universe as that it is comprehensible.” Stephen Hawking interprets it to mean that the universe is comprehensible because it is governed by scientific laws; that is to say that its behaviour can be modelled.

The known forces of nature, which guide us to know how our universe behaves, can be divided into four classes:

1. Gravity: This is the weakest of the four, but it is a long range force and acts on everything in the universe as an attraction. This means that for large bodies, the gravitational forces all add up, and can dominate over all other forces.

2. Electromagnetism: This also is long range and is much stronger than gravity, but it acts only on particles with an electric charge, being repulsive between charges of the same sign and attractive between

charges of opposite sign. As a consequence the charges between large bodies cancel each other out but at the molecular stage they dominate. These are the forces, which dominate the fields of chemistry and biology.

3. Weak nuclear force: This causes radio activity and plays a vital role in the formation of elements in stars and early universe. This plays no role in our everyday life.

4. Strong nuclear force: This holds together the protons and neutrons inside the nucleus of an atom. They also hold together protons and neutrons themselves composed as they are of still tinier particles called quarks. This is the energy source of the sun and provides us the nuclear power.

### ***(vi) Gravity Modified by the Theory of Relativity***

Laws of Gravity were governed by Newton’s Laws of gravitational attraction and motion till overthrown by Einstein’s general theory of relativity. Measurement of motion is not possible without a stationary frame of reference. The absoluteness of space provided this in Newtonian mechanics. According to Newton’s Laws of motion, objects such as cannon balls and planets move in straight lines unless acted upon by a force, such as gravity. But gravity in Einstein’s theory is not a force like other forces; rather, it is a consequence of the fact that mass distorts space-time, creating curvature. In Einstein’s theory objects move on geodesics, which are the nearest things to straight lines in curved space. Lines are geodesics on flat planes, and great circles are geodesics on the surface of the earth. In the absence of matter, the geodesics in four dimensional space time, correspond to lines in three dimensional space. But when matter is present, distorting space-time, the paths of the bodies in the corresponding three dimensional space curve in a manner that in Newtonian theory was explained by the attraction of gravity. When space time is not flat, objects’ path appear to be bent, giving the impression that a force is acting on them.

### ***(vii) Maxwell’s Equations – Electricity and Magnetism United as One***

The current ideas about electricity and magnetism were developed over a period of about hundred years. Faradays accidental discovery that an electric current deflects a magnetic needle was a landmark; he argued that if that be so a magnetic field should be able to produce electric current. This was subsequently found to be experimentally correct,

leading to the embryonic concept of force fields. Then, over a period of years in 1860s, James Clerk Maxwell developed Faraday's thinking into mathematical equations that explained the intimate relation between electricity and magnetism. Maxwell thus unified electricity and magnetism into one force. Moreover, he showed that electromagnetic field could propagate through space as a wave. To his astonishment the speed of electromagnetic wave was equal to the speed of light, leading to the discovery that light itself is an electromagnetic wave.

### ***(viii) Modified Concept of Gravity, Ether as Non-existent and Speed of Light a Constant in all Frames of Reference***

In the previous para we have discussed how the Newtonian concept of gravity was modified by Einstein's theory of Relativity. Maxwell's equations pertaining to electromagnetic field also suffered drastic modification due to relativity. The speed parameter in Maxwell's equations had to be relative either to earth or to previously un-detected medium permeating all space called luminiferous ether or simply ether the question arose: if light waves travel through ether, like the sound waves travelling through air, the speed should vary relative to observers motion through ether. A sophisticated experiment conducted by Michelson Morley showed that it was not so. Einstein dispensed with the concept of ether, proved that the speed of light is the same in all frames of reference. It is fixed,  $3 \times 10^5$  km per sec or  $1.86 \times 10^5$  miles per sec. He also proved that this was the highest possible speed. He intuitively predicted inter convertibility of mass and energy leading to the famous equation  $E=mc^2$ . Relativity coupled with uncertainty principle lead to the birth of a new branch of knowledge called quantum physics, as briefly alluded earlier.

### ***(ix) Impact of Quantum Physics***

According to quantum physics, no matter how much information we obtain, or how powerful our computing abilities, the outcomes of physical processes cannot be predicted with certainty because they are not "determined with certainty." Instead, given the initial state of a system, nature determines its state through a process that is fundamentally uncertain. It leads conceptually to a new form of determinism which may be stated: given the state of a system at sometime, the laws of nature determine the "probabilities" of various

futures and pasts, rather than determining the future and past with certainty. Contrast it with (Laplace's) determinism previously discussed.

The principles of quantum physics were developed in the first few decades of the twentieth century after Newtonian theory was found to be inadequate for the description of nature on the atomic and sub-atomic levels. Classical theories such as Newton's are built upon a framework reflecting every day experience in which material objects have an individual existence, can be located at definite locations, follow definite paths, and so on. Quantum physics provides a framework for understanding how nature operates on atomic and sub-atomic scales where movements and locations are governed by uncertainty principle.

The famous bucky-balls experiment gave a startling revelation: if individual particles interfere with themselves, then the wave nature of light is the property not just of a beam or of large collection of photons but of the individual particles. A new word "wavicle" was coined to reconcile the wave-cum-particle nature of electrons or photons. A view was also put forth that electrons are nonexistent and in fact only a sort of probability wave.

All this gives a confusing picture. Einstein's belief that the laws of nature should be uniformly applicable to all frames of reference appears to remain indefinitely un-fulfilled. Stephen Hawking has attempted to provide M-theory as a probable candidate for the Theory of Everything (TOE). What is it all about and what does it predict as the probable shape of universe? We propose to examine this in the succeeding paras.

### ***(x) Challenge to Find out the Quantum Version of all Laws***

With the birth of quantum physics, a new challenge arose viz. to find out the quantum version of all the laws of nature. The first force for which a quantum version was created was electromagnetism, called quantum electrodynamics, or QED for short. According to classical theories, forces are transmitted by field. But in QED, fields are pictured as made of various elementary particles called bosons, which are force carrying particles that fly back and forth between matter particles, transmitting the forces. The matter particles are called fermions. Electrons and Quarks are examples of fermions. The photon, or particle of light, is an example of boson. It is the boson that transmits the electromagnetic force. What happens is that a matter particle, such as electron, emits a boson or force particle, and recoils from it, much as cannons recoil after firing. The force particles then collide with another

matter particle and is absorbed changing the motion of that particle. According to QED, all interactions between charged particles – particles that feel the electromagnetic force are described in terms of change of photons. Feynman depicted this in terms of diagrams, which were painted on his van also, which is still preserved.

After uniting weak and electromagnetic forces, scientists in 1970s looked for a way to bring the strong force into the theory. A number of grand unified theories or GUTs were proposed that could unify the strong forces with the weak force and electromagnetism but none of them proved successful. In 1976 a possible solution to the problems faced was suggested in the concept of what is called super symmetry or super gravity. The theory implied that force particles and matter particles, such as quark are really just two facets of the same thing. Practically, speaking that means that each matter particle, such as a quark, ought to have a partner particle that is a force particle, and each force particle, such as the photon, ought to have a matter particle as a partner. But actually no such partner particles have been observed. Various calculations that physicists have performed indicate that the partner particle ought to be a thousand times as massive as a proton. No such particle has been seen in any experiment, not even in Large Hadron Collider in Geneva. Another theory called String Theory was also put forth. This presumes that particles are not points but patterns of vibrations that have length but no height or width – like infinitely thin pieces of string. These theories are consistent only if space-time has ten dimensions instead of four. These are curved into a space of very small size. String theorists are now convinced, different string theories and super gravity are just different approximations to a more fundamental theory, each valid in different situations.

### **(xi) M – Theory as a Possible Candidate for TOE**

The more fundamental theory, as mentioned earlier, is called M-theory. Stephen Hawking says: No one seems to know what “M” stands for, but it may be “master,” “miracle” or “mystery.” It seems to be all the three. Whether M-theory exists as a single formulation or only as a network, we do know some of its properties. First, M-theory has eleven space-time dimensions, not ten. M-theory can contain not just vibrating strings but also point particles, two dimensional membranes, three dimensional blobs, and other objects that are more difficult to picture and occupy even more dimensions of space, up to nine. The objects are called p-branes (where p-runs from zero to nine).

The laws of M-theory, therefore, allow for different universes with different apparent laws, depending on how the internal space is curled. It allows for  $10^{500}$  (ten raised to the power five hundred) different universes, each with its own laws. Utter confusion! This leaves the great theoretical physicist gasping: Where does that lead us? If M-theory allows for  $10^{500}$  sets of apparent laws, how did we end up in this universe, with the laws that are apparent to us? And, what about those other possible worlds?

What then is his cosmological picture of the universe in his “Grand Design?” Let us see. He argues: there could be two approaches: 1. Bottom up approach based on the assumption that there is a single history of the universe, with a well defined starting point, and the present state is an evolution from that beginning. 2. Top-down approach in which one traces the histories of the universe from present state to the beginning. He prefers to adopt the second approach because it is in consonance with the picture as obtained with the application of quantum mechanics and Feynman’s equations to the macro level, as at the micro level i.e. sub-atomic particles and their behaviour.

### **(xii) The Universe has a Beginning**

The first actual scientific evidence that the universe had a beginning came in 1920s. Earlier, most scientists believed that the universe had always existed and that it was static. Edwin Hubble made a scientific experiment with a 100 inch telescope on Mount Wilson in California to observe the movement of galaxies. An analysis of the spectrum of light they emit showed that nearly all galaxies are moving away from us. In 1929 he published a law relating to the rate of recession vis-à-vis their distance from us. He concluded that the farther away they are, the faster they are moving. If that is true, then the universe must have been smaller in the past. In fact if we extrapolate this to the distant past, all the matter and energy in the universe would have been concentrated in a very tiny region of un-imaginable density and temperature. If we go back far enough there would be a time when it all began the event we now call the “big bang.” The concept of expansion is somewhat subtle and not as ordinarily understood. Arthur Eddington, a Cambridge University astronomer, likened the Universe as the surface of an expanding balloon, and all the galaxies as points. This picture illustrates why far galaxies recede more quickly than nearby ones: It is important to realize that expansion of space does not affect the size of the material

objects such as galaxies stars, atoms or other objects held together by some sort of farce.

A Russian Physicist Alexander Friedman worked out some equations on theoretical grounds modifying Einstein's Equations. In this model the universe begins with zero size and expands until gravitational traction slows it down and eventually causes it to collapse in upon itself. In another model thrown by the same set of equations the universe continues to expand forever, though it slows down a bit but never reaches zero. The first direct observation supporting the idea came in 1965 with the discovery of cosmic microwave background radiation or CMBR for short. This was believed to be the radiation left over from the very hot and dense early universe that would have existed after the big bang.

Astronomers have also found another finger print supporting the big bang picture in the helium abundance. During the period the entire universe would have acted as a nuclear fusion reactor leaving behind mainly hydrogen but also helium with traces of lithium. Both CMBR and helium abundance are strongly supportive of the big bang picture.

### *(xiii) Concept of Time*

An equally tricky issue is the beginning of time. Normally time in our daily experience begins and ends. But Einstein's general theory of relatively unified time with space as one entity "space-time." Time however, still was different and either had a beginning and an end or else went on forever. In the early universe when the universe was small enough to be governed both by general relativity and quantum theory – there were effectively four dimensions of space and none of time. That means that when we speak of the beginning of the universe, we are skirting the subtle issue that as we look backwards towards the very early universe, time as we know it does not exist! I may strike a note of caution here. The concept of time Stephen Hawking gives in contrary to the Upanishadic concept of eternity. We will critically examine this in the next section.

### *(xiv) The Conclusion*

To sum up M-theory which is the candidate for theory of everything, TOE, is only a conglomerate of possibilities permitting almost all that could be probable. A critic could call it hardly a theory as, in common parlances a theory ought to throw a definite result rather than an infinite number of possibilities.

We may, now conclude by summing up a few things. Relativity, Quantum mechanics, Particle physics and Astrophysics have opened up a universe where our ordinary sense perception fails to work, and where only subtle mathematics, based on pure intuition, can work. There are a few things which are wonder of wonders e.g. speed of light as the only constant in the relative and changing universe. At the micro level Planck's discovery of Planck's constant ( $6.62 \times 10^{-34} \text{JS}$ ) (ten raised to the power – 34) itself is a wonder. It is on Planck's constant that Heisenberg's epoch making uncertainty principle is based. Astrophysics and Relativity have exposed a universe much vaster than we can imagine. It is now calculated at 15 billion years old. Its radius, according to Einstein's field equations is 35 billion light years. The universe is filled with billions of galaxies spread over a platform of super space of infinite dimensions. The universe created after the big-bang of a super dense supernova, probably a black hole, is disintegrating since 15 billion years like splinters from a primeval explosion. Before the big bang there was matter and antimatter symmetry i.e. equal amount of matter and anti-matter. The last remnant of the great heat of big bang lingers today as  $2.7^0$  (degree) kelvin radiation all over the empty space.

Stephen Hawking calls our solar system as an apparent miracle with "lucky" properties without which sophisticated life forms might never have evolved. Newton's laws predict planetary orbits to be either circles or ellipses. The degree to which the ellipse varies from a circle is its eccentricity, a number between zero and one. The earth's orbit has an eccentricity of about 2 per cent, which means it is almost circular. As it turns out, that is a stroke of very good fortune. Seasonal weather patterns are determined mainly by the tilt of the earth's axis of rotation relative to the plane of its orbit around the sun. During the winter in the Northern Hemisphere the North pole is tilted away from the sun. The fact that the earth is closer to the sun at that time – only 91.5 million miles away, as opposed to around 94.5 million miles away from the sun in early July has a negligible effect on the temperature compared with the effect of its tilt. But on planets with a orbital eccentricity, the varying distance from the sun plays a much larger role. The temperature on Mercury, with 20 per cent eccentricity is over 200 degrees Fahrenheit warmer at the closest approach, perihelion, than when it is farthest from the sun, aphelion. If the eccentricity of the earth were near one, our oceans would boil. We, are equally lucky in relationship to our sun's mass to our distance from it. If our sun were 20 per cent less or more massive, the earth would be colder than the present day, Mars or

hotter than present day Venus. This leads to what is called Anthropic principle, the idea that we can draw conclusion about the apparent laws of physics based on the fact that we exist.

At the micro level it appears to be a bigger marvel how the primordial Universe of hydrogen, helium and a bit of lithium evolved into a Universe harbouring at least one world with intelligent life form. One of the first to recognize that this might involve a good measure of serendipity was Fred Hoyle, in 1950s. His calculations show that a change of as little as 0.5 per cent in the strength of the strong nuclear force, or 4 per cent in the electric force, would destroy nearly all carbon or all oxygen in every star, and hence the possibility of life.

From the foregoing it appears that there is a certain design or purpose which Stephen Hawking calls serendipity in our part of the universe i.e. solar system to sustain life form. No doubt solar worship is common in all older religion. The sun is the most visible and potent manifestation of a Primordial Principle of creation. When asked whether he believed in God, Einstein replied in the affirmative stating that it is a "Cosmic feeling." Those who don't have it cannot understand. Dr Radhakrishnan says: "So long, as we are on empirical plane, we can't understand the ultimate 'why'." For a person of religious consciousness that Primordial Principle is God, and the visible world as his play, at the transcendental level it is Brahm and his Maya. For Stephen Hawking it is serendipity of the laws of nature and science. I feel it is equally true in either way or all the ways put together.

**To be continued in the next issue**

## Can India build a Synthesis between her Traditional Civilization And The Global High Tech Society?

**Come Carpentier de Gourdon**

According to the present western-inspired model for socio-economic and political organization, whether liberal or social-democratic, traditional cultures are only tolerated as aesthetic props, as long as they don't contradict the limits or restrict the scope of secular modernity. As mainstream economists like to say: "there is no alternative" (TINA)...to the path blazed by the West.

Under such guidelines, the ruling institutions of the world are heavily involved in social engineering, without usually taking into account natural laws and psychological conditions in diverse cultures, as their main imperative is to raise the material productivity and increase the consumption patterns of individuals in the name of improving their well-being. Yet, such social engineering is found to upset and often destroy the natural balance of many systems, which like all biological ones are "far from equilibrium" and because of their non-linearity, which implies multiple unpredictable feedback loops, are not reducible to mathematical logic. Many examples of disrupted equilibriums being observed nowadays include the dynamics between the sexes, family stability, birth and death ratio, sustainability of the ecosystem, renewability of resources and natural immunity of living organisms now exposed to new, antibiotic resistant viruses and bacteria born out of decades of widespread and excessive use of those very antibiotics and other drugs.

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The current globalised socio-economic system is based on a rationalistic and materialistic understanding of life and reality derived from the systems and philosophies best illustrated in the works of Francis Bacon, Rene Descartes and Isaac Newton during the European “Age of Enlightenment” and subsequently applied by Auguste Comte and other theoreticians of positivism, structuralism and functionalism. Marxism, classical Liberalism and Neo-Liberalism are all inspired in one way or another by that basic world view which sees human beings as rational animals who follow the rules of the Games Theory in order to secure their interests and maximize their benefits in a mechanistic universe, presumably created for their enjoyment.

The guiding principle that we can instead learn from recent conclusions of the physical sciences should instead be: we cannot direct a living system, we can only disturb it. We are an inseparable part and parcel of the ecosystem to which we owe our existence and which we must therefore also respect and protect. Therefore, socio-political and economic policies must be designed to orient a society towards an environmentally sustainable breakthrough towards a higher state of well-being and knowledge and not lead it to breakdown by using newly acquired technological power irresponsibly. This is called Eco-design.

Development can only be sound if it is a form of learning generating positive feedbacks in a qualitative sense. Its driver can only have an ethical source code but the ethics of modern civilization is anthropocentric (*ahamkar*-based) and thus inadequate. It should be bio-centric (*jiva*-based) and holistic (*akhandā*) as the Jain tradition postulates.

More ancient civilizations, generally regarded as being guided by religion, are described in the contemporary context as inadequate or counter-productive. In India, the “Hindu system” is seen as consisting mostly of “polytheism and caste injustice” which must be relinquished for progress and development to occur, broadly following the paradigm of “protestant ethics” (Weber).

The West still tries to convert “inferior cultures” either to Christianity or to the “rationalist” materialistic civilization it has developed when not to both at the same time. Although western societies often profess sympathy for Buddhism they envision it as a way of “liberating” Indians from the trammels of the Hindu tradition because they generally view Buddhism in their own culture’s image as a rational, atheistic, self-centered egalitarian psychology and praxis of well-being that can better fit in with the dominant globalized paradigm created by

the Euro-American West. This image of a “protestant” or hedonistic agnostic Buddhism is, however, erroneous because it isolates a part of the Dharma preached by the Buddha from its historical-civilisational context and its mythology, theology and soteriology inseparable from the Indic-Hindu context.

As an alternative to the widespread notion of separate and opposite currents of thought and belief co-existing and often conflicting violently in ancient India, the concept of “Hindutva,” insofar as it implies a fundamental unity in diversity of Indic civilization as the expression of a universal awareness, is valuable as it creates a common, non-denominational “dharma” platform for the expression and inter-communication of the many traditions which share the Indian soil and indeed the earth.

Rather than taking the analytical Cartesian view of Hinduism as a late and artificial combination of heterogeneous and contradictory beliefs, we should find the truth in the *Sanatana Dharma* as a cosmic symphony in which many players and instruments, some indigenous and others coming from other lands, participate and draw their own musical themes and variations.

Some ancestrally taught natural processes and mechanisms seminal to Indic culture in particular and to traditional civilizations in general are now being rediscovered as a result of advances in scientific research. A brief list follows:

**Emerging Concepts and Newly or Better Understood Laws that are Consonant with ‘Vedic’ Notions of Cosmic and Social Reality:**

**The Systems View of Life** (Capra and Luisi, 2014): order in Chaos, synergy between laws of entropy and self-organization which is symbolized in the *Trimurti* of generation, perpetuation and destruction for recreation in a possibly infinite cycle of which mankind is a part but not the ruler or end-result.

In this light the physic-mathematical models used in contemporary economic “science” (in fact more of a set of theories intended for advocacy of certain interests) are defective because they oversimplify and misinterpret human behaviour which cannot be modelled mathematically and also treat all other life forms variously as “stock” (enslaved, harnessed and killed for food or production of other goods), “property,” impersonal “wildlife” or “pests.” Consumerism and overpopulations conjugated with that primitive world view leads to

eradication, willful or unintended of many life forms and species and eventually ruins our supporting eco-system.

Similarly, agriculture must be restructured away from the dominant western industrial model which concentrates the land and resources in a few mechanized hands, relies on chemicals and fossil fuels to increase production, seeks to destroy “parasites” and “useless” plants and pollutes both the soil and the water. The potential of such labour-intensive, ecologically nurturing traditional techniques as agroforestry, permaculture and hydroponic food production which are related to traditional forms of Indian agriculture must be fully developed to increase both the quality and quantity of food crops, both for domestic consumption and export, taking advantage of India’s warm and sunny climate and varied geography. The recipes advocated by Kumarappa and some of his western colleagues and followers such as Keiling, Hamaker and others should be studied and implemented as well as possible.

The rediscovered universal pervasiveness and unity of all life, affirmed by the major Indic indigenous religious and spiritual traditions, forces us to regard animals as persons and not as machines or unintelligent, soulless creature. That realization poses a grave moral dilemma to a society based on mass consumption of meat and other animal resources.

Consequently, a sound economic system can only be based on moral philosophy as argued by economists such as Kamran Mofid and Steve Szeghi and on abstract value-free profit-based algorithms which are not even reliable for gambling.

**The Property of Contextuality** involving what is called a “magic state” because of the properties of quantum mechanics which implies that properties of physical phenomena are not observed but created by the act of observation. Likewise the various schools of Vedanta and the Buddha’s *pratitya samutpada* reflect that *maya-samsara* (space-time) is both generating our relative “outer” beings and generated by our senses beginning with our minds. That gives us a notion of our infinite power to modify the material world and ourselves as well as the wisdom (the ecosophy as defined by Raimundo Panikkar) to participate consciously in maintaining the cosmic harmony, the *lokasamgraha*.

In such a world, there may not be “a job” for everyone as understood in modern monetary economics but everyone can find productive and rewarding activity and a dignified place in society not directly tied to one’s material output or level of consumption.

**The Property of Emergence** and stochastic autopoiesis: information and energy are two sides of the same coin and they are indissociable from the processes described under the headings of cognition, mind and consciousness which are now being studied with reference to traditional Indian perceptions and descriptions. The French IT and cybernetics expert Jacques Vallee has highlighted in some of his more recent work the “physics of information,” hitherto neglected because of the focus of physicists on the relativistic and quantic mechanics of matter-energy

**The Properties of Recursion (in Time) and Consilience (in Space)** under the general principle of iteration owing to the nature of consciousness that creates the impression of space and time by “transversally linking associations. Dimensions are culturally created” (Jacques Vallee): *manodrshyam idam lokam*. Thus in physics space-time can be mapped as having a logarithmic structure like our spiral galaxies and fractal sets in general. In contemporary physics it gives rise to the notion of double causality (Guillemant) which is akin to the law of *karma* in its various subsets. It also opens the way for a better understanding of Time as a bi-directional process suspected by many researchers and thus makes “reverse causality” possible (i.e. the past, the future and the present are interactively shaping each other).

**The Property of Non-locality** (with all its implications, including electronically enhanced telepathy and quantum teleportation, through such processes as Warp Drive propulsion and others): the universe is a subsystem of a meta-reality (matrix) of simultaneous, non-temporal information structures (Vallee): *paramatman*.

**‘Cosmic Proportions’ such as Phi** (the Fibonacci series in the west) seminal to the sciences of tectology (Bogdanov) and the general systems theory (Bartalanffy). The physical model based on the atom may be replaced by a geometric model that maps energy flows and structures (Arkani-Hamed) and can help us to build more powerful super-computers and power generators of various types, including the so-called “vacuum over-unity” and “cold fusion” (LENR) power generators.

**The Physics of Information** rooted in neurophenomenology (Varela) as a higher stage of the physics of matter-energy, using light instead of wires in computers **and the Related Processes of Biological Transmutation** which take into account the complex non-linear dynamics of living networks and potentially enable us to create any substance out of the “dynamic void.” A pioneer in that science was the

French biochemist Louis Kervran who was also inspired by oriental philosophies in his research.

**Non-Binary Decimal Computer Language Codes** (possibly based on Panini's grammatical representation of the deep structure of language, as explored by I-SERVE in the SITA (Signal Intelligence Through Appliance) system and using natural intelligence as distinct from Artificial Intelligence which seeks to quantitatively mimic the former. Natural intelligence reduces non-linear data to cognitively linear ones for making them hermeneutically manageable and actionable (*nayavada* of the Jains): "semantic information generates character information and vice-versa" (I-SERVE).

In this regard the research of Vidur Nanda in M3Click (Cognitive Linguistic Intelligence Catalyst) technology, based on the features of natural intelligence for handling Big Data offers a high performance more effective alternative to mathematical models which do not adequately reflect the fundamental structures and processes of the mind as defined by Gregory Bateson in his book *Mind and Nature*. Such investigative programmes aimed at practical applications should be supported and fostered on a priority basis, as they can help India to leapfrog more advanced countries in the general areas of IT, AI, Cybernetics, neuro-biology and neuro-engineering and other related fields.

**The Concept of The Internet of Things Envisioned in the Perspective of the Indrajalala and Dharmakaya**, fundamental in Hindu, Buddhist and Jain cosmologies which defines all things and events as "knots" in an infinite fractal web of relations that is in fact a process to which they owe their matter and form.

**Harnessing Electromagnetism and Gravity for Energy Generation and Propulsion.** Tesla's cosmology and its vedantic connotations. See also the works of TT Brown, T Bearden, Priure, A Twombly, P Tewari etc...and their relevance to the quest for systems of hyperluminal propulsion (warp drive et al.)

Such borderlands of R&D must be explored in one or more specialized publicly funded institutions that can take a long-term view of the results and not be limited by the requirement of rapid profits. Giving this direction to the national drive for inclusive modernization and development would provide a tangible dimension to the ancestral notion of Dharma as *Rita*, the Divine Law. It would harness the considerable energy, creativity and talent that are channelled into religious and spiritual avenues for a path-breaking collaborative,

interdisciplinary venture inviting international cooperation in the service of the country and the world. Being *Jagad Guru* implies leading at the vanguard of knowledge which peaks in wisdom and this is what the interpretation of universal principles, now being rediscovered or confirmed for practical applications, would allow and trigger.

India must (re)form its civilizational semantic structure in order to maintain and renew the shared meaning that held her society together for many centuries through several invasions and reverses. Only thus can she resist the pressure of uniformizing globalization and the resulting alienation from its own roots which is already affecting many Indians. The country may also thereby elude the contrary temptation of isolating itself religiously and geopolitically as a reaction to the destructively flattening effect of westernised modernization. The government can spearhead that social mobilization. The goal is to integrate the biological, cognitive and social dimensions of human development in the words of Luisi and Capra (ibid.) through the dynamic interpretation of Dharma in the politico-economic structure, which western socio-political and economic theories have not been able to do so far.

This new critical theory (on the principles outlined by J Habermas but not based on his Marxian ideological framework) would free India from the western colonial and post-colonial conditioning that shapes her present state.

In that optics, the primary function of education is to teach people a suitable interpretation (hermeneutics) of their natural and social (anthropogenic) environment so as to accordingly shape and positively modify their conduct, thereby improving the social structures and fabric as a whole as Giddens proposed. Various ancient and modern texts, including certain *shastras* and *sutras* should be studied and commented in the contemporary context and such a programme should be sponsored by the HRD Ministry whose very name suggests what its most desirable and significant mission should be.

The proper mission statement and definition of objectives and methods could be worked out by a body made up of like-minded and well informed experts in various disciplines, guided by the vision of the "Science and Non-Duality" group which already exists as an independent thinktank or network. Other sources of inspiration and possible partners could be international THRIVE network, the "Noospheric" scientific movement in Russia inspired by the lifework of Vernadsky and Varela's Mind and Life Institute, co-chaired by HH The Dalai Lama.

The goal of India's new "eco-noospheric," peaceful revolution should be, in the words of Capra and Luisi to bring together spirituality and scientific research "understood as inner growth, associated with the experience of a profound sense of connectedness, of belonging to the universe as a whole...and with respect for a humanitarian and ecological ethics; then there cannot be any dichotomy between spirituality and science, nor between science and a religion that has such spiritual experience as its core" (ibid.).

There lies the reconciliation between the ancient dharma of India inherited from the Rishis, Munis and Acharyas of India and upheld in a simplified form by Mahatma Gandhi and the "scientific temper" promoted by Jawaharlal Nehru.

Will the present government of India consider taking up such an agenda? Time is running out for the world to break out of the current exploitive and self-destructive paradigm.

## Are the Rural Credit Policies of Mainland India Suitable for Assam?

**Tiken Das\***

**Abstract:** Since independence, the government of India has been taking various policies to reach the financially untouched people of rural India. Now the question that comes up is, are these policies successful for reaching the financially untouched people of rural Assam? The present article tries to concentrate on this. The author found the ineffectiveness of various rural credit policies like Branch Expansion Policy, Lead Bank Scheme, Self-Help Group Bank Linkage Programme, Kisan Credit Card Scheme, General Credit Card, No-Frill Accounts, Business Correspondent, and using technology like Biometric Card, Mobile Banking etc. in rural Assam. The paper also raises concern over the new financial inclusion policy "Prime Minister Jan Dhan Yojana, 14" in rural Assam. Furthermore, the author recommended a separate financial inclusion policy for rural Assam which may be different from the mainland India credit policy.

### 1.1 Background

Credit is an important instrument in enabling farmers to acquire command over the use of working capital, fixed capital and consumption goods (Qureshi & Shah, 1992). Nevertheless, since poor people don't have sufficient traditional forms of collateral security such as physical assets, they are often excluded from traditional financial markets. Moreover, the transaction costs of serving poor people are high, relatively to small loans typically demanded by poor people. Indeed, because of information asymmetry, the bank faces both voluntary and involuntary risk and these risks make the acceptance of collateral security

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necessary for the lenders. This is the case that makes them excluded from the credit markets. According to Rural Finance Access Survey (2003), 70 per cent of marginal/landless farmers do not have a bank account; 87 per cent have no access to credit from a formal source. As a result, they are forced to rely on informal finance, mainly from moneylenders who charge exorbitant rates of interest (**Basu and Srivastava, 2005**). The 2002 All India Debt and Investment Survey (AIDIS) revealed that 43 per cent of rural households continue to rely on informal finance, which includes professional moneylenders, agricultural moneylenders, traders, relatives and friends, and others. Thus we can understand the depth of financial exclusion.

The problem is more serious in north-eastern region where a large number of populations are still outside the fold of the formal financial agencies. More than 95 per cent of the households are financially excluded from the formal sources in the north-east region. At a disaggregated level, the situation is much more acute with more than 70 per cent of the districts in Assam having an exclusion which ranges from 96.1 – 98.5 per cent (**Report on the Committee of Financial Inclusion, 2008**). Indeed, there is a fairly vibrant rural financial market operating in the region, across geographies, which is mostly informal in nature (**Sharma, 2011**).

Since independence, the government of India has been initiating various policies like nationalization of banks in 1969 and 1980, establishment of Regional Rural Banks in 1975, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) in 1982, Lead Bank Scheme (1969), formulation of District Credit Plans, Service Area Credit Plans at village level, Service Area Management Information System, innovations like Micro-finance, Rural Infrastructure Development Fund, Kisan Credit Card (1998-99), General Credit Card (2005), no-frill accounts etc. Now the question that comes up is, are these policies successful for reaching the financially untouched people of rural Assam? The present article tries to concentrate on this. The study was basically conducted by using secondary sources. Secondary sources were collected from Statistical Handbook of Assam, Census of India 2011, State Level Bankers Committee Report, Assam, Banking Statistical Returns of RBI, NABARD, AIDIS and NSSO. However, six group discussions were also conducted in three districts namely, BARPETA, Baksa and Nalbari. These districts were given preference in the study because of the fact that literature (**Sharma, 2011 & Das, 2010**) indicates the high concentration of informal microfinance setups besides semiformal financial institutions in these districts.

## 1.2 Appraisal of Credit Policies in Rural Assam

The government of India had undertaken the policy of nationalization of commercial banks in 1969 to expand the rural bank branch network and equalize individual access to banks across Indian States. Consequently, the number of reporting bank offices of all scheduled commercial banks in Assam has increased to 1940 in the year 2013-14. However, if we compare the Average Population Per Branch Office (APPBO) of all scheduled commercial banks in Assam with India as a whole, we found an adverse picture. In Assam, APPBO of all scheduled commercial banks are 17413, while in all-India level it is 10825 as on December, 2013. Similarly, if we look at the picture of Average Rural Population Per Branches (ARPPB) of commercial banks, we noticed the same picture. On March 2009, it is 34071 in Assam, whereas 26281 in India as a whole. This raises a question over the branch expansion policy of the government of India. In the similar way, the Average Per Capita Credit (APCC) and Average Per Capita Deposit (APCD) also indicates shortfall in Assam as compared to the overall India average. The APCC of all scheduled commercial banks, as on December, 2013 is Rs. 9616, whereas in India as a whole it is Rs. 47418. Likewise, APCD of all scheduled commercial banks of Assam as on December, 2013 is Rs. 24852, while the overall India average is Rs. 61667. Thus it would deem that the branch expansion policy has failed to reach the right and needy places, and concentrated only on small portion of people, basically rich farmers and in well-to-do rural areas.

The Lead Bank Scheme was introduced by the RBI in 1969 with the objective of enabling the commercial banks to assume the role of leadership for the development of banking and credit facilities throughout the country on the basis of area approach. Under the scheme the RBI directed all scheduled commercial banks to provide 40 per cent of their total credit to the priority sector in rural areas. Among the aggregate advances in Assam in 2011-12, 55.83 per cent is devoted to priority sector and from these only 19.91 per cent goes to agriculture and allied activities. This also raises concern over distribution of rural credit, whether credits are going to right persons or not? However, we can get a very adverse picture if we look at the situation of target achieved for advancing to priority sectors in the districts of Assam. As on 25.02.2014 in Baksa district, the scheduled commercial banks only fulfill 6.32 per cent of their target. Similarly, in BARPETA district 24.08 per cent and in Nalbari district 27.93 per cent. Thus failure of achieving the target of priority sector lending where majority of rural people are

engaged, indicates the severe financial exclusion in rural areas of Assam, and consequently, may be that most of the credits are actually concentrated among small portion of rich people. Thus one can get the actual picture of Lead Bank Scheme of the government of India in rural areas of Assam, how it has failed to target the grass root level people.

The Self-Help Group Bank Linkage Programme (SHG-BLP) initiated by NABARD during 1991-92 as a pilot project has taken the shape of a movement. The total number of bank linked SHGs in Assam increased to 499183 in 2011-12 from 122304 in 2004-05. Similarly, the amount of credit totalled Rs. 128813 Lakh in 2011-12 from Rs. 17566.7 Lakh in 2004-05. The total number of banks linked, deposit linked and credit linked self-help groups are increasing overtime in Assam, which is not a surprising result because of the fact that it is a natural increase in the numbers of SHGs and the amount of credit and deposit overtime. However, it can be seen that the proportion of Non Performing Assets (NPAs) out of total loan outstanding in Assam is higher than the all-India average in almost all the years from 2007-08 to 2012-13. In 2007-08, in Assam, percentage of NPAs out of total loan outstanding was 11.4 per cent, while in all India level it was 2.1 per cent. Likewise, in 2012-13 in Assam it was 11.34 per cent, whereas in India as a whole it was 8.39 per cent. Moreover, in case of percentage of NPAs out of total loan outstanding under Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) in Assam is more than the all-India position in almost all the years from 2004-05 to 2011-12. In 2007-08, in Assam it was 15.8 per cent, while in India as a whole it was 3.7 per cent, and in 2011-12 in Assam it was 11.19 per cent whereas all-India average was 8.75 per cent. This raises concern over SHG-BLP in Assam. We can get similar picture from Per Capita Loan Disbursed (PCLD) to SHGs and Per Capita Saving (PCS) of SHGs with public sector commercial banks from 2007-08 to 2012-13. The PCLD to SHGs in Assam in 2012-13 was Rs. 76026.72, while in overall India average it was Rs. 181629.2. Likewise, the PCS of SHGs with public sector commercial banks in Assam was Rs. 8069.917, whereas in all-India average as a whole it was Rs. 13570.247 during the same time period. Thus we got a very poor picture of SHG-BLP. It emphasizes the need for reviewing the SHG-BLP in Assam.

The Kisan Credit Card (KCC) is an innovative key product designed and introduced to expand and simplify the credit delivery system of banks by the NABARD. It was introduced in 1998 and revised in

October 2004 to cover term loans for agriculture and allied activities. During the year 2011-12 in Assam, 371474 KCCs were issued and Rs. 1303.29 crore was sanctioned by the banks as against 163063 KCCs were issued and Rs. 504.96 crore was sanctioned by the banks in 2010-11. Thus although numbers of KCCs issued increased in recent time, in rural Assam we get an opposite picture. During the pilot survey we found that KCC cards are going to the rich farmers. Indeed, the rural people need to give bribe for getting KCC's. Interestingly, some rural people who don't have land are also getting KCC's. Apart from that, the author couldn't notice the concept of General Credit Card, no-frill accounts, Business Correspondent, and using technology like biometric card, mobile banking etc. in the respective villages of rural Assam.

Though formal banks failed to provide banking facilities to rural peoples of Assam, but there is a fairly vibrant rural financial market operating in the region, across geographies, which is mostly informal in nature. The 59th round of NSSO clearly reports that almost 80 per cent of the households in Assam were indebted to the informal sector as compared to only 60 per cent in the country as a whole. Thus we can get a vibrant informal financial sector in rural areas of Assam, as **Sharma (2011)** rightly found out the domination of some traditional community based organizations like "Xonchois" in rural areas of Assam.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Independence day speech introduced a new scheme namely – "Prime Minister Jan Dhan Yojana" (PMJDY), where he mentions that every household will have at least a basic bank account with a Repay debit card and an in-built accident insurance cover of Rs 1 lakh as well as an additional Rs 30,000 life insurance cover for those opening bank account before January 26, 2015. Now the question arises whether unlike the earlier policies, will this policy become successful in reaching the financially untouched people of rural Assam? Indeed, to make it a success, banks need to set up a large number of branches in and around financially untouched villages and they have to recruit large number of rural cadre to serve those branches.

### 1.3 The Way Forward

Thus we found an adverse picture of financial inclusion in rural areas of Assam. However, the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance Budget 2014-15 has made quite a few announcements for improvement of credit facilities to rural people. In an effort to provide institutional finance to landless farmers, it has proposed to provide

finance to five Lakh joint farming groups of landless farmers through the NABARD, or fixed a target of Rs 8 Lakh crore for agriculture credit during 2014-15. In addition, Corpus of Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) was raised by an additional Rs 5,000 crore, allocation of Rs. 5,000 crore was provided for the Warehouse Infrastructure Fund. Besides, a Long Term Rural Credit Fund was proposed to be set up for the purpose of providing refinance support to Cooperative Banks and Regional Rural Banks with an initial corpus of Rs 5,000 crore, amount of Rs 50,000 crore allocated for Short Term Cooperative Rural Credit and Rs 200 crore was provided for “NABARD’s Producers Development and Upliftment Corpus” for building 2,000 producers organizations over the next two years. Now the question arises, will the benefits of all these measures reach the untouched people of rural Assam? Are these policies suitable for rural Assam’s banking structure? Do rural Assam’s people need separate policy for financial inclusion? Since, our all previous credit policies almost failed to improve the financial scenario of rural Assam, therefore, we should think of an innovative approach, which may be different from mainland India policy for reaching the needy people. By tradition, since we get a dominant role of some traditional community based financial organizations in rural areas of Assam, we should develop our banking structure by incorporating these institutions. We should establish different banking structure for different areas of Assam because of the multi-diversity character of the State. These are the some contentious issues which need to be answered. In addition, we should incorporate the personalised relation between the borrower and the lender, market fragmentation and inter-linkage nature of rural credit market which is found to be more prominent in rural Assam, in our credit policies. But, how we incorporate these issues in our credit policies? It is a big question and needs extensive study in the field.

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## Forthcoming Issues of the Dialogue

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