**Contents**

Perception of the Past and the Purānas .......................... 1  
Sibesh Bhattacharya

Consciousness Theories in the Six Āstikadarśanas ................. 21  
T. S. Rukmani

Delimitation of the Arhat Ideal in Early Buddhism ................. 33  
S. N. Dube

In Search of the Present ............................................. 47  
F. G. Asenjo

Beyond Binaries: The Category of Body and Ontological Tripartition ............. 65  
Saugata Bhaduri

Re-charting Indianness - A Study of Four Short Stories ............. 87  
Usha Bande

The Con(Textual) Contours of Lajja: A(Re)Visioning of the Social Praxis in the Indian Subcontinent ............. 97  
Nishamani Kar

Congress in Bihar Politics: From Dominance to Marginality ......... 107  
Anil K. Ojha

Electoral Politics in Arunachal Pradesh: A Study of Voting Behaviour ............. 117  
Nani Bath

The Globalisation of Food: A Cultural Assimilation ............. 129  
V. P. Raghavan

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS .................................................. 141
Perception of the Past and the Purāṇas

SIBESH BHATTACHARYA

This is an attempt to explore and understand the contours of the conceptual universe of the authors of the Purāṇas regarding what they perceived as history. Till quite recently, it was accepted as a truisim that the ancient Indians had no sense of, or interest in, history. Various explanations of this ‘deficiency’ were also offered; the most persistent being the one that Indian outlook in its philosophical and psychological makeup was anti-historical. The point has been stretched in different directions with added nuances. Winternitz and Keith may be cited as examples:

What Indians lacked was not, however, taste for history, but taste for criticism and for historical truth. And the reason of this is that the writers of history have as a rule been either court-poets or religious-minded persons. For the former the main task has been to sing in praise of their princes, to record their and their ancestors’ heroic deeds and probably also invent such ones as never took place. The saints have, above all, been all along busy either with the praise of their sect or in preaching sermons to the community and to cause it to increase . . . . The Indian historian . . . will not penetrate deep into the connected topics, set down the historical data critically and explain them psychologically; on the contrary he will entertain and instruct as a poet (kavi), above all teach morals, when he will explain with examples the influences of moral behaviour on the destiny of man.¹

Similarly, Keith observed, ‘in the whole of the great Sanskrit literature there is not one writer who can be seriously regarded as a critical historian.’ According to him the probable causes of ‘this phenomenon’ were the lack of ‘any sentiment of nationalism’, a belief in the doctrine of Karma, the absence of ‘the scientific attitude of mind which seeks to find natural causes for the events of nature’ and the ‘tendency of the Indian mind to prefer the general to the particular’.²

The Orientalist formulations that ancient Indians lacked a sense of history are not accepted any longer. Already in the late fifties we
find A.K. Warder reacting angrily against these. He wrote:

It used to be said that ancient India produced little or no historical literature. It was even suggested that the ancient Indians lacked the "historical sense" possessed by other peoples: that they were too religious to be interested in such worldly matters. We need not trouble ourselves overmuch with the analysis of such superficial misconceptions.\(^5\)

The impatience of Warder is not wholly unjustified because the proposition not only runs counter to facts but verges on absurdity even from a commonsense standpoint. To say that a people did not have a sense of history amounts to saying that they had no view of the past or an awareness of time. Such an obviously untenable proposition could have been hardly seriously made about early India. Early Indian philosophical systems reflect an acute consciousness of time.\(^4\) Thus the central contention of scholars like Winternitz and Keith seems to have been that the way the discipline of history developed in the West is found practically absent in early Indian literary tradition. Ghoshal and Warder have succeeded in demonstrating that even this contention is not fully maintainable.\(^5\)

The proposition may also be approached and evaluated from another perspective. We may try to understand the kind of past events that occupied or engaged the interest of ancient Indians and how they viewed those events and in what manner they related themselves to those events.\(^6\)

A large number of terms denoting past events were in continuous vogue in ancient India right from the Vedic age. It is true that the exact connotations of these terms are debatable and that it is not possible to ascertain how far these terms referred to the actual historical past and to what extent to mythical time. But all the same they do represent certain attitudes to the past. It is important to understand these attitudes for gaining some insight into the ancient Indian "idea of history".

Despite the fact that religion is the basic theme of Vedic literature, it contains references to certain forms of compositions that may be termed as historical. They merit the label of 'historical compositions' in the sense that they represent an attempt to preserve and transmit the memory of what was regarded as 'memorable' or 'significant' in the human past. Songs and verses were composed in praise of worthy deeds. The \textit{Rgveda} states that kings were very fond of eulogies as a form of literary composition.\(^7\) It appears that there was a class of versifiers and singers similar to the latter-day bards: \textit{gāthīn}, \textit{viṇāgāthīn}, \textit{viṇāgāpārīn}, etc., who specialized in the composition
and narration of this kind of eulogies. In the genealogies of Vedic seers—the vaṁśa and gotra-pravara lists—the beginnings of another tradition of historical writings can be glimpsed.

Various terms connoting 'historical' compositions like gāthā, nārāśaṁśi, itihāsa, puraṇa, ākhyāna, etc., are found referred to in Vedic literature. These compositions, it appears, became a part of the ritualistic tradition that dominated the Vedic literature. The recounting of glorious and heroic stories of the past was a part of the great Vedic sacrifices like the āsavaṁdeha. These were also narrated in the course of some domestic rituals. Similarly, the vaṁśa and gotra-pravara lists harked back to divine ancestors and mythical sages. The dominance of religion and ethics over history in varying degrees remained a permanent feature of the Indian view of history and the two were never fully de-linked. That itihāsa was called a Veda is a testimony of its very strong ethico-religious association.

However, there are certain indications that these historical compositions originated independently of the ritual tradition in a secular milieu and later got incorporated into the ritual system. The term nārāśaṁśi signified 'verse celebrating men.' The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa distinguished gāthā from ṛk by stating that while the former is merely human, the latter is divine. Although gāthā and nārāśaṁśi had often been distinguished, they had as often been represented as kindred terms. A passage in the Atharvaveda enumerated the following kinds of works: ṛk, sāman, yajus, brāhmaṇa, itihāsa, puraṇa, gāthā, nārāśaṁśi. The passage seems to refer to two different classes of compositions, the one religious (ṛk, sāman, yajus, and brāhmaṇa) and the other secular or historical (itihāsa, puraṇa, gāthā, nārāśaṁśi). The Kāthaka Śaṁhitā describes both gāthā and nārāśaṁśi as false (anṛtam). There is a statement in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, which appears interesting in this context: “Twofold, verily, is this, there is no third, viz. truth and untruth. And verily, the gods are the truth and man is the untruth.” There is little doubt that gāthā and nārāśaṁśi was not religio-spiritual but human and secular.

It may perhaps be surmised that right from the early Vedic age there was a floating tradition of historical compositions, originally non-Vedic and non-ritualistic, which celebrated the heroic and noble deeds of men. These were mainly eulogistic songs and their main patrons were kings who were fond of such compositions. In consequence of the growth of big Vedic sacrifices historical narratives acquired a place in the ritual system because the kings who were the
clients of these elaborate Vedic sacrifices were also the patrons of historical narratives. This paved the way for the inclusion of secular heroic narratives as parts of the religious sacrificial lore. Nārāśaṁśa, from which nārāśaṁśi was derived, was associated with rites devoted to deceased ancestors or past generations thus formed an important component of what was regarded as historical narratives. The recitation of the lore of the past became an important element in the performance of rājasūya, aśvamedha, etc.23 There were experts, ākhyānavid, purānavid, etc., in the narration of historical lore, whose services were utilized in the rituals.24 In fact, Yāska hints at the fact that there was a school of aitihāsikas who specialized in interpreting Vedic hymns through itiḥāsa, in contrast to the nairuktas who relied on etymology for Vedic interpretation.25

Gāthā, nārāśaṁśī, ākhyāṇa, etc. seem to have been predominantly legends celebrating heroic and noble deeds. In them the line separating the human and superhuman was not important. Thus there were indrāgathās and yajñagathās, and the ākhyāṇa of the union of a divine nymph with a mortal hero and its inevitable tragic consequences.26 These narratives in Vedic literature were considered as having a mystical aspect which facilitated their way into the ritual system.

Among the various history-denoting terms current in early India, the central space was occupied by the twin terms: itiḥāsa and purāṇa, often joined together in a compound. It is not easy to define these terms precisely and to bring out the precise relationship between the two. Both the terms apparently were very old; itiḥāsa clearly and unambiguously had made its appearance already in the Atharvaveda.27 Then in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads, it is a frequently occurring term and usually in association with purāṇa.28 In the Vedic period itiḥāsa and purāṇa, jointly or separately, had already acquired the status of a Veda.29 It is clear that itiḥāsa and purāṇa had a very intimate relationship; their subject matter must have covered a great deal of common ground and must have often overlapped. The points of distinction between the two—the use and continuation of both the terms over a very long period suggest that they were not regarded as synonymous to begin with—got blurred and confused. This confusion is strikingly illustrated by the contradictory positions taken by such famous authorities as Medhātithi and Śaṅkarācārya on the one hand and by Śaṅkara on the other. Whereas Śaṅkarācārya and Medhātithi describe the
Perception of the Past and the Purāṇas

creation account (srṣṭiprakriyā) as constituting purāṇa and the Urvaśi-Purūravā legend as itiḥāsa, Sāyaṇa regards the creation account as itiḥāsa and the Urvaśi-Purūravā legend as purāṇa. In the arthavāda (i.e., explanatory) portions of the Brāhmaṇas, however, the ākhyānas of Urvaśi-Purūravā and that of Śunahṣeṇa have been given as examples of itiḥāsa and the creation account as that of purāṇa.

But our main concern here is to understand the way in which the past was viewed in early India and thus, the elucidation of the elusive boundary between itiḥāsa and purāṇa is not central to our objective. In the Arthaśāstra of Kautilya there is a passage that gives us a fairly accurate and broad idea about the perspective in which itiḥāsa was viewed. The Arthaśāstra perspective is also interesting because it is the product of an age in which Puranic literature was receiving its standardized form. The passage occurs in connection with the training programme designed for the prince in equipping him for rulership. The passage seems extremely significant and merits detailed review.

The Arthaśāstra passage occurs in the chapter on the training of the prince. The training programme had a clearly structured character. The training started at a very early age immediately after the tonsure ceremony (c āu la) was performed. At this primary stage the prince was first introduced to the alphabet and numbers as a foundation for the more rigorous intellectual training to follow. After the sacred thread ceremony (upanayana) began the study of the three Vedas, the philosophical systems and the management of economic and political affairs. After gaining a thorough grounding in these when the prince attained manhood he was asked to cultivate constantly the association of wise and knowledgeable people 'for the sake of improving his training'. It is in this context that Kautilya prescribed that the prince should spend the second half of everyday in 'listening to itiḥāsa'. Then comes the passage describing the scope and constituents of itiḥāsa: "The purāṇas, ātivṛtta, ākhyāyikā, udāharaṇa, dharmaśāstra and arthaśāstra—these constitute itiḥāsa".

Despite sharing certain common elements, the purāṇa, dharmaśāstra and arthaśāstra represented distinct classes of literature. And each has a distinctive personality. It may be surmised that the other three, i.e., ātivṛttā, ākhyāyikā and udāharaṇa, too must have had their separate existences and distinctive characters. Again, purāṇa, ātivṛtta, ākhyāyikā and udāharaṇa appear to have shared a common family trait; all of them seem to have been narratives of old
events. They differed from one another not so much in character as in scope and range. Udāharaṇa, as the term suggests, probably signified a collection of separate events exemplifying success and failures. Kautilya apparently gives us a few samples of udāharaṇa in the chapter entitled, ‘Casting out the Group of Six Enemies’ dealing with the necessity of controlling the evil impulses and passions of the prince. 36 The udāharaṇa narratives did not seem to have any temporal order or sequential unity. The incidents in an ākhyāyikā had internal relatedness and unity. Ākhyāyikā was a variant of, or derivation form, ākhyāna. This form of narrative appears to have been popular since the Vedic period for their dramatic quality and for their morals and was given a place in the ritual system. Generally, ākhyāna dealt with a particular story. Sometimes, however, a number of ākhyānas were strung together as in the pārīplavani cycle.38 Even the whole of the Mahābhārata was sometimes called an ākhyāna although it contained within itself numerous independent ākhyānas.40 Ākhyāyikā later appeared to have acquired a standardized narrative form pertaining to the lives and activities of rulers. Anyway, this seems clear that ākhyāna-ākhyāyikā had for its theme a single thread: an ‘event’ or a string of events constituting a ‘story’ with a beginning, middle and end. Itivṛtta and its synonym purāvṛtta perhaps signified events covering a longer period and range than ākhyāyikā; the suffix vṛtta suggests a sequential order. Itivṛtta also seems to hint at a circular or cyclical concept of history. Itivṛtta or the variant purāivṛtta perhaps meant a cycle of events.

It is not possible to trace the evolution of the term purāṇa with precision. That it referred to accounts of the ‘olden past’ is obvious; the very expression purāṇa is a sufficient indication. Whether Puranic traditions antedated the Vedas, whether they were anti-Vedic and anti-Brahmanic are questions that await final answers.41 It seems clear that by the time the Arthaśāstra was composed and the Puranic literature was formalized, the scope of the theme of the purāṇas had acquired a truly vast sweep. It included the entire process of creation and evolution and accommodated within this frame a number of secondary beginnings, the disintegration of the world, the succession of the yugas and the accounts of all significant beings and events. It is not only the sumptuousness of the marvelous elements in these accounts, but also the vastness of the scope that disagrees with our contemporary sensibilities. The point that we are trying to make here is that udāharaṇa, ākhyāyikā, itivṛtta and purāṇa represented a series of graded perspectives in history; the scope of ākhyāyikā...
was wider than udāharana, itivṛtta was wider than ākhyāyikā, and purāṇa was wider than itivṛtta. According to Kauṭilya, itihāsa included all of the above and even more; it also included dharmaśāstra and arthaśāstra. The inclusion of dharmaśāstra and arthaśāstra appears particularly interesting as it seems to underline the social perspective of history. Events ought to be situated against the dharma and artha perspectives.

Itihāsa in the light of the Arthaśāstra passage appears to have been considered as a wholesome study of the affairs of this world preparing man to comprehensively meet his social obligations. Its study seemed to have an especial value for a ruler. It ranked in importance next to the three Vedas and āṅgika. These two were geared predominantly to the realization respectively of mokṣa, and economics and politics. Itihāsa, in contrast, put equal emphasis on all of the caturvargas.

The Arthaśāstra passage would also allow us to form an idea about the way an ‘event’ in history was conceived. Any narrative was not necessarily historical; to acquire the status of history a narrative had to be instructive. It is the ability to teach and instruct that invests an event with significance. The notion of significance from this point of view is essentially ethical because only that has the ability to instruct which can contribute to well-being and happiness and because the attainment of well-being hinges on the ability to make the distinction between right and wrong. It is noteworthy that although Kauṭilya’s Arthaśāstra was a text that predominantly dealt with the secular matter of success of royal policies; the way history (itihāsa) was perceived by Kauṭilya had a strong ethical underpinning. This is clear from the narration of events of excesses committed by the rulers of yore that led them to their doom. Kauṭilya narrated those events as part of instructions to the prince as illustrations of conduct to be abjured.

Normally an event was also regarded as one with a fulsome story. It usually contained one or more of ākhyāna/ākhyāyikā characterized by different parts that succeeded in sequential order. V.S. Pathak has described and illustrated these parts in his work. These parts were: beginning (prārambha), the efforts (prayatna), the hope of achieving the objective (prāptyāśā), the certainly of achievement (niyatāśā) and the achievement (phalāgama). A book of itihāsa could consist of a single ākhyāna/ākhyāyikā like Harṣacarita. It could also include many ākhyānas sewn around a central theme as in the Mahābhārata
that was also called Bhāratākhyāna though it contained a large number of other independent ākhyāṇas. 49

The Arthaśāstra passage also sheds some light on the relationship between itiḥāsa and purāṇa. In Kautilya’s view, we have noted above, purāṇa was a part of itiḥāsa, and the two were thus intimately related. The scope of itiḥāsa was perhaps wider than purāṇa, for purāṇa was only one of the various elements or forms of itiḥāsa. Although the Arthaśāstra passage has been interpreted as indicating that purāṇa was only one among the several elements which together constituted itiḥāsa, the passage is also liable to interpretation to the effect that itiḥāsa had many forms or variants as specified by Kautilya and that these variants separately or together merited the name of itiḥāsa. We have also noted above that the relation between itiḥāsa and purāṇa and the scope and content of these were matter on which famous authorities disagreed and took opposite positions. Thus it is not possible to decide whether the passage in the Arthaśāstra represented merely Kautilya’s personal view of itiḥāsa or it reflected the commonly perceived perception of his time. That Kautilya included dharmashastra and arthaśāstra in itiḥāsa may help us to understand why the Epics and purāṇas included didactic material and dharmashastra and arthaśāstra matters in such abundance.

It is worth trying to understand why the expression purāṇa stood both for ancient lore as well as for a specific class of literature. Winternitz has surmised that a mass of ancient lore and traditions existed as a floating body which served as a common storehouse from which various forms of literary expressions like gāthā, nārāśāmśi, vaṁśa, ākhyāna, etc., drew their material. 50 The Puranic form seems to have developed by absorbing many of these forms within itself. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa, for example, tells us that there were three constituent elements of the purāṇas: gāthā, ākhyāna and supplementary ākhyāna. 51 They were collated within the framework of the vaṁśas to produce the vaṁśanucharita to provide the purāṇas with some of its so-called distinctive marks—the pāṇchalakṣaṇas. 52 The development of purāṇas through adaptation, absorption and integration of earlier mass of historical traditions and compositions represented a process of growth of historical narratives. It represented growth even in physical terms in the sense that the purāṇas came to constitute a collection of an enormous corpus much larger in scope and volume than the earlier forms of historical narratives. However, the growth of the purāṇas reflected more than mere physical expansion; it also marked the broadening of the scope and subject
Perception of the Past and the Purāṇas

matter of history as new elements and aspects were added by puṇnakāras. Purāṇas thus also represented a widening of the perspective in the conceptual framework of history. Since purāṇas became the repository of diverse aspects of the past, the expression purāṇa came to signify both the old lore as well as the class of literature preserving the old lore.

From another perspective also, purāṇas may be considered as marking a continuous and dynamic growth of the historical narrative. Through the process of upabṛhūṣha new material covering immediate past was continuously added to the existing corpus updating the narrative and keeping it attuned to contemporary requirements and tastes. This saved the narrative from getting stale, investing it with a certain evergreen quality. This, moreover, also underlined the relevance of past to the present by relating the past to the contemporary.

It is thus abundantly clear that the custom of documenting the past in India had a very long and old history; the earliest recorded traces of this custom are available in Vedic literature. There existed a definite tradition of preserving the memory of memorable and significant events of past. This tradition was generally called itihāsa-purāṇa tradition. There were bards and minstrels whose business was to compose, narrate and preserve glorious and heroic deeds. It seems that a class of specialists arose who developed expertise in preserving records of past; these experts constituted the 'school of historians' for the society. We have noted above that originally they did not form an integral part of the Vedic ritualistic tradition. The matter that was of primary concern to the preservers of heroic lore, the school of the aitihāsika-purāṇika, was mainly secular and was disapproved of by the orthodoxy on that count. Even if one does not wholeheartedly agree with Pargiter's view that purāṇa-itihiśa tradition represented Kṣatriya tradition in contrast to the Vedic Brahmanical—the two might not have been as antithetical as Pargiter contends—there is no denying the fact that they originally belonged to two distinct traditions.

A large number of terms for these specialists are found. Some of the more frequently used terms in Pauranic literature were purāṇavīd, purāṇavida, purāṇajīva, purāṇika, vanśavīd, vanśacintaka, vanśa-purāṇajīva, anuvanśapurāṇajīva, etc. It is not possible to locate and demarcate specific areas of specialization associated with these terms that were often used loosely without adhering to a fixed meaning. From the purāṇas it appears that these specialists were also known
by a common and broader term, the sūta. The duties and functions of a sūta can be sketched with certain amount of definiteness. "The sūtas special duty as perceived by goodmen of old was to preserve the genealogies of gods, rīsis and most glorious kings, and the traditions of great men, which are displayed by those who declare sacred lore in the itihāsa and purānas." It was thus sūta’s function to preserve the memories of ‘glorious kings’, ‘the traditions of great men’, ‘the eulogies’ of famous people and ‘the genealogies.’ The sūta was a paurāṇika, a specialist in ancient lore, a varṇākṣāla, an expert in genealogies.

The paurāṇika sūtas were different from the varna samkara sūtas mentioned in the smṛti literature. Kautilya makes a clear distinction between the two. The paurāṇika sūtas appear to have been learned people and apparently they belonged to the cultivated class. Pathak has drawn the attention of scholars to the fact that the Brahmāngirasa families had shown special aptitude and interest in the preservation and propagation of historical lore. The close relation between the Brahmāngirasa and itihāsa-purāṇa has been recorded especially in the Chandogya Upanişad. At one place it states that the Atharvaveda bears the same relation to itihāsa-purāṇa as the Rigveda to rik, Sāmaveda to sāman, Yajurveda to yajus. At another place we find a clearer statement: "Atharvāṅgirasas are the bees, the itihāsapurāṇa is the flower." At yet another place it states that the hymns of the Atharvāṅgirasas brood over the itihāsapurāṇa. It is possible that the paurāṇika sūtas belonged to the Brahmāngirasa extraction and the antiquity of the itihāsapurāṇa was not very much shorter than that of the Vedas.

An account of the compilation of purāṇa is found in the Vāyu, Brahmāṇḍa and Viṣṇu Purāṇa. There the compilation is attributed to Veda Vyāsa. After accomplishing the stupendous task of systematization and division of the Vedas into four, the Rk, Sāman, Yajus and Atharva and entrusting them to four of his disciples—Pāla, Vaiśampāyana, Jaimini and Sumantu, respectively, Maharṣi Krṣṇa Dvaipāyana compiled a purāṇa samhitā and entrusted it together with itihāsa to his fifth disciple sūta Lomaharṣana or Romaharṣana. After that he composed the Bhāratākhyānam.

This account of the systematization of the Vedas, the compilation of the purāṇa and the composition of the Mahābhārata is highly interesting. Even though scholars have treated this account with skepticism generally, no really valid argument can be advanced for completely dismissing off its authenticity. If Vedic literature is silent
about this tradition of Vyāsa's dividing the Veda into four; there is nothing surprising about this omission. Vyāsa had merely organized the Vedas; there is no reason why the texts should contain any reference to him, he only arranged the Vedic texts without, presumably, any kind of interference with the texts themselves which were already in existence before his own time and which were traditionally regarded as of non-human (apauruśeya) origin. It is also natural that the language, culture and the universe reflected in the Vedas on the one hand and the purāna and the Mahābhārata on the other should be quite distinct because the methods followed by Vyāsa in regard to the Vedas and purāna-Mahābhārata were quite different. In the case of the Vedas, Vyāsa's work was limited merely to arrangement and organization, in the case of the purāna and the Mahābhārata he was not just an organizer but also a composer author. It is interesting further to note that whereas for the Vedas he divided a single text into four divisions, for the purānas he collected a large number of existing traditions and accounts into a single whole. As for the Mahābhārata, Vyāsa is credited with composing it.

That the later history of the development of Vedic Literature and purāna itihāsa should take on different lines was also natural; the reason for the same was inherent in the very nature of the texts. Vedic texts were finished products, they dealt with things 'become', the purāna on the other hand dealt with things 'becoming', there was scope for continuous addition of new material to it as new historical facts kept piling up. When looked at from this point of view, Vyāsa's work with regard to the arrangement of the Vedas proved much more enduring than his compilation of the purāna-saṁhitā; the Veda-saṁhitās as arranged by Vyāsa have remained intact, the purāna-saṁhitā compiled by Vyāsa has got buried under later growth.

The traditional number of the purāṇas is considered eighteen, although the extant numbers of purāṇas greatly exceed this traditional number. These different purāṇas appear to have branched out of the original purāṇasaṁhitā compiled by Vyāsa. This original purāṇa could hardly have condensed all the existing past traditions. There must have been other existing ancient traditions leading to its augmentation and later proliferation into a number of purāṇas. The purāṇas by their very nature easily lent themselves to augmentation and adaptation. According to Pargiter, the later Brahmana editors of the purāṇas—the custody of the purāṇa passed from the hands of professional sūtas into those of sectarian Brāhmaṇa priestly class—
—took full advantage of the situation to introduce a great deal of extraneous matters, particularly religious and didactic, besides the fresh historical material that was accumulating over time and stamp the purāṇas with their sectarian views and attitude. Thus the handiwork of Vyāsa got lost.63 The Brahmanical embellishments led to a change in the nature of the purāṇas by giving the original secular Puranic accounts a religious character and thus narrowing the gulf that divided the theological Vedic traditions and the non-religious Puranic heritage.64

Let us now consider the constituent elements, which had gone into the formation of the purāṇas to get an idea of the kind of the historical material found in them.

The traditional account of the compilation of the original purāna-samhitā by Vyāsa tells us that he had collected ākhyāṇa, upākhyāṇa, gāthā and kalpa-jokti for the same.65 In this connection it may also be noted that traditionally the purāṇa was regarded as a class of literature that contained the following five characteristics (pañc-taksāya): original creation (sarga), dissolution and re-creation (prātsarga), genealogy (vamsa), transition of Manus (manvantara) and accounts of persons mentioned in the genealogies (vamsi-nuca-rit).66 These give us a fair idea about the kinds of materials originally used for the composition of the Puranic literature. Same kinds of materials must have also constituted the basic raw material of the itihāsa. The subject matter of the original purāṇa thus seems to have consisted mainly of traditions about gods, about ancient rishis and kings, about ancient genealogies and biographies.

No great distinction seems to have been made between itihiśa-purāṇa and ākhyāṇa; they were often treated as synonymous:

As collective terms itihiśa and purāṇa are often mentioned as distinct, and yet are sometimes treated as much the same; thus the Vayu calls itself both a purāṇa and an itihiśa, and so also the Brāhmaṇḍa. The Brāhma calls itself a purāṇa and an ākhyāṇa; the Mahābhārata calls itself by all these terms.67

An ākhyāṇa, however, does not seem to constitute just any kind of old tales. It seems to have been a tale of special nature, a tale to illustrate a moral or a lesson. It was generally didactic. It is important to remember that the concept of history in ancient India generally had always been strongly didactic in nature. However, according to Pargiter, the didactic dharma matter which looms very large in the extant purāṇas were added later by the Brahmanas into whose hands the task of preservation of the purāṇas had passed from their original custodians, the sūtas.68 It is significant that dharma does not directly
Perception of the Past and the Purāṇas

figure at all among the five characteristic features of the purāṇas (the pañcalakṣaṇa). Neither does it figure in the list of the materials used by Vyāsa for his compilation of the original purāṇasamhitā. Upākhyāna obviously belonged to the same genre as akhyāna, the difference being perhaps in size and dimension. Gāthā meant a song in praise of noble and heroic deeds. Besides the kalpa-jōktis, thus the heroic traditions, lore and tales of past embodied in akhyāna, upākhyāna, gāthā, etc., constituted the main Puranic material.

Of the original five characteristics of the purāṇa, the pañcalakṣaṇa, (original creation, dissolution and recreation, the manvantaras, ancient genealogies and accounts of persons mentioned in the genealogies) Pargiter writes:

The first three subjects that purāṇa should treat of, are based on imagination, are wholly fanciful, and do not admit of any practical examination, hence it would be a vain pursuit to investigate them...
The fourth and fifth subjects are, however, genealogies and tales of ancient kings, profess to be historical tradition and do admit of chronological scrutiny, hence they are well worth considering.

Not questioning the validity of Pargiter’s observation it may be pointed out that although it is true that the first three subjects are not valuable for empirical history, nevertheless they provide a grand sweep to the concept of history. Such sweeps form one of the chief characteristics of some of the most influential schools of historical interpretations. An obvious example is the Christian idea of history, which encompasses all empirical events within a single all comprehensive framework of the divine plan. Similarly, the Puranic framework of creation and dissolution, within which the vaṁśa and vaṁśānucaṁḍita have their existence, give all empirical events a meaningful perspective and from that point of view these three subjects sarga, pratisarga, manvantara are highly valuable. They provide a synthesist framework and try to look at empirical events from the point of view of totality and not piecemeal.

This grand cosmological scheme that provides the comprehensive framework for empirical events is exemplified in the theory of yugāntara and manvantara (kalpajōkti seems to have denoted the same thing): the transitions of the vast cosmic-time cycles. Yugaṁtara denotes a cycle of four great successive ages (yugas): kṛta, treta, dviapara, kali, charting a course of progressive decline, moral as well as biological. Seventy-one of such four-age periods (kṛta to kali) made up a manvantara.

The Puranic theory of the decline from the pristine golden age of
krta through treta and dvapara to the kali is generally similar to the Buddhist theory of the origin of civil society\(^7\) and it probably points to a common original source from which both the Buddhist as well as the Puranic theories have developed.\(^8\) The general pattern is the same; the decline begins with the beginning of avarice, selfishness, conflict and violence. It is not only a moral degeneration but also physical; even the physical stature of men dwindles.

The Puranic view of progressive decline is found in several works but the most elaborate accounts are found notably in the Vāyu Purāṇa.\(^7\) The Śānti Parvan in the Mahābhārata gives practically the same account.\(^8\) The Śānti Parvan explains how in the krta age there was at first no state, but eventually passion and greed developed among men, consequently Brahmā invented the state and government. The Puranic tradition places the beginning of corruption and division of society not in the krta but after its end in the early treta. According to the Vāyu Purāṇa account after the development of agriculture during the treta which led to the appropriation of property, Brahmā created state and gave Kṣatriyas the right to rule.

A. K. Warder finds in this account an echo of the transition from the food gathering to food producing economy. Warder further feels that the original version of the theory placed the beginning of agriculture and state during the treta. This was later modified by Brahmanical editors in order to place the beginning of kingship in the most perfect age, the krta itself and accommodate a number of kings in that age. On account of their bias against kingless republican societies, the royalist authors, according to Warder, were unable to bear the idea that the most perfect age in human evolution should have been the age when there was no king and no state.\(^9\)

Historical time in the purāṇas was conceived of at two levels. Level one comprised of ‘sarga’ and ‘pratisarga’, the cycle of ‘creation’ and ‘dissolution and re-creation’. Time works havoc with the world making it old, dirty and polluted. It can be regenerated only by calling into existence the beginning of time, the re-creation of the world anew (pratisarga) after the dissolution of the old.\(^10\) The cycle of sarga and pratisarga keeps on recurring weaving the fundamental pattern of history, the succession of a series of remorseless decline from krta to kali to pralaya. Running through these cycles of sarga and pratisarga exists the second level, the time spanning the vāṃśas and vāṃśāṇucarīnas, the genealogies of gods and sages and the accounts of royal dynasties. It is the vāṃśas and vāṃśāṇucarīnas, which provide focal points and centres to the
Perception of the Past and the Purāṇas

drifting sands of time lending the process its meaning and significance. In the overarching theme of drift and decline, the vaṁśa, manvantara and vaṁśānucarita provide some footholds, however, precarious and transitory they may be, in the total scheme. At the second level, periodization is made on the basis of manvantaras (cycles of manus) and vaṁśānucarita (dynastic accounts). The frame here is predominantly political.

History in the purāṇas is also divided into the 'history of the past' and the 'history of future', the kaliyuga being the dividing line. The coupling of the past and future is not a feature typical of the Puranic perception alone. It is also found, for example, in the jātakas where stories are divided into those pertaining to atiavatthu and to paccupannavatthu. The comparison may be extended further. In the early Christian concept, history is divided into two halves, the birth of Christ constituting the dividing line, the history of 'Old dispensation' and the history of 'New dispensation', the first being the preparation for the coming of Christ and the second embodying the consequences of the birth of Christ.

By the time the Puranic literature developed and proliferated, the old Vedic suspicion of and hostility towards historical concerns seem to have gone down substantially. In fact, the prestige and authority of the purāṇas came to rank next only to the Vedas. The purāṇas came to be regarded as complementary and aid to the proper understanding of the Vedas.

The dvija who may know the four Vedas with the angas and upaniṣads, should not really be (regarded) as having attained proficiency, if he should not thoroughly know the purāṇa. He should reinforce the Veda with the itihasa and purāṇa. The Veda is afraid of the little learned man thinking 'he will injure me.'

The heavy theistic embellishments in the Puranic literature might have also contributed to the melting away of the old hostility towards historical compositions.

Judged by modern canons of historical study, the purāṇas are found wanting in cogency and reliability as historical works. However, it should be noted that even even such a skeptical scholar as V. Smith has accepted the value of purāṇas as historical document for certain ruling houses. Pargiter and Morton Smith made praiseworthy endeavour to vindicate Puranic dynastic accounts as genuine history. The purāṇas may be judged to be poor history by modern measure, but they embody a philosophy of history, which may serve as an interesting foil to the modern notion of history.
After all, a philosophy of history in the deepest sense is nothing but a philosophy of life, a vision, a search for the essence of the universe and man's place and destiny in that universe. This quest naturally has to go beyond mere empiricism. The purāṇas were avowedly not history in the modern sense where history is regarded as a product of empiricism, a record of empirical facts. The purāṇas represent a world view manifesting itself through the narration of past events, events that are worth remembering and recording, events where men attained heroic proportions and achieved practically the stature of the divine and thus sublimated the remorseless wheel of time from kṛta to kāli.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

4. Nyāya-Vaiśeṣhika systems can be cited as obvious examples.
6. A noteworthy endeavour in this direction is the work of V.S. Pathak, Ancient Historians of India, Gorakhpur 1984.
7. Rgveda IX. 10.3.
10. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, XIII. 4.2.8-11, 4.3.15; Kātyayana Śrauta Sūtra XX. 2.7-8.
12. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, X. 6.5.9; Brihadāranyaka Upanishad, VI. 3. 14.
13. The word itihāsa was formed from iti ha āsā, this is what it was and etymologically signified puravṛtta. E. Seig, Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, VII. p. 461; itihāsa/itihāsa-purāṇa was called Veda, usually the fifth Veda, Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, XIII. 4.3.12; Chandogya Upanishad, VII 1.2, the Milinda-pañha, ed. V. Trencker London 1928, p. 10 uses the expression itihāsapādana.
15. Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, VII. 18.
16. Vedic Index 1, p. 224 s.v. gāthā notes 3.4.
17. Atharvaveda, XV. 6.3.4.
Perception of the Past and the Purāṇas

19. Śaapatha Brāhmaṇa, 1.1.1.4.
20. V. S. Pathak, op. cit., p. 2
21. Rgveda, IX, 10.3; also see note 7 above.
22. V. S. Pathak, op. cit., pp. 4-5.
23. Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, VII, 18. 10; Śaapatha Brāhmaṇa, XIII, 4.3.2.15.
27. Atharvaveda, XV, 6.4 et seq.
28. Vedic Index I, pp. 76-78.
29. Chāndogya Upanishad, VII 1.2 combines itihiṣa and purāṇa to constitute the fifth Veda. Gopatha Brāhmaṇa, 1.10 speaks both of itihiṣaveda and purāṇaveda, cf., Sāmkhaśayana Srauta Sūtra, XVI, 22.17; Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, XIII, 4.3.1.13.
32. Winteritz, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 519. Date of Kautilya’s Arthasastra continues to be debated. Many scholars accept the tradition that Kautilya was the Chancellor of Chandragupta Maurya.
33. The training programme is detailed in Arthasastra 1.5-7. For the text and translation of the Arthasastra we have used R. P. Kangle, Kauṭiliya Arthasastra, Pt. I & II, Bombay 1969, 1972.
34. Arthasastra, 1.4.13.
36. Arthasastra, 1.6.
37. For ākhyāṇa and ākhyāyikā see V. S. Pathak, op. cit., pp. 6-9, 36-37 and Vedic Index I, pp. 52, 71. Bāna’s Harṣacarita is called ākhyāyikā, see Pathak, pp. 14, 26-29.
38. Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, XIII, 4.3.15.
40. Pathak, op. cit., pp. 26ff, 36-37, 84-85.
41. F. E. Pargiter, Ancient Indian Historical Tradition, Delhi 1972, I, XXV, XXVI.
42. The concept of history in the Arthasastra thus was surprisingly liberal and modern.
43. Arthasastra, 1.5.7-14.
44. The value of learning is not just an academic or intellectual luxury. Learning is of practical value for disciplining character and conduct. “From (continuous) study ensues a trained intellect, from intellect (comes) practical application, (and) from practical application (results) self-
possession; such is the efficacy of sciences", *Arthasastra*, 1.5.16 Kangle Pt. II, p. 11.

45. "Control over the senses, which is motivated by training in the sciences should be secured by giving up lust, anger, greed, pride, arrogance and foolhardiness. Absence of improper indulgence in (the pleasures of) sound, touch, colour, taste and smell by the senses of hearing, touch and sight, the tongue and the sense of smell means control over the senses, or, the practice of (this) science (gives such control). For, the whole of this science means control over senses". *Arthasastra*, 1.6.1-3; Kangle, *op. cit.*, II, p. 12.

46. *Arthasastra*, 1.6.4-12.


53. *Upamāṇaḥ* was the process through which fresh material was added.

See above note 41 above.

54. See above note 41 above.


60. *Chandogya Upanishad*, III. 3.4; III. 4.1-2.


63. Pargiter, *op. cit.*, pp. 24, 36-37. Pargiter's line of argument that originally the purāṇas were the works of professional sītas untouched by Brahmanical influence is not acceptable to many scholars. We have noted above Pathak's opinion that *paurāṇika sūtas* were originally Brāhmaṇas. Moreover, the original compiler of the *paurāṇasamhitā*, Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana was a Brāhmaṇa. This would also go against Pargiter's theory.

64. Winternitz thinks that religious and didactic matters formed parts of original purāṇas and that old traditions about creation, deeds of gods, heroes, saints, etc., were added to the original *dharmas* works to produce Puranic literature. Winternitz, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 518-21.

65. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, II 34.21, *Vāyu Purāṇa* 60.21, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* III. 6.16.


68. See above notes 63, 64.

69. See above note 37.


Pargiter, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34.


Agganasuttanta, *Dīgha Nikāya*.

A. K. Warder, *An Introduction to Indian Historiography*, Chapter II.

Vāyu Pūrāṇa, *Adhyāya*, VIII.

Sānta Purva, LIX.

See note 76 above.


Vāyu Purāṇa, 1.200-01, Pargiter, *op. cit.*, p. i. Rāmānuja quoted the verse, but he was of the view that although the knowledge of *itihiṣa purāṇa* led to the cleansing of sin, the attainment of highest knowledge of Brahman, could be had only from the Vedas, Winternitz, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 527-28.

V. Smith, *Early History of India*, pp. 11ff.

Consciousness or how we have the double experience of subjectivity and objectivity in any knowledge episode is as enigmatic today as it was at the time of the ancient Vedic sages. Thinkers from various disciplines have tried to unravel the 'phenomenon of consciousness' using their own methodologies to uncover this mystery. As Chalmers explains: “The problem of consciousness lies uneasily at the border of science and philosophy” and thus the methods used to understand this unique experience have also been multifarious, differing not only between science and philosophy but also between scientists of differing disciplines as, for instance, the life sciences and the physical sciences.

In recent years, there have been numerous studies examining the phenomenon of consciousness and we find a good collection of recent papers, dealing with this question, in the volume on Consciousness edited by Frank Jackson. While many theories are advanced by different scholars in this collection, there is no final answer as to what this mystery of 'Consciousness' is. According to Bruce Mangan, for instance, “...consciousness... is itself a particular physical medium in the brain”. On the other hand, Colin McGinn favours a “naturalistic but not constructive” solution to this question. He believes that the brain is responsible for consciousness and that it is inherently miraculous. He also adds that “conscious states are simply not potential objects of perception: they depend upon the brain but they cannot be observed by directing the senses onto the brain”. Thus there is a cognitive closure, as far as the phenomenon of consciousness is concerned, according to McGinn.

Whether consciousness is an illusion, whether it can be explained in terms of a physical or natural law, or whether it belongs to a realm outside of science or philosophy, is something we are unable to answer at this stage of our development.
In India, the first inquiry into this phenomenon can be traced to the Upanishads which belong to what is nowadays known as the 'Inner Sciences' (adhyātma-vidyā). Their search for the 'consciousness phenomenon' follows the path that is in conformity with their own method of inquiry and combines both epistemology and ontology to explain this phenomenon. It is, thus, one more approach to understand this unique phenomenon of consciousness.

In the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, which is also very much concerned with the phenomenon of consciousness, Yajñavalkya declares after a long discussion that the nature of consciousness is that which is the witness of vision, the hearer of the hearing, the thinker of the thinking, the knower of the knowing and so on. The distinction is here fundamental. In all these statements there is careful avoidance of any action involved. Thus, for instance, in the hearer of hearing or in the knower of knowing, the importance is to draw attention to the insufficiency of each of these senses to fulfill its function independently. Moreover, no one can see the eye seeing, or the ear hearing, or the mind (knower) knowing. And yet one is intuitively aware of these functions of the senses. Added to it is the continuity of experience felt in memory and in the act of recognition of something seen before. So there must be something other than the senses for one to have the said conscious experience. Seeking an ontological explanation for an epistemological event, the Upanisads attribute this experience to the presence of an abiding entity in all living beings, having the nature of existence, consciousness and bliss (sat, cit and ananda), which can then account for the conscious experiences. However, they refrain from philosophically adducing arguments as to how one can know this subtle abiding entity in all experience. In other words, how can one know the underlying witness of all experience?

In the Br. Up. Yajñavalkya, in response to Maitreyi’s question about the ultimate reality, says "Through what may one know (vijñānīyat) That, owing to which all this is known-through what, O Maitreyi, should one know the knower?" The Br. Up. in Yajñavalkya’s words, can be construed as declaring one of two possibilities:

(i) the impossibility of knowing that which is the knower, or (2) the possibility of knowing that knower intuitively or otherwise. We will see how in the later philosophical and commentarial literature this problem will exercise our thinkers and how they will come up with ingenious solutions to this very difficult epistemic enigma.

It is in the six schools of Hindu Thought that this topic of knowing
Consciousness Theories in the Six Āstika-dārśanas

The knower and knowledge as well, has received special attention, and in keeping with its respective ontology and epistemology, each school will take a position on the matter. It is in these six schools that we find a wide divergence as to the intrinsic nature of ātman and in the analysis of the phenomenon of ‘knowing knowledge’ as well. While all the six schools accept ātman as permanent/eternal, not all of them subscribe to the view that consciousness is an intrinsic property of the ātman. For instance, Nyāya/Vaiśeṣika and Pūrva-māmasā (PM), consider jñāna or knowledge as only a quality of ātman. So these schools differ from Sāṅkhya, Yoga and Utpānavamāmsā (Vedānta), wherein ātman, also known as puruṣa in Sāṅkhya/Yoga, is of the very nature of consciousness. For the purposes of this paper, I am only addressing myself to the Advaita school amongst the different Vedānta systems of thought.

In this brief paper, I will examine the way in which each of the six schools is or is not faithful to Yājñavālka’s initial statement of one not being able to know the knower, and discuss the possibility of knowing the knower and also knowing knowledge as objects, in any knowledge event. Even though PM does not particularly care for the jñāna kāṇḍa of the Upaniṣads, since it also believes in the eternal nature of ātman and of knowledge being only its property, we can include it in this discussion. In order to appreciate why there are these differing views on the knowability of knowledge, it is important to remember that some of these schools like Nyāya/Vaiśeṣika and PM are realist philosophical systems while others like Sāṅkhya/Yoga and Advaita are mainly idealist schools of thought. Thus, while ātman is eternal (nitya) and also many in these realist schools, the quality of knowledge is an adventitious one and can only arise in ātman in an act of knowing something.

Nyāya/Vaiśeṣika

Knowledge arises in Nyāya/Vaiśeṣika when there is contact with ātman through the mind (manas), sense-organ (indriya) and object. In the case of internal feelings like pleasure and pain, the manas serves the purpose of both indriya and object. As a realist school, whatever is ‘is knowable’ in Nyāya/Vaiśeṣika and therefore ātman (the knower) and knowledge (consciousness) can also be known. First, the object is known and in a subsequent anuvyavasaya (reflection upon experience), both the ātman (subject) and jñāna (consciousness) are known. It, therefore, falls back on an intuitive experiencing of both the ātman and knowledge in an after-
knowledge-state. This has logically led to rival schools questioning whether there is a second *anuvyavasāya* for the first *anuvyavasāya* and a third for the second *anuvyavasāya* and so on *ad infinitum*. But as one has to end somewhere, in the interest of brevity, the first *anuvyavasāya* has come to stay in Nyāya epistemology.

By not subscribing to the premise that *jñāna* is the intrinsic nature of *ātman*, the Nyāya/Vaiśeṣika school(s) was able to also allow knowledge to be sometimes true and sometimes false, depending on external factors. This also led to the additional theory that knowledge, though known in *anuvyavasāya*, cannot also prove its validity or invalidity. For that we have to go outside of knowledge to see if it is validated by fruitful activity (*samvādī-prayāti*). One other consequence of not accepting *jñāna* as the intrinsic nature of *ātman* is the possibility of error in knowledge, which in turn, is due to the two stage theory of perception that Nyāya/Vaiśeṣika accepts. Normal perception or knowledge of an object, let us say, a cow, involves the judgment as ‘an object possessing the property of cowness’; it is thus a complex perception. This is called determinate perception or *savikalpaka*. It is contrasted with a pre-determinate perception (*nirvikalpaka*), where the object cow is presented without any characteristic. This is derived inferentially, in keeping with its theory of complex things being constituted of simples. It is *savikalpaka* that is the subject of the after-thought (*anuvyavasāya*), and which is known as self-consciousness. If the *ātman* were to be admitted to have *jñāna* as its intrinsic nature, Nyāya could not have subdivided it into two stages, as it would falsify the nature of the *ātman* it admitted. But this device enables it to valorize *nirvikalpaka* *jñāna* as being without error while allowing worldly knowledge or *savikalpaka* to be sometimes subject to error. Thus, if the complex *savikalpaka* knowledge has a correspondence with truth outside (*samvādī prayāti*) it is true, otherwise it is false. Different strategies are adopted to explain different kinds of error, for them to be consistent with this postulate.

To summarize, Nyāya/Vaiśeṣika believes in the permanence of *ātman*, but considers consciousness as only its adventitious quality. This enables it to argue for two stages of cognition, a possibility of error in ordinary perception, and also to the verification of validity through outside means. And lastly, such a theory of consciousness without its linkage intrinsically with *ātman*, denies any state of consciousness in liberation or *apavarga*, as it is called in the system. For liberation to come about, Nyāya requires the self to direct the
mind to itself as an object, having realized through proper
discrimination that its nature is different from the psychophysical
complex with which it identifies in the unliberated state. Nyāya
stresses on the cessation of pain/suffering as the main description of
liberation. But once this state comes into being "the self is able to
cast off all its...qualities. Accordingly, the self then...ceases to be
the subject of experience in all its forms"10, as cognition is but a
quality of ātman and has to be also cast off.

Pūrvamimāṃsā

Pūrvamimāṃsā (PM) which is out and out a realistic school of
philosophy, also recognizes that the ātman is eternal and considers
jñāna as a mode and not a quality of the ātman, as in Nyāya/Vaiśeṣika.
This modal change brings the ātman in contact with the object to be
known, and in the act of knowing, both the subject (ātman) and the
object are affected. PM does not talk of jñāna as if it can be directly
known as in Nyāya, but it is to be inferred as rising in the ātman for
every knowledge event of an object. Thus, while jñāna is only
associated with the ātman, it cannot be known and confirms
Yājñavalkya's description of it in the Br. Up. But PM does not
acknowledge the Upaniṣadic section of the Vedas and we have to
conclude that it developed its own theory of consciousness in keeping
with its own Vedic texts, but also due to the context in which it
developed.

How does one know the subject ātman and how does one know
that one has knowledge in PM? The mind and the senses, in contact
with objects, give rise to knowledge in two stages. First there is a
vague perception called ālocana (though not the same as
nirvikalpaka of Nyāya), which gains clarity later. One is indeterminate
(nirvikalpaka) and the other is determinate (savikalpaka). Since
knowledge arises only in ātman, PM deals with the problem of
knowing the subject in an interesting way. Kumarila Bhaṭṭa and
Prabhākara, the two great commentators on Śabarā's commentary
of Jaimini's PM sūtras, have different explanations as to how one
knows the subject ātman. First we will deal with Kumārila's
explanation.

Basing his understanding on such statements as 'I know myself',
Kumārila understands that the ātman can be both the knower and
known. All states of knowledge or consciousness have two elements:
(1) the self that knows and (2) the self comprehending itself. For
Kumārila, all self-awareness is "crucially delimited by the body".
So Kumarila’s position in Chakravarthi’s words is “there is a unified self and it is distinct from the body: but it requires embodiment for consciousness of itself as an identifiable self”. And this is explained by some as the atman being the object of the ‘I notion’. Thus the atman has self-consciousness (I notion, ahamvritti), through the delimited body; it has conscious states (feelings of pleasure and pain) and external perception of objects as their subject. It also mistakes the body as itself.

As for Prabhakara, the atman can never be an object, as the subject and the object can never be the same. Since the atman is not self luminous in PM, in other words, since consciousness is only something contingent and not intrinsic to atman, it requires something else like jhāna to reveal itself. So whenever jhāna (sanvita), which is self luminous arises, it reveals both the subject i.e. atman and the object simultaneously. Along with revealing both atman and object, it also reveals itself; thus it is called tripeti-jhāna or knowledge having three folds. PM, true to its indifference to the Upaniṣadic utterances, is perhaps closest to Yajnavalkya’s statement of ‘one not being able to know the knower’.

Even though PM does not admit consciousness as an intrinsic property of atman, it upholds that it is self valid, both when it rises and when it is known. In other words, knowledge is always true. In cases of error, it is the means that are faulted. Thus, if a person sees a rope in the dark and mistakes it for a snake, it is insufficient light that accounts for it. Thus the self validity of knowledge is maintained. This is known as svatadvīt-pramāṇya (intrinsic validity) as opposed to parātadvīt-pramāṇya (extrinsic validity), which we witnessed in the case of the Nyāya/Vaiśeṣika school.

And, lastly, mokṣa in PM resembles Nyāya/Vaiśeṣika, as in both, atman is divested of knowledge and mokṣa is an escape from saṃsāra. But even that fact will not be known to atman, as there is no consciousness as an intrinsic property of atman in mokṣa. This ideal of mokṣa is arid precisely because PM has the concept of mokṣa thrust upon it in the period, because commentators like Prabhakara and Kumārila (particularly Kumarila), wanted to reconcile it with the highest value of mokṣa that was fashionable at the time. The early ideal for PM was the attainment of svarga or another world by the correct observance of dharma or otherwise, respectively. By abandoning its original stand and adopting the new value PM did not elevate its status at all. As it had always valued saṃsāra as the theatre for performance of dharma and had also granted a permanent
Consciousness Theories in the Six Āstikādāsanas

state of existence to the world for all time, the new ideal does not in any way make sense. As consciousness of ātman in PM was also defined by the limitation of the body, it was doubly handicapped. We can conclude by saying that PM, true to its fidelity to the ritual portions of the Vedic corpus, is least interested in the phenomenon of consciousness as a transcendent principle of consciousness. It comes out as a realistic school and its chief concern is only the knowability of ātman, which is the subject in any knowledge event. It does not soar above the empirical level and knowledge/consciousness is also bound to sāṁsāra as defined in the body in which it is encased.

Sāṁkhya/Yoga

The conception of puruṣa/ātman in Sāṁkhya/Yoga is close to the Upaniṣadic view. Thus, puruṣa is viewed as of the nature of pure consciousness. But for knowledge to happen, puruṣa needs the help of buddhi/mahat, which reflects its modification of the form of the object in puruṣa/consciousness that results in the experience 'I know that'. While all worldly experience will take the form of puruṣa being the subject of an objectivist knowledge, it does not rule out the possibility of having a state of pure consciousness/puruṣa, when buddhi is totally devoid of any object modification and reflects itself, like a clean mirror in puruṣa, when the reflection will have puruṣa alone as its reflection. Since this does not cover worldly knowledge, it has to be relegated to the metaphysical realm. But allowing such a state while living in the world (jivanmukti), brings the puruṣa within the realm of knowledge, i.e. the puruṣa can be aware of itself as pure consciousness.

Is this what Yājñavalkya had in mind when he spoke to Maitreya in the Br. Up. regarding that which is the witness of vision etc? In other words, did Yajñavalkya somehow intuit that one can know (be aware) of the knower in some state, while living in the world? The Br. Up. does not elaborate on this and we will not know the answer to it.

Such a view of knowledge which makes it dependent on a material substance like buddhi, makes Sāṁkhya/Yoga free to attribute truth (validity) or falsehood (invalidity) to knowledge, the only condition being that they cannot be both at the same time. Since the buddhi is also the seat of the innumerable past latent impressions, it also enables Sāṁkhya/Yoga to view knowledge as affecting different individuals in different ways. Thus the same object affects different individuals...
differently. The same woman, for instance, will be looked upon with love by her husband, with indifference by an ascetic and hated by someone who is her enemy. So there is no real theory of error in knowledge to be explained in this view. As buddhi by itself nor purusa by itself can know, and it is the combined entity of purusa and buddhi that knows, all knowledge is based on an error of lack of insight of two factors involved in every knowledge event. Thus the ‘I’ or ‘knowing’, and ‘that’ in ‘I know that’, are not the purusa or the buddhi by itself, but a combination and can be called a metaphysical error. Thus, in Sankhya/Yoga, it is only in the state of jivanmukti that the purusa can become aware of its own self. But even at this stage, it cannot know itself as either the subject of being aware of itself or even as an object being known reflexively, as in the after knowledge of Nyaya. Only a modification of the buddhi reflected in purusa can serve as an object in the system. So, the most we can understand in this state of jivanmukti is that, purusa is aware of itself as different from buddhi, as there is no more modification at this time due to the pure sattva nature of the buddhi.

Yoga adds one more state called asamprajñātā samādhi, wherein the jivanmukti stage is also transcended. According to Sāṅkhyā, kaivalya is achieved in the jivanmukti stage, whereas in Yoga it seems to come into being only in the last stage of asamprajñātā. Kaivalya, as the word denotes, means that purusa is now all alone characterized only as pure consciousness and is eternally free. It will no more get entangled with prakṛti through non-discrimination. It will be obvious from the above that Sāṅkhyā/Yoga is an idealist school of philosophy.

Advaita Vedānta

Advaita Vedānta is probably the closest to what Yājñavalkya told Maitreyi i.e. “Who may know the knower who knows”. This school, though expounded initially by Gaudapāda, was systematized by Śaṅkaraśāstra in the eighth century of the Common Era and is an idealist school par excellence. There is only one Reality according to Advaita and everything else is only an appearance of Reality. The individual jivas which we all are, are also the same Reality called Brahman. Because of embodied existence in a body, the kind of body being determined by one’s karma, the jiva does not realize its identity with Brahman. While the former is called jivātman (individual ātman), the latter is the Paramātman (absolute Ātman). This Ātman is eternal and has the intrinsic properties of existence (sat), consciousness (cit) and bliss (ānanda).
Consciousness Theories in the Six Āstikadarśanas

Advaita Vedānta is close to Sāṅkhya/Yoga, though not identical in the way that knowledge takes place. The ātman, with the help of the mind (antahkaraṇa), which is a material entity as in Sāṅkhya/Yoga, (though eventually going back to Brahman itself unlike in Sāṅkhya/Yoga where it is traced back to prakṛti), is the one that partakes in the knowledge event. The ātman is the empirical self that has experience and it is conceived of as having a purely witnessing observer status called sākṣi (which is the same as Brahman), along with the mental apparatus called the antahkaraṇa.

The sākṣi (witness), like the puruṣa in Sāṅkhya/Yoga, illuminates the modification (vṛtti) of the mind, which is called knowledge (jñāna). But one has to remember that sākṣi is here characterized as pure consciousness and so is considered to be self-luminous as well. In ordinary day to day worldly knowledge called vṛttijañña (knowledge of modification), there is the sākṣi that illuminates the vṛttijañña which is caused by interaction of subject and object. All knowledge is to be traced to the ‘modal transformations’ or modifications of the antahkaraṇa, which are then illumined by the witness consciousness. For an object to be known, it has to fulfill three conditions i.e. it must be such as can be directly known; it must be existent at the time; and there must be a unique relation between the subject and object to be known. If these conditions are fulfilled, vṛtti (modification) takes place and knowledge results. Even though the modal change is described as taking place in the antahkaraṇa, since the subject (jīva) is conceived as sākṣi and antahkaraṇa combined, in truth, the modal transformation is in effect the “coincidence of the jīva and the object”. It is because of this dual nature that it can be called both the subject and object in a knowledge event. Thus, in every knowledge, the subject is also acting upon itself in a reflexive manner and knows itself. “That to which it has reflexive access is that which it calls ‘itself’; and the unique, singularly accessible but typically available name for this identifiable itself is ‘I’.”

This situation is different from the other schools we have already examined. Whereas in the other systems, consciousness is either a quality of the ātman, or consciousness by reflection in the mental mode brings knowledge into being, in Advaita, the ātman is consciousness and with the mental mode as a unity ‘knows knowledge’. So in every jñāna, the self (consciousness) reflexively knows itself as the subject and also knows the object. That is why Śaṅkara, in his introduction to the Brahmāsūtrabhāṣya makes the...
30

T.S. RUKMANI

insightful observation that the existence of the self can never be
denied because what denies is itself the self. 17

So the question of the subject, in this case jīva, itself
becoming known has been answered by Advaita through this
ingenious device; "...an analysis of consciousness [in Advaita]
concludes that its unique, intrinsic reflexivity takes it out of the
subject-object relationship of all epistemic operations". 18 In the
unliberated state the self expresses itself as egoity in the form 'I
know this'. Advaita also extends the argument of the perpetual
presence of consciousness in states like dreaming and deep sleep.
It is also important to note that, though consciousness of
individuated individuals is distinguished phenomenologically, because of their
conditioned existences, they are ontologically identical. And
liberation in the system is to realize the true nature of
consciousness or become Brahman. This is achieved by removing
the ignorance that conceals the true nature of ātman/consciousness
from us. This is illustrated through the device of adhyāsa or
superimposition. Thus when one sees a rope as a snake, due to
some defect like insufficient light, for instance, it is called
superimposing the false idea of snake on the ground of the rope.
Similarly, due to ignorance there is the false imposition of the
limited phenomenological consciousness on to the ultimate
Brahman-consciousness. When that is removed, through correct
knowledge, there will no more be the individuated consciousness,
but it will be the One Reality which it always was. This is likened
to an immediate intuitive experience of identity.

It seems that Yājñavalkya's statement, with which we began this
paper, i.e. that the nature of consciousness is that which is the
witness of vision, the hearer of the hearing, etc., reaches its culmination in
the way that Advaita posits ātman/Brahman as the only Reality
behind all phenomena of seeing, hearing, thinking, etc.

Starting with the Upaniṣadic postulates of the permanence of ātman
and the phenomenon of consciousness as an enduring presence in every
knowledge event, each of the six systems of Hindu thought comes up
with insightful explanations of the knower, known and the act of
knowing, depending on its own metaphysical structures. What is
interesting is that, as early as the Upaniṣadic times and in the early
centuries of the Common Era, the ancient philosophers in India were
engaging themselves with the problematic of the phenomenon of
knowledge.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

3. Quoted in Frank Jackson, op. cit., p. 385.
5. Quoted in Frank Jackson, op. cit., p. 413.
7. *Brhadāranyaka Upanisad*, III 4.2
8. *Br. Up.*, 2.4.14
9. *Nyāyaśūtra*, 1.1.21-2
Disgusted with the ills of life, the Buddha renounced the world to seek what is good, the excellent station of peace. He finally attained Enlightenment by discovering the relatedness and contingency of all things and the ineffable peace which lies beyond. These twin principles of Pratītyasamutpāda (Paṭiccasamutpāda) and Nirvana (Nibbāna) form the core of Buddha's philosophy. It is through their divergent interpretations that subsequent Buddhist philosophical systems have arisen. The Buddha does not seem to announce a categorically defined system. Instead he gave expression only to an inspired and inspiring wisdom using similes and parables and adapting his expression to the need of their occasion. The Buddha, in fact, allowed his words to be remembered by everyone in his own dialect, the meaning being important not the word. Consequently, after the passing away of the Buddha, his collected words gave rise to diverse attempts at systematizing them and, thus, many different schools and sects came into existence.

In the course of Buddhist history its missions have traversed the far corners of the earth for 'the happiness and welfare of mankind'. As the Buddhist order (Saṅgha) expanded, councils claiming to be ecumenical had been held from time to time. Alongside this expansion the spirit of Buddhism has been liberal and democratic and its organization highly decentralized. This has given the widest possible latitude to thought and has led to the proliferation of numerous sects and schools. Traditionally by the time of Asoka their number had reached eighteen. There is a common ground in the traditions of the different sects in holding that the differentiation of sects had arisen early, mostly within the first two centuries of the Nirvāṇa era. In the evolution of the Buddhist sects and schools it is noticed that the 'great schism' in the Saṅgha resulting in the rise of two sects, i.e., Theravāda and Mahāsāṃghika at the time of the Second
Buddhist Council, was followed by a series of schisms leading to the formation of various new sects. C.A.F. Rhys Davids calls the non-Theravāda schools dummies and observes that the ancient treatises on them by Vasumitra, Bhavya and Viniṭadeva offer us only the dry disintegrated bones of doctrines. Yet the dummies appear to have been once alive and the dry bones clothed with flesh and blood. The records, doubtless, present a dry conspectus because they are the products of scholastic activity.

The schism between Sthaviras (Theravāda) and Mahāsāṅghikas was occasioned by differences over the question of the status of Arhat (Arhant). The concept of Arhat-ship, thus, forms a significant issue of debate amongst the early Buddhist sects. Arhat is the title given to the perfect man in Buddhism. The Buddhists seem to derive the term from 'ari, i.e., 'enemy' and 'han', i.e., 'to kill' and, thus, the term stands for a 'slayer of enemy', the enemy obviously being passions. Some modern scholars, however, prefer to derive this term from 'Arhati, i.e., to be worthy of' or 'deserving' and 'worthy of worship and gifts'. It seems that originally Arhat was a popular appellation given to ascetics. In Buddhism, however, it assumed a technical significance as denoting only the fully and finally emancipated saints. The Buddha is generally called an Arhat. In the earliest Buddhist usage, Buddhahood and Arhat-ship are so closely allied that it is difficult to draw any significant distinction between the two.

The Pali canonical texts lay down in various formulae the qualities, which go to make Arhat-ship. An Arhat is described as one who, is in possession of the excellent goal, free from attachment, hatred, delusion, in short, all impurities, relieved of the burden of 'five constituents' (skandhas), accomplished in all that is to be accomplished and devoid of any future existence. The Arhat is one in whom the 'intoxicants' or 'outflows', i.e., sense desire, becoming, ignorance, wrong views are destroyed, who has lived the life, who has done his task, who has laid down his burden, who has attained salvation, etc. Similarly, it is said that an Arhat is 'alone, secluded, earnest, zealous, master of himself'. He exerted himself and realized that the circle of 'birth-and-death' (jātā-marana) with its 'five constituents' (skandhas) is in constant flux. He abandoned all the defilements and won Arhat-ship. On becoming an Arhat he lost all his attachment to the world. He has obtained 'gnosis', the 'super-knowledge' and the 'powers of analytical insight'. Thus he is supposed to be possessed of both kṣayajñāna,
Delimitation of the Arhat Ideal in Early Buddhism

35

...
36  S.N. DUBE

(3) He still has doubt.
(4) He gains knowledge through the help of others.

The corresponding heterodox views on *Arhat*-ship as enumerated in the *Kathāvatthu* are:

(1) *Arhat* has impure discharge, i.e., he may be subject to unconscious temptations. 28
(2) He may lack knowledge, i.e., one may be an *Arhat* and not know it. 29
(3) He may have doubt on matters of doctrine. 30
(4) *Arhat* is excelled by others. 31

While the *Kathāvatthu-Aṭṭhakathā* attributes these new assertions to the Purvaśailas (*Pubbaseliya*) and Aparaśailas (*Aparaseliya*), 32 Vasumitra, Bhavya and Vinitadeva attribute some of these to the Mahāsaṅghikas in general and their sub-sects, i.e., Ekavyavahārikas, Lokottaravādins, and Kaukkutikas in particular as also to some of the Theravāda sects. 33 It is interesting that even the *Kathāvatthu-Aṭṭhakathā* attributes some of these assertions to certain offshoots of the Theravāda sect. For example, the thesis 'that an *Arhat* can fall away from *Arhat*-ship' 34 was held, according to Buddhaghosa, by the Sammatiyas, Vajjiputtīyas, Sabbattivādins and some of the Mahāsaṅghikas. 35

The so-called heterodox movement against the ideal of *Arhat*-ship was disputed and criticized at length by the Theravādins. They defended the status of *Arhat* and his attainments with equal vehemence. The *Kathāvatthu* picks up the above four points, along with various other assertions denigrating *Arhat*-ship, discusses them in considerable detail and finally claims to establish their untenability. For example, on the alleged fallibility of *Arhat*, the Theravādins observe that the thesis must also imply: (a) that he may fall away everywhere, (b) at all times, (c) that all *Arhats* are liable to fall away, and (d) that an *Arhat* is liable to fall away not only from *Arhat*-ship, but from all the four ‘Path-fruitions’. 36 The proponents of the thesis do not, however, admit the possibility of universal retrogression. They concede that the *Arhat* retrogresses only up to the ‘sotāpatthphala’, and that the retrogression occurs only in the sphere of kamaloka and not in the two higher spheres, viz., rūpa and arūpa. And this retrogression too is confined only to the mudindriya or samaya-vimutta *Arhats*. 37

It is in this strain that the Theravādins categorically reject the thesis about the possibility of falling away of an emancipated one, even
Delimitation of the Arhat Ideal in Early Buddhism

such, who attained this only occasionally in meditation. Still less can he fall away from Arhat-ship, because, as suggested by some, he might have calumniated a saint in some previous birth. They also deny that the gods of the Mara group can impose physical impurities upon an Arhat. He has acquired complete knowledge and hence cannot have any doubt or be surpassed by others in knowledge. He has cast aside every fetter of ignorance and doubt in attaining his end. Nevertheless, he is human and hence the thesis that he is entirely free in every regard from any association with the four ‘intoxicants’ (āsasvās) cannot be sustained for the simple reason that his body and sense organs cannot be considered absolutely uncontaminated by these ‘intoxicants’. The only things which are really free from any connection with the ‘intoxicants’ are the ‘Paths’, their ‘Fruits’, ‘Nirvana’ and ‘the factors leading to insight’. Similarly, though an Arhat is indifferent to sense impressions, his indifference is manifested under human conditions; he cannot attend to more than one sense impression or idea at the same time, for his consciousness is essentially momentary. Moreover, the progress to Arhat-ship must be carried out in strict accordance with the stages laid down. It is, therefore, wrong to assume that the attainment of Arhat-ship means the simultaneous destruction of all fetters. In the first three stages, five of the fetters are cast away; in the last, the aspirant rids himself of the desire for rebirth either in the rūpa-loka or arūpa-loka, conceit, distraction and ignorance. It is also wrong to associate an Arhat’s insight to a learner. Similarly, no one can attain to Arhat-ship unless he has laid aside the life of a layman. It is also impossible for an embryo to become an Arhat at the moment of rebirth. Nor by offering gifts, paying homage to the shrines and so on does an Arhat become subject to a process of accumulating merit. If he could win merit he could also win demerit, which is absurd. Nor is it true to say that he cannot have an untimely death for he has to experience the results of all his former actions as was opined by some, since the liability to accidents cannot be wholly ruled out. It is also denied that he possesses consciousness subject to moral distinctions at the time of his death. Nor is it right to say that an Arhat attains the completion of existence while in the imperturbable absorption of meditation.

An analysis of the unpalatable new assertions about Arhat-ship might suggest that some of the theses may have their genesis in observed failings, e.g., (1) the idea of Arhat may not be as attractive as that of the Buddha. A comparison between the two would highlight the limitations of the former. (2) There is some reason to
postulate a psychological hostility arising from institutional and historical reasons. (3) Some of the theses suggest actually observed failings and limitations. (4) There is also room for divergent interpretation in the canonical statements on Arhat-ship.

According to the Pali tradition, the Second Buddhist Council was held at Vaiśāli to discuss the ten practices of the Vajjian monks for which not only recognition was categorically refused but these acts were unanimously declared to be un-Vinayic. From the metaphysical point of view, the acts of the Vajjians hardly appear significant. But they do indicate a more liberal attitude on the part of eastern monks in general and Vajjians in particular. A people thoroughly imbued in democratic traditions, they were unlikely to submit to the exclusive powers and privileges claimed by the Arhats and, thus, 'the real point at issue was the rights of the individual, as well as, those of the provincial communities as against the prescriptions of a centralized hierarchy'. Undoubted as the Vajjian monks' liberal views were not acceptable to the orthodox elders, they must have been severely impeached by the latter as indicated by the details of the Second Council. Discomfited, thus, in the Council, the eastern monks seem to have started, as a reaction, their campaign against the very same Arhats by calling in question their claims and authority and seeking to propound their fallibility. In order to uphold their views and innovations with regard to the Vinaya and Dhamma they organized at Pataliputra a separate council called Mahāsāṅghika or Mahāsāṅgiti without making any discrimination of Arhat and non-Arhat. In view of the high number of attendance at the Mahāsāṅgiti, which is given as 10,000, it seems likely that no such discrimination was really made. In this council the Vajjian monks are supposed to have carried out things according to their own wishes. They altered the course of the sutras in the Vinaya and the five Nikāyas, removed some of them and interpolated new ones. It is also added that they refused to accept the authenticity of Purivāra, Paṭisaṃbidāmāgga, Niddesa, certain Jātakas and six texts of the Abhidhamma. It is difficult to assume, however, that all these texts had really been compiled by that time. Nevertheless, the Mahāsāṅgiti of Pataliputra seems to have formalized the division of the original order into two sects. On the one hand was the large bulk of eastern monks with its strongholds at Vaiśāli and Pataliputra and, on the other, was the section of western monks with their chief centers at Kauśāmbi, Avanti and Mathurā, a group in which the influence of the old Sthaviras was predominant.
The other tradition on the Second Buddhist Council, preserved by Vasumitra and followed by Bhavya and Vinüadeva, in fact, clearly asserts that the first breach in the Saṅgha resulted from the ‘Five Points of Mahādeva’.43 The first four propositions of Mahādeva, as noted above, relate to Arhat of whom a startling conception is put forth. It is gathered from the Abhidharma-mahā-vibhasālun (chapter 99)44 that Mahādeva was a Brāhmin from Mathurā and he received his ordination at Kukkutārāme in Pātaliputra. His zeal and abilities crowned him with the headship of the Saṅgha there. With the help of the ruling king, who was his friend and patron, Mahādeva succeeded in ousting the senior monks from that monastery. Thereupon he started propagating his five propositions. These points clearly indicated that the Arhats were not all fully perfect persons as was the view of orthodox Theravadins, and that the Arhats had a few limitations. Such stipulations naturally gave rise to a serious dispute leading ultimately to the first schism in the Buddhist Saṅgha and the emergence of the two sects, Mahāsanghika and Theravāda. The points raised by Mahādeva are evidently suggestive of a critical attitude of the emerging sect towards the elders who claimed Arhat-ship to be the highest attainment. It is likely, therefore, that the Vaishjans, having suffered a defeat in the Second Council, launched a counter-attack against the conservatives and the prevalence of ‘bogus Arhats’ among the latter provided them a favourable issue of criticism. In Mahādeva they seem to have found an able leader and champion of their viewpoint. Minayeff has observed that the Buddhist Saṅgha was undergoing a state of demoralization about the time of the Second Council.45

Thus, it appears that within a century of the passing away of Lord Buddha, the Arhat ideal of the original teaching tended to give rise, within a monastic system, to a kind of soteriological individualism. At the hands of some orthodox sects, especially the Theravādins, the ideal received an individualistic twist. They strenuously emphasized that Arhat-ship is the only goal of salvation and freedom from suffering. One might says that the Theravādins tried to faithfully adhere to the moral, monastic and disciplinary life of early Buddhism. It does not, however, mean that the Theravāda standpoint thoroughly represents the spirit of original Buddhism or that the entire Buddhism is comprised in the Pali canon as was the accepted belief of the older generation of Buddhist scholars. Thus, the purely individualistic attempts of the Theravādins to pursue the threefold development of ‘śīla, ‘samādhi’ and ‘prajñā’ (paññā) with the consequent attainment
of Arhat-ship could well be deemed inadequate from the point of view of the average mass of mankind. On the other hand, for the spiritually more ambitious the ideal of Arhat-ship would appear pale beside the glory of the Buddha and may well lead them, through this comparison, to look at Arhat-ship with critical eyes. The individualistic tendency of the Theravāda, therefore, provoked protests from others in the Buddhist community and contributed by way of a reaction in a significant measure towards the growth of heretical and unwholesome notions about the idea.

From the debates on the issue, as recorded in the Kathāvatthu, it seems that there was something inherent in the oldest tradition itself which enabled the growth of heterodox views and subsequent controversies on Arhat-ship. For example, in the relationship between the conceptions of Buddhahood and Arhat-ship, there are some enigmatic passages in the canonical literature the testimony of which makes it difficult to draw any distinction between the two. For example, it was asserted that ‘Every Buddha was an Arhat. Every Arhat was Buddha’. The Buddha himself is habitually called an Arhat. At one place it is said: ‘Let us ask Gotam, the awakened one, who has passed beyond anger and fear….’ But the same adjectives, as we find here, are used elsewhere for an Arhat. Similarly in a long description of the Buddha, all the epithets used for him are generally found applied to one or other of his disciples. Arhat is, in fact, one of the oft-used titles for the Buddha but it was not an exclusive title and all those, who, as a result of his teaching, came to realize the Truth, are said to have become Arhats, the number amounting to as many as sixty-one. In the third dhāyāna which denotes the final stage of ‘worldly’ wisdom, just before the ‘Path’ is reached the equanimity of the Arhat who ‘never abandons his natural state of purity’ when presented with desirable or undesirable objects is similar to the equanimity of a Buddha which is often lauded in the scriptures. It is said that the equanimity of Buddhas and Arhats is unaffected by the reception his teachings may receive, and they feel no joy when it is accepted, no displeasure when it is rejected but remain unmoved and fully mindful. The teacher never called himself a Buddha as distinct from an Arhat. When addressed as Buddha or spoken of as such by his disciples, it is always doubtful whether anything more is meant than an enlightened Arhat. In the oldest documents the two conceptions seem to be still in a state of fusion. In fact, the word Arhat has been used in early texts without any great precision. It may be an epithet of the Buddha, or a name for the eighth of the ‘holy persons’, the one who has won final sanctification. That person
is sometimes distinguished from the Pratyekabuddhas. At other times, however, the Arhat is either a disciple (śrāvaka) who must ‘hear’ from a Tathāgata, or a Pratyekabuddha.\(^{52}\)

However, it cannot be maintained with certitude that the ideal of Arhat was synonymous with Buddhahood and that no distinction was made between the two in early canonical works. The view inevitably implies equality between the teacher and his disciples which would have been difficult to sustain for the Buddhist community as the Buddha being their teacher was such an exalted figure. We come across such passages in the early texts where the difference between the two concepts may be brought out clearly.

Attention may be drawn to a dialogue between Sāriputta and the Buddha.\(^{53}\) Sāriputta here confesses that he has no knowledge of the ‘able and ‘awakened ones’ that have been and are to come, as also, of the present times. Sāriputta was one of the greatest direct disciples of the Buddha and yet his figure, as compared to the Buddha, is completely dwarfed by his confession. It was logical to assume that a Buddha would possess a number of additional qualities of perfection as compared to an Arhat.\(^{54}\) There is an illuminating incident referred to in the Sūtaṭhā on the Abhidharmakosā where it is shown that the Buddha surpasses all his disciples which enables him to become the universal teacher or saviour.\(^{55}\) Further, the theory of a number of successive Buddhas\(^{56}\) presupposes the conception of a Buddha as a different and more exalted personage than an Arhat. In a famous dialogue, Lord Buddha is reported to have said that he is neither a man (manussa), nor a gandharva (gandhabba) nor a yaksa (yakkha) nor even a deva or brahma, but a Buddha.\(^{57}\) In fact, the Buddhist Theravada tradition itself speaks of three kinds of saints (ārya, i.e., persons having won the Path) as being ‘adepts’, or ‘enlightened’, or as ‘having’ Nirvana. They are the Arhats, Pratyekabuddhas and Buddhas. Vasubandhu points out\(^{58}\) that the Lord Buddha alone has destroyed ignorance in its entirety, and is wholly free from that which prevents us from seeing things as they are. The Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas have freed themselves from the delusion which is soiled by the defilements; but in them the ignorance which is unsoiled by the defilements continues to operate. They do not know the special attributes of a Buddha, nor objects which are very distant in time or space, nor the infinite complexity of things. The Arhat is content to know everything which concerns him personally, the Pratyekabuddha in addition knows conditioned co-production, but still the bulk of the universe lies beyond him. The distinction between
an Arhat and a Buddha is made evidently clear in the works of Mahāyāna where it is said that Arhats who are perfect śāvakaś, get rid of only kleśavaraṇa, i.e., the veil of impurities consisting of rāga, dosa, silabbataparāmāsa, and viśeṣicchā but not of jñeya-varaṇa, i.e., the veil which conceals the Truth — the veil which can only be removed by realizing the Dharma-śūnyatā or Tathātā. It is the Buddha alone, who, being perfectly emancipated has both kleśavaraṇa and jñeya-varaṇa removed.\textsuperscript{59} It is interesting that the Theravādins, though they desperately try to defend the cherished status and image of Arhat-ship, themselves have to grant ultimately that the bodhi attained by an Arhat is characterized by the knowledge of the four paths (caitumaggānāṇā) and not omniscience (sabbakānāṇā) which is the bodhi of the Buddhas.\textsuperscript{60} It is plausible, therefore, that the basic difference in the two conceptions inherent in the Nikayas was brought to the fore in the course of time, and led to two parallel developments in a new direction in the history of Buddhism. One led to a gradual decline in the ideal of Arhat-ship and the other towards eventual deification of the Buddha.

There appears to have been a close inter-relationship between the two tendencies. Generally the same group of sects, which carried on the anti-Arhat campaign, led pari passu a movement seeking to establish the transcendentality of the Buddha.\textsuperscript{61} A process was, thus, set moving under which the life of the Master formed the edifice and the rival sects provided the material for the superstructure. Consequently, while the orthodox Theravādins adhered strictly to the realistic view of the person of their Teacher, the heterodox radicals proceeded boldly to idealize and eventually deify Him.

NOTES AND REFERENCE

6. ‘Arhatpratisaranam na vyajyanam’.
7. Mahāvagga p.23: ‘caratha, bhikkhave, cārikam bahujanahitāya bahujanasukhāya lokanskampāya athāya hitāya sukhiyā deva-
8. cf., Dīpavaṃsa, V 39 ff; Mahāvamsa, V 3 ff; J. Masuda, “Origin and
11. Dialogues of the Buddha, Pt.III. Patthikasutta, Introduction, p. 6
12. Dīgha Nikāya, III. pp.66, 76; Majjhima Nikāya, I, pp.7, 94; Sānynthesis
13. cf., Cullavagga, pp.18, 34-35, 202; Dīgha Nikāya, I, pp.149, 168;
24. ibid., p. 194.
29. ibid., II, 2.
36. See *Kathāvatthu*, pp. 71 ff.
38. For discussions on these points see S.N. Dube, *Cross Currents in Early Buddhism*, pp. 97 ff.
44. cf., Thomas Watters, *On Yuan Chwang’s Travels in India*, Delhi, 1961, I, pp. 267-68.
47. *Sutta Nipāta*, p. 309.
49. cf., *Sutta Nipāta*, pp. 353 ff.
55. *Sūtra-bhābuddharmakośa-vyākhyā* Ed., U. Wogihara, Tokyo, 1930-36, p. 5
57. *Anguttara Nikāya*, p. 41.
59. See N. Dutt, *Aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism and its Relations to
Delimitation of the Arhat Ideal in Early Buddhism


60. See Kathāvatthu-Atthakathā, p. 76.
61. cf., S.N. Dube, Cross Currents in Early Buddhism, pp. 90 ff.
In Search of the Present

F. G. ASENJO

1. How Should We Think of the Present?

Honore de Balzac wrote a story titled “The Quest of the Absolute.” It is a literary piece, filled with characters and events, but the chief theme of which is a person’s pure drive toward reaching the ultimate, the *ne plus ultra*, the thatness of existence. This motif is also the propelling idea in Balzac’s “The Unknown Masterpiece,” which describes a painter’s effort to capture artistically, reality itself in its full actuality. Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* is also essentially a search for the absolute. For him, though, the absolute resided in past ecstasies that he had experienced in his life which he wanted to recapture and describe accurately. Taken to the extreme, such devotion to the past can be morally inadvisable, even destructive. In any case, like it or not, the past has always an undeniable staying power. William Faulkner exclaimed in frustration: “The past is not even past!,” meaning that unpleasant memories that he wanted to obliterate kept mercilessly following him into the present. In his *Lived Time*, Eugéne Minkowski rejected the delusions of nostalgia and rightly pointed out that the “past when it was present had nothing more seductive in it than the present which overwhelms us, and we speak of the good old times only because we project into them, without realizing it, what our present seems to deny us.” In fact, the present has its own ecstatic potential; in this it is not essentially different from the past. And even more important, it does exhibit explicitly the effective possibility of renewal. Nostalgia is dangerous because it can blind the mind to the potentialities of present existence; having eyes only for the immediate obstacles makes us forget that, in effect, obstacles were also present in the past. The Kierkegaardian phrase “Everything that does not happen immediately is diabolic” has more than one pregnant meaning. One, of course, is the obvious one that delays are very often frustrating and boring. A weightier one is that any unfulfilled expectation can close our mind to the present’s own rewarding capabilities.

Further, just as nostalgia can dominate the present, so can also an exciting anticipation. Both states of mind are able to lessen the
present's own potentialities. Anticipation, in particular, disguises the fact that, no matter how much the future is pulling us now, the present is where novelties actually occur. Whatever we do we do it now or not at all.

This work attempts to capture aspects of the real nature of the present, delving to some extent into its complex constitution. As such, it belongs to what we should call "concrete semantics": it tries to elucidate fragments of the concealed meaning of the word "present," an infinite meaning to be sure, impossible to apprehend in full— as is the case with the meaning of any word that has a concrete reference. In order to move in such a direction, we shall use suitable categories and ideas regardless of their origin and of the time when they were expressed first. We shall find it useful to draw notions and models from physics, mathematics, cosmology, psychology, and even Buddhism, but shall place them in a different context. Since we are leaping into the unknown, we need any light that dispels the obscurities generated by the usual simplistic conception of time we all have inherited. We shall proceed, however, in the knowledge that fully capturing the present in the flesh is an infinite task: the finiteness of our existence and the limits of our perception set impassable barriers to such ambition. And yet, like Balzac's painter, we are driven by a powerful desire to depict the present in its full actuality. A positive outcome of our attempt will be that, despite the essential incompleteness of any effort to apprehend the concrete, our direct perception of the present will be broadened and deepened, our actual grasp will reach regions that our abstract, predetermined conceptions make us overlook. Let us, then, proceed by stages.

2. The Present is Not a Point in Time

Just as for Proust the absolute resides in past ecstasies, for us the absolute must have the present as one of its characteristics. Both past and future have effects on us as long as memories and prospective objectives have a strong presence in our consciousness, fill the present now. This implies that the present is not a simple point without extension; in fact, no matter how much it can be divided, it always contains past and future components: the lasting momentum of past events, good and bad remembrances, scars, inherited platforms from which to leap forward, and also aspirations, old and new aims, the determination to move in a given direction, desire, hope. Both physically and psychologically the present
inevitably spreads within itself. It is not possible to pinpoint its beginning or its end, because it fades gradually into other presents with which it intersects, often unnoticeably. Each present contains a microcosmos within itself, an actual world that I would like to call the realm of the interpresent. Clearly, we are very far indeed from the mathematical conception of point as Euclid defined it: "A point is that which has no part."

The idea of a point is, of course, an eminently useful abstraction, but it has no reality whatsoever: there are no real points in the universe, infinite divisibility does not end in entities without extension. To live a present means to spread ourselves within an enduring, identifiable lapse. Such lapse can be analysed into other lapses, other hazy intervals, but never into instantaneous points. The present is an extended passage, itself always a course of time that has no precise boundaries; it is fluid, its emergence and fading are gradual, and its brief evolution can be neither explained nor described by purely temporal categories: it is a running aspect of a flowing reality, a reality without which it has no existence. George Herbert Mead expressed similar ideas in his Philosophy of the Present. He said that "reality cannot be reduced to instants," meaning temporal points. More specifically, "Past, present and future belong to a passage which attains temporal structure through the event, and they may be considered long or short as they are compared with other such passages." In other words, the present possesses its own spread, which is why it is possible to attempt to make a partial inventory of the present. In contrast, a point cannot contain any fragment of reality, precisely because it has no parts. Again, there are no temporal points. But contrary to Mead, who thinks that past and future are boundaries of the present, both past and future impinge on the present, are present in the present; otherwise, they would be nonexistent. Further, no present has an immediately preceding present or an immediately following one. Presents can intersect, but they are not contiguous in any geometric sense: between two identifiable presents one can always find other presents that actively encroach on one another. We usually are aware of the peak portion of each extended present and erroneously think of such a peak as being the entire present. But time is more complex than a linear succession of peaks. This complexity, this constant overlapping of lapses, is what makes consequence possible. A time made up of isolated points would be the reflection of a
constantly disappearing and recreated universe; the present cosmos would have no possible communication with other realities differently dated; no overlapping, no causality.

As a consequence, the notion of abruptness is very relative. What emerges in a seemingly abrupt manner has a preparation and a lysis no matter how brief these might be. What seems an instantaneous decision contains the push of preceding acts of awareness that converge to the act of decision and are present in such an act to carry us over into the neighboring future. During this passage the past awareness, our prior wishes and deliberations, all change quality and momentum. The past is not irrevocable; on the contrary, it is highly malleable. As Mead sees it, there is no permanent character in any physical object independent of its changes, and so it is with any mental state - that is, the past is not even past!

The present is part of existence; there would not be time without an existing reality. But also there is no present without a past that lasts and keeps transforming itself as an enduring part of that very existence. There is, indeed, an identifiable permanence in any emergent change. This is the inescapable paradox of becoming, the fact that the essence of a concreteness in process is an irreducible, constant difference-in-identity and identity-in-difference. Every effort at trying to dismantle the paradox, or dismiss the contradiction as a confusing misunderstanding, only ends up in perverting our comprehension of the facts, in veiling reality in the flesh as it really is. Facts are often intrinsically contradictory, a situation nobody can do anything about, nor one we should attempt to dismiss for the sake of simplifying our thinking.

Neither the past nor the future can, then, be removed from the present; nevertheless, some presents belong to such an energetic undertaking, are so much dominated by the act of consummation of which they are a part that both past and future fade away from our attention. This is particularly true of creative acts during which the overall sense of time recedes. In these instances we cannot really focus on the fact that we are existing now, even though such now is so strongly lived. Charles Peirce hinted at this situation when he commented on how "extremely difficult it is to bring our attention to elements of experience which are continually present..., to perceive what stares us in the face with a glare that, once noticed, becomes almost oppressive with its insistence."10

Without a sameness that endures, there can be no perceivable object, no memory, no self. On the other hand, without real change,
There can be no process in the cosmos, no creative stream of consciousness; the universe and the mind would be reduced to static photographs of themselves, timeless and boring. This inevitable contradiction is a fundamental pillar in the architecture of reality. Such ontological paradox is what makes it possible to identify entities in a world of pervasive change, as well as for the products of constant change to last after having been created. We must welcome this paradoxical situation as a universal characteristic of existence, indeed as a metaphysical blessing.

Sometimes the present that emerges brings with itself a new ecstasy, a kind that is in contrast with the Proustian reliving of a rapturous past. There is an element of melancholy in reliving good memories; there is no melancholy in a present exhilaration that owes its existence to an inspired exertion. During such an act of inspiration it is eminently clear that reality is the locus of the present rather than the present the locus of reality. This example of an inspired action shows indeed that it is the essential insertion of the present into reality that makes ecstasies of the present possible, that lets the past be substantially changed, a past that therefore has no possible finality, and further, that lets the stepping stones of future achievements be laid down now.

3. The Present is Always Filled

Even if one chooses to be detached from some aspects of reality, to live in the present implies to be engaged with actuality. However, this engagement does not involve being continually aware of the entirety of what happens to us now. Mead said that we are "unable to reveal all that is involved in any present"; this is so not only because each present has no discernible beginning or end, but also because the complexity of the reality in which the present remains inserted is inexhaustible. The fact is that every present breaks down into a vast, infinite interpresent, a vast, infinite network of presences, each enjoying its own duration, a place where past and future dwell, lest they have no existence at all. The present is not even a pure present!

It is, of course, difficult to remove ourselves mentally from the conception of time as a one-dimensional line of point-like instants, a deceiving cosmological extrapolation of the Euclidean line in geometry. But this universal prejudice we must transcend if we are ever going to apprehend the concrete nature of time. This prejudice is none other than one more example of how readily we are to be
satisfied with blatant abstractions as though they were the complete picture of reality. In order to persuade the reader of how pervasive this kind of prejudice really is, let us list the following additional examples namely: (i) All too often we allow an outstanding memory of a past event to erase all other recollections of the same event, which henceforth we fully identify with the characteristics of what we remember. (ii) The image we have formed of a given person is taken to be the true picture of the real person. (iii) Scientists are also far from being immune to falling into the kind of fallacy we are discussing: a physicist once commented to Werner Heisenberg that "space is simply the place of operations," taking a theoretical construct as fully representing the real space. To this remark Heisenberg replied: "Nonsense, space is blue and birds fly through it" - a sane rejoinder indeed. Even though, on reflection, it is obviously erroneous to judge on the basis of such abstract simplifications, we do continue to think in such simplistic ways. In fact, we are satisfied thinking that the present is a point in time, empty as a consequence, because a point can have no parts; a selective memory of a past fact reflects the fact in its entirety; a "bad" image of a person gives us the whole person; a physical aspect of the world is what a fitting theory makes of it. The danger of these and other similar errors of thought resides in how negatively they affect the breadth and acuteness of our perception, and, in the end, the conception of reality with which we function consciously or subconsciously.

The present, then, is never empty. It cannot be, even if boredom and similar states of mind occasionally make us think so. Some presents do not start anything new, of course; they are merely passive unions of past and future. However, such passive coalescences may generate new associations, become indirectly a prime mover despite their lack of any other kind of innovation. The inertia of the past combined with the accessibility of the future can generate by themselves a forceful action at a given moment. But generally, even when what happens now creatively dominates the situation, that kind of blending is still a factor that helps to fill the present continually. Indeed, the present is always filled.

4. **Action is a prime locus of the present**

The whole of reality is the locus of the present, but the real action that takes place now is especially so. Action can be inertial, the predictable result of a past prime mover, or it can be creative, the
unpredictable outburst of an emergent origination. Without the latter there would be no uniqueness, no novelty, only a ghastly sameness lasting forever. Creative action is usually how creativity manifests itself, be the action physical or mental. From the position that an atomic particle actually takes from a hazy spectrum of possibilities to an act of personal inspiration, creativity generally appears wrapped in the form of action. The cosmos and the mind are constantly visited by creative bursts, quantum leaps into the unknown, which makes of both, cosmos and mind, sites of wonder, at turns delightful and frightening. These outbursts of creativity are what profoundly change the meaning of the past. As already hinted, the past is not independent of the present: what happened yesterday can be totally impacted by what today brings about creatively. And since there is neither a nearest past nor a nearest future to the actual present, no immediate contiguity of acts, the creative aim of the present keeps leaping over intervals of time, back and forth, making it impossible to live the present without going beyond it at the same time. This merely reflects the indetermination generated by the impossibility of strictly localizing any action in space. An action spreads inevitably into a concomitant action at a distance. This nonlocality of actions, the fact that actions are ubiquitous in space as well as in time, is one of the fundamental marks of concreteness, and carries with it the impossibility of finitely localizing the present. A Marcel Proust bent on pursuing a search of the present could describe accurately in deep detail this predicament of ours; through vivid streams of consciousness he could portray how the present emerges, how life is lived present after present, how, in fact, acts create time.

5. Energy is the ultimate source of the present

Because action produces an immediate field of effects, every action clearly detects the presence of an underlying energy. Indeed, there is no action without energy to draw from, hence no time without energy from which to emerge. Energy, though, is not directly observable; it is detectable only indirectly through action. Even the word “energy” itself has a more or less hazy meaning. No definition of energy, either taken from physics or any other discipline, is really satisfactory, relying as they all are on either circular characterizations or on examples – something that, in fact, is true of any attempt to define any basic category.
Energy is introduced in textbooks by referring to its effects on other entities, in both physical and mental situations. The nature of energy itself is never truly captured in words. As with any concrete entity, only an infinite sentence could begin to approach its infinite content.

We have learned from physics that mass is really one form of energy, the latter being the more fundamental entity of the two, and also that energy is always embedded in large dynamical systems. Whether energy can be considered a substance or not is really a matter of how substance is defined, regardless, energy does have effects on many substances within its reach. Nothing in absolute isolation could be reached by energy. Energy is an entity-in-relation, a relativistic aspect of reality, never a mere property of physical objects or minds. It is within the overall configuration of a related system of entities that energy instigates new events.

The insurmountable difficulty one encounters when trying to thoroughly define or characterize energy should not be a surprise at all. As we said, such is also the case with any fundamental concept we use in our thoughts. Even in mathematics, the most explicit of languages, no basic primitive idea can be defined directly; it can only be introduced indirectly through principles, axioms, or postulates in which they appear. Moreover, its meaning can be only partially grasped when interpreted in suitable models that satisfy the principles, axioms, or postulates. Since an infinite number of such models can usually be offered, we can never say that we have really captured the complete meaning of any primitive idea. We can only elucidate a basic category partially through specific applications. In connection with energy, let us look at one particular example outside the field of physics. Nagarjuna distinguished energy from zest and vigilance. His psychological characterization is encapsulated in this analogy: "Zest is comparable to a person who, at the point of departure, makes an initial decision to go. Energy is comparable to a person who, once on the march, does not stop. Vigilance is comparable to a person who persists so that his stride never slackens." Energy in this model is, then, what once on the march makes us keep going. There would be no steadfastness without the "virtue of energy," as it is called in Buddhism. We feel we understand in part what energy is through examples like this, although we do perceive that no single exemplification can exhaust the whole semantic content of the word "energy."

Principles and axioms, then, can be characterized as linguistic expressions leading to unlimited reservoirs of examples, applications,
and models, each providing a different intuition of the concepts involved, a different "spread of thought," each bringing a new illumination, a new way to grasp the concepts. Even though each concept cannot be circumscribed completely, we do recognize its semantic presence in every one of its pertinent embodiments. This infinitude of content is implicit in any course of thought, in the meaning of any theory: it is simply an inevitable fact of rational cogitation. As we pierce the meaning of a concept with examples, we cannot help but be aware of the existence of a limitless semantic landscape that extends beyond what our finite mind can ever hope to apprehend fully.

Now, in physics one distinguishes between actual and potential energy: that is, the energy exerted at the moment versus the energy in reserve, ready to be actualized eventually by special interventions. Potential energy may originate in past acts or in delayed objectives. We shelved work that we knew we had to go back to eventually in order to finish it properly. We badly desire to start a project that obstacles prevent us from pursuing; the frustrated desire possesses, embedded in its memory, potential energies that we may be able to actualize, to set in action under suitable circumstances. However, energy is enacted now or not at all. We search into the present to use the energies embedded in its midst: its own, or alien ones that the present allows into itself. Action is the outward appearance of effectively applied energy. Clearly, energy is the opposite of an ideal essence. Energy is real and effective, while essences are only abstractions extracted from the real, aspects of the real whose reality vanishes as soon as the real vanishes. There is no heaven of essences waiting to be tapped. There is instead a huge reservoir of energies, potential or actual, stretched both spatially and temporally throughout the universe as well as inwardly in every corner of our mind. On these energies we rely, and our personal energy is only part of the universal spread. Wisdom is a discerning way to direct energies fruitfully, to know when, how, and in what directions to push and pull productively here and there, with the knowledge that small interventions can grow up to, lead to huge consequences: we deflect the path of a movement slightly, and this small investment of energy may usher monumental results in the long run, the art of deflection being like a magician's touch to put energy to good and efficient use.

We should, then, look at the present in search of all the throbbing energy it contains. And when we see the present as the interpresent
that it is, then we find the presence of not one but several crisscrossing currents of flowing energy, sometimes convergent to a harmonious synthesis of actions, sometimes clashing in conflict with one another. In the latter case, we cannot help but become engulfed by the whirlwind of contrasting tendencies in motion that force us to act in contrary ways simultaneously. Despite the deceptive prejudice of centuries against all contradictions, such discordant engagement into opposite actions may be highly fruitful. Often, by avoiding the subsumption of contradictory trends into a single abstract and sterile unity, by keeping alive the antinomies, one can productively revel in the energy that such antinomies generate. In effect, this happens more commonly than one might think. Now, these various currents of energy of the interpresent may contain a push from the past or a pull from the future, or just emerge and spend themselves in a short flash without displaying any temporal direction. Whatever their dynamic character, though, they now all interact together at once.

Strong as the memory of a past event or the image of a desired objective may be, they can never match the vividness of present existence, the turgidity of what we are experiencing or doing at the moment. Such vividness and turgidity are so compelling that they cannot be ignored: we are forced to deal with them in some way. The superior urgency of the present makes the past and the future unclear; its irresistible forcefulness engages us with the world at hand, whether we like it or not. Even in a state of boredom, dejection, or despair it is impossible for us to set aside the present. The colors, the smells, the sounds, the tactile textures that surround us, our own sense of life, the pain or pleasure we are experiencing, all together erect a real dwelling whose concreteness is overpowering.

Because the present is one of the faces of energy, the time when paths can actually be opened is now. This is also the time when choices from any ramification of possible actions can effectively be made. Each present is many presents: its consequences branch constantly; indeed, at each moment we live many lives. All this is eminently clear during creative activities. An artist, a writer, a composer, for example, are oblivious of time while they work: when they are “living in the present,” choosing, they are the present in all its many-sidedness. This is true also during any intense, involving exertion, a process where
energy shines as the ultimate primitive entity that sustains any person’s existence.

6. *Energy may come out of bareness*

That energy is not itself directly observable is a fact of physics. But this does not mean that energy is in any way ghostly or necessarily in the background. It may come to the fore unmistakably, especially when its presence emerges out of the barest forms of existence. In connection with this type of emergence, Buddhism claims that “an inexhaustible mine of energy obtains just because of the emptiness of things.” The word “emptiness” employed in this citation and elsewhere in Buddhist texts as a translation of the Sanskrit sunyata is highly misleading. It is used essentially as a tool to cleanse the mind of misconceptions and troublesome desires; even writers like Nagarjuna end up by attaching to “emptiness” a wealth of existential attributes and powers. “Emptiness” in Buddhism is more akin to bareness than to nothingness. In effect, ontologically speaking, there is no emptiness; nothingness does not exist. Let us look at this situation more closely, since it involves an important aspect of energy: its ability to surge unaided from bareness itself.

It is well established in cosmology that it is senseless to speak of empty space. The universe is everywhere pervaded by radiation as well as by the presence of many other kinds of physical entities, especially fields, all of which can hardly be considered “nothing.” The most fundamental reason why there is no empty space anywhere is because space – just as time – is a property of reality, which makes of empty space an ontological impossibility. Neither space nor time can ever be void of existence because both of them are aspects of existence. “Emptiness” can only have a very relative meaning, be that in physics or in Buddhism. Nagarjuna, Chandrakirti, etc., were struggling to express a difficult concept for which every other word seemed inadequate. To them, “emptiness” was an operational term, used to empty the mind of superfluous, distracting contents, not to refer to an ontological vacuum as the ultimate residue of any kind of purifying analysis. What one finds inevitably after a systematic “cleansing” of consciousness, or after any exhaustive physical analysis by elimination, is bare existence, not identifiable “atoms” of any kind, but a pure spreading field of reality in which mutual, dependent origination of actual entities rules, an absolute relativity of creation. No eternal objects, no isolated items, but omnipresent waves and spreading fields and entities, entities with multiple location,
nonlocal in the sense that their place in the cosmos cannot possibly
be truly circumscribed. In part and whole, reality is ubiquitous and
has no room for absolute emptiness: the interpenetration of actualities
fills the remotest corners of cosmos and mind with each and every
one of such actualities.

Bareness, then, is not nothingness; it is a state of existence. To
make this fully clear in connection with Buddhism, let us quote
Scherbatsky. He says: "We can translate the word sunya by relative
or contingent, and the term sunyata by relativity or contingency.
This is better than to translate it by 'void.' The term sunya is in
Mahayana a synonym of dependent existence and means not
something void, but something 'devoid' of independent reality, with
the implication that nothing short of the whole possesses independent
reality, and with the further implication that the whole forbids every
formulation by concept or speech, since they can only bifurcate
reality and never directly seize it - this is attested by an overwhelming
mass of evidence in all the Mahayana literature. That this term never
meant a mathematical void or simple nonexistence is most
emphatically insisted upon. Those who suppose that sunya means
void are declared to have misunderstood the term, they have not
understood the purpose for which the term has been introduced.
'We are relativists, we are not negativists,' insists Chandrakirti."

Now, to speak of dependent existence and interpenetration of
entities seems to point to a monism of actuality: if everything is
related to everything else, then all reduces necessarily to one single
object - a false conclusion! For lack of a better term, Scherbatsky
and Obermiller refer to what they call "Buddhist monism." But
"monism" is a misleading word in reference to Buddhism, or to any
theory that basically puts relations as being genetically prior to terms.
Just as "emptiness" really points to dependent existences, the
presumed "monism" of Buddhism points to a pluralism of entities
in which each entity's extension covers the whole that contains the
entity. In both world and mind each distinguishable entity branches
out to reach and overlap anything within its range. There is nothing
extraordinarily transcendent or startling in this assertion: rather, it
conveys a routine matter of fact. A regular example of this is that of
a physical field of forces, a concept with far-reaching implications
not sufficiently exploited outside of physics. Michael Faraday, who
introduced the notion of field of forces in physics, arrived at the
following natural conclusion: "Each atom extends, so to say,
throughout the whole of the solar system, yet always retaining its
In Search of the Present

own center of force." This is not a claim for a monistic system of all atoms, a fusion of all of them into one single physical being; on the contrary, it points to an overall pluralism of entities, each a center of forces, each covering the whole cosmos in an especially ordered perspective. Another regular example is the one of physiology: each organ is the center of a special physiological function that extends over the whole organism, is the whole organism in a singular functional perspective. As for time, we can say that each present also extends "beyond itself," that is, beyond any limited location that one can assign to it on a first approximation. Time exists, but just as with the two previous examples, it has multiple location: each distinguishable moment stretches to past and future moments to absorb them all as components placed in a singular order.

Looking attentively then into what energy is ultimately, we find ourselves often face to face with some form of bare existence from which energy emerges, a bare existence which, by virtue of the universal co-dependence of all the parts in which it can be imperfectly sliced, is fundamentally unlimited. Bare existence is the entire mass of reality devoid of any specific configuration generated by physical forces or mental conceptions. Existence begins in a state of bareness, and preserves this bare condition underneath even after it either shapes itself or is being shaped by forces created by distinguishable entities as these emerge in its midst. This condition of bareness never disappears entirely, no matter how events hide it from our perception. Often, when energy begins to work suddenly at a given moment and we can find no explanation for such surge, it is a mass of bare existence whose transformation accounts for the presence of such working energy. There is nothing metaphysically recondite about this last statement: it is a routine fact that differentiated events come to the fore as a condensation of a relatively undifferentiated mass of reality. The absolute relativity of things requires that every event be placed in a diffuse background, a background that, carefully analysed, reveals an undisguised bareness underneath. This is bareness, not nothingness - an extension of unhinged existence ready to articulate itself in an unlimited number of different ways. Leibniz's famous query, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" implies that the existence of something preempts the existence of nothing. But if the cosmos is a plenum of existence without empty cleavages or gaps, it must, then, steadily retain for itself the condition of bareness as a necessary factor with which to make possible the constant partition of reality into distinguishable sequences of related occurrences - distinguishable, not fully separable, for nothing is ever
fully segregated from the naked substratum of being from which everything evolves.

7. The present has stages

Every action has stages: a prelude, the exertion, a postlude. Like every seemingly instantaneous event, there is usually an incubation, a delivery, and a lyses. Ordinarily we act moved by memories, or pulled perhaps by a “nostalgia for the future,” even when we think that our acts are pure impromptus. The truth is that we must reckon with action as a process with stages. Just like the present itself, these stages have no boundaries; they are linked by zones of transition that play the role of diffuse connecting regions: no line boundaries, no sharp barriers, ever. All the stages of an action may be included in the act’s present, and each plays a different role in it. They are identifiable but not fully separable. For example, there is no instantaneous act of will; even the most abrupt decision breaks down into: (i) a wish, (ii) an effective preparation that, even if briefly, induces and makes up the potential execution, (iii) the decision itself, identifiable but not capable of being truly isolated, and (iv) the postlude, the beginning of the decision’s consequences. The same is the case with an act of thought, even if it appears to be a sudden revelation in the middle of a “dark night of the soul.” Such act breaks down into: (i) a brief period of questioning without an answer, (ii) the rise of the conception itself, and (iii) the thought’s aftermath.

Such is the case also with an act of love, as well as with purely physical actions. All these various kinds of stages are part of the respective presents into which they inject themselves.

In turn, each stage may have its own stages, be they physical or mental in nature, each consisting in gradual changes in fundamental characteristics. For example, (i) all stages of the present have a temporal direction that may switch from forward to backward, thus creating substages within the given stage. (ii) The strength with which reality holds on to the present of a given act can, within a particular stage, increase or weaken, thus producing contrasting phases - again, new stages within a stage. (iii) The specific effectiveness with which reality operates into each of the present’s stages is also not necessarily uniform; it can generate by itself stages within stages. There are innumerable examples of this successive articulation into parts of parts in the realm of subatomic physics. To make clear that there is nothing unusual in such gradual partition of reality, let us think of a typical example from our conscious life.
Very often we act mechanically, out of duty, going through the motions, so to speak, then, in the course of the act — be that in the preparation, in the execution, or in the aftereffects as we look back — we become suddenly or gradually engaged in the act, internally involved with it. This transition evidently breaks the act's stage into two substages. We experience such kind of mental transition as a natural matter of course, and we seldom think much about it. Clearly, each stage can reach its own kind of relative plenitude, its own way of peaking and then of connecting with other peaks. Stages may come and go fleetingly, but always add to the complex structure of the present. This is obvious in any basic transient physiological act: a heartbeat, inhaling, tasting, lifting an arm, touching — as physiologists well know, these are by no means simple events: in each of them there are many minuscule subacts, as well as changes of direction and degrees of fulfillment. The act's stages make of the present a little universe in itself, a microcosmos, a peak of reality dressed as a now whose spurious appearance of unity hides its multiple interpresent.

Not to see the present the way we have described it would make of causality a supreme mystery. Were the present to be the independent point-like abstraction we learned to think of from time immemorial, cause and effect would be impossible. The present would be void of content, the past could not interact with the present or the present with the future. In fact, it would make no sense to talk about the present's direction. Will would be unthinkable. Wishes could not create attitudes, and deliberation could not end up in decisions: the stages that lead to the act of will must be co-present with the resolution to make it happen. In general, gropings for orientation, or reversals of direction, would be beyond the bounds of possibility. It is the past in the present that creates material cause, and it is the future in the present that creates final cause.

We wish to emphasize that the preceding analyses apply to the most exclusively physical events and situations as well. Consider an inert object in motion, a falling stone, say. Its direction is gravitationally imposed. The stone is steadily subject to constant forces of attraction. The stone's acceleration at a given moment contains and reflects all the previous stages of the fall, at the same time that the direction of the fall is continually affected by other concurrent events, clashes with other stones, etc. Thinking along the lines of Michael Faraday, we can say that the rest of the universe — past and future — has a specific hold on each stage of the moving
stone; it is part of the stone’s cosmological constitution. We are, then, a far cry from conceiving the fall of the stone as a mere continuous sequence of instantaneous positions. Because each stage of the fall contains the memory of all the previous pushing stages as well as the pulling of forthcoming destinations, it is, then, a monumental mistake to see the fall of a stone as a simple descent along a one-dimensional line. In fact, the physical universe would stop fully if, in this as well as in any other physical process, the previous and following phases were not a part in each stage of the process, no matter how brief the stage. There would be no consummation, not even a single tendency.

We have described changing entities and events, both mental and physical, as exhibiting under careful analysis a rather intricate temporal organization. The same can be observed in something as intangible as a point of view, both physical or mental. Although a point of view is not a solid entity, it does have an undeniable reality. A mental viewpoint is the overall frame of mind of the self at a given moment—clearly, a changeable reality. In cosmology, the reality of each point of view, each moving center of reference, plays a most fundamental role in relativity theory, according to which no center of reference can be taken as absolute in any way, nor can its overall view of the cosmos be taken as complete: a “complete” view would need all the other concomitant views to make up what is, in effect, the truly infinite multiplicity of perspectives that together constitute moment to moment our plural universe—the multiverse in which we exist.

As a consequence of what we have just said, each viewpoint cannot be seen at all as a kind of mathematical point without dimension, be that in the mind or in the world. Rather than a point in time or in space, viewpoints extend indefinitely and cover the whole of consciousness and the world. As far as the mind is concerned, points of view provide the energy to apprehend internal and external entities in a given prefigured order. To judge means to activate a point of view, which implies engaging the mind into an actual duration, organizing our perception along specific lines and into specific frames. Viewpoints lead to extended, unique ways of grasping reality; as such, they generate lasting attitudes and represent specific mental ways of looking at anything. They create priorities, and by so doing they relegate some aspects of mind and world to oblivion. A productive conversation is a counterpoint of viewpoints, be they in agreement
or in opposition. Social conflict is an intersection of presents with points of view at variance with one another. In addition, we have a viewpoint that is totally in focus as long as it lasts, or hazy and then capable of fully adjusting to aspects of reality that are intrinsically diffuse. Exact apprehension is not necessarily sharply delineated: an essentially vague fact calls for a hazy apprehension in order to be captured with a reasonable degree of adequacy.

Let us stop our semantic investigation here, aware that the search for the present has not been completed — as could well have been expected, since such is the case with the comprehension of any concrete matter of fact. We do hope, however, to have made clear that our ancestral prejudices regarding the matters here discussed cannot possibly give us anything but the most superficial approximations.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

2. H. de Balzac, "The Unknown Masterpiece" (*Le Chef-d’œuvre inconnu, Comédie Humaine*, vol. 2), ibid.
Beyond Binaries
The Category of Body and Ontological Tripartition

SAUGATA BHADURI

Dominant interpretations of Western philosophy have presented it as being epistemologically and ontologically binary, with a schism between what are cursorily called ideation and sensation, mind and matter, running through most of it, dividing it into two sets of dogmatic and non-penetrating schools. This rigid dichotomy is conveniently presented in the academic theatrics of Platonic Realism versus Aristotelian Nominalism in the Graeco-Roman age, Cartesian Rationalism versus Lockean Empiricism after the Renaissance, and Idealism versus Materialism in the nineteenth century.

However, quite at odds with this mind-matter dichotomy, an interesting feature in ‘theory’, that is contemporary attempts to read literature and culture, whether of the politically charged cultural materialist type or the relatively apolitical structuralist type, is a focus on a certain ontological tripartition of the domains of analysis into mind, matter and body.

On the one hand, political attempts to read culture in terms of race, class and gender refer precisely to the three domains mentioned above, race being primarily an ideological ‘mental’ construct based on language, religion, etc., class being straightforwardly ‘material’, and gender being primarily located in ‘physical’ disparities. Keeping aside Marxist, feminist and anti-colonialist modes of reading, where the tripartition is obvious but exclusive, with only one ontological pole being taken up for each mode, and turning towards exponents of more inclusive political analyses like Foucault or Habermas, the ontological tripartition takes up more interesting hues. A cursory glance at Foucault’s *œuvre* confirms his engagement with this tripartition. He begins by relating power to knowledge in his earliest works, *Mental Illness and Psychology* (1954) and *Madness and*
Civilization (1961), and soon includes the body into the schema in his The Birth of the Clinic (1963), thus foreboding a tripartite structure. By his The Order of Things (1966), the tripartition is sufficiently concretized, so that he can discuss the evolution of human sciences in terms of the three disciplines of language, economics and life sciences. The tripartition gets a political turn after 1968, to be reflected in Foucault’s subsequent works, first in lectures and articles written on the political nature of linguistic discourse, next in his Discipline and Punish (1975), where he studies power in the domain of socio-politico-economic materiality, and finally in his three-volume The History of Sexuality (1976, 1984, 1984). Similarly, Habermas shows in his Knowledge and Human Interests (1968), that both ‘scientism’ and the hermeneutic tradition present inadequate and reductionist views of knowledge, with the former’s objectivism and the latter’s subjectivism hiding the politically motivated nature of all knowledge. For him, this system of power is perpetrated through certain ‘techniques’, comprising the ‘technocracy’ through which knowledge is dispensed in advanced capitalist societies. In his Legitimation Crisis (1973), Habermas shows how there are three main types of techniques: those concerning a material production of ‘things’, those concerning a (mental) significational use of ‘signs’, and those concerning a domination of physical individual beings. Furthermore, he takes up the same tripartition in his Communication and the Evolution of Society (1976), to show how in advanced capitalism, to assure its governance, a regime cannot but take care of three domains: the knowledge or policy behind production, the actual material production and fulfilment of collective needs, and also individual physiological needs.

On the other hand, within the relatively apolitical pole of structuralist analysis of narratives too, one can see the same ontological tripartition at work in the likes of Dumézil, Greimas or Barthes, who also show a similar insistence on tripartition of matrices of structuration into the domains of significational communication, material power and physical desire. Georges Dumézil in his Mythe et épopee (3 vols., 1968, 1971, 1973) talks about the functional tripartition of Indo-European ideology, so that its folktales get articulated with one of the three archetypal forms as their protagonists: a warrior, a man of knowledge, or a king. The title of Vol. II of this book—Mythe et épopee: Types épiques indo-européens: un héros, un sorcier, un roi—makes the tripartition clear. The ontological tripartition thus arrived at gets a syntactic form in Algirdas-Julien
Greimas and his actantial model presented in *Structural Semantics* (1966), where the categories of the triad are given syntagmatic forms in performantial, contractual and disjunctural syntagms, and paradigmatic forms of desire, knowledge and power in the narrative syntax. For Greimas, all narratives can be conceived as the action of three primary syntagms in these three domains I have already mentioned. The tripartition thus formalized gets a more radicalized form in Roland Barthes, who in his analysis of the 'classic text' in *S/Z* (1970), takes up these three categories as the very domains in which dominant ideology works to set up its normative narrative forms so that an economy of signs, sexes and fortunes determines the normative structure of a narrative, and in a subversion of which lies an unearthing of the limit of such dominant 'classic' forms.

This tripartition has very interesting parallels in classical Indian philosophy, where, as opposed to the general duality in Western thought, where epistemic validity is ascribed either to sensual perception or to ideational inference, most of the philosophical schools believe in the simultaneous and equal validity of not only these two epistemologies—pratīyakṣa and anumāna, but also of a third one—that of verbal testimony or āgama. In most of classical Indian philosophy accepting a tripartition of epistemic modes, the duality of mind and matter in Western philosophy is dissolved into an ontological tripartition, and one sees how right from intra-individual qualities to elements of the cosmological trinity, ancient Indian philosophy projects a tripartition of domains into the triad of mentality, materiality and physicality. At the most atomistic level of intra-individuality, all schools of classical Indian philosophy believe that every individual is equipped with three basic guṇa-s, or qualities—sattva, or the propensity to knowledge, rajas, or the propensity towards material accretion, and tamas, or the propensity to physical luxuriation. Accordingly, at the extra-individual level, classical Indian philosophy envisages four puruṣārthas, or goals in an individual life, three of which—dharma, or the pursuit of knowledge and moral ethics; artha, or the pursuit of wealth and material power; and kāma, or the following of the needs of the body—correspond to the three basic propensities, and the fourth, mokṣa, is a means to escape the excesses of these three. Similarly, in the social domain, it provides for three upper castes—the brāhmaṇa, dedicated to knowledge, the ksatriya, dedicated to warfare and acts of physical prowess, and the vaiśya, dedicated to business and material pursuits—with a fourth lower caste, the Śūdra, operating as labour
in all the three modes of production thus delineated. Moving over to Hindu cosmology, the creation, sustenance and destruction of the universe are credited to a trinity, which itself consists of a set of three feminine and three masculine principles and deities. Thus, one has three goddesses—Sarasvati, the goddess of knowledge, Laksmi, the goddess of material wealth, and Kali or Durga, the goddess of physical prowess and fertility—corresponding to the three poles of the triad, and three gods as their respective consorts—Brahma, credited with creating this world, Viṣṇu, who sustains the world, and Śiva, who destroys the world. Therefore, the triad of cosmological principles that classical Indian philosophy cultivates—that of srṛṣṭi (creation), sthiti (sustenance) and laya (destruction)—is also connected to the basic tripartition of modes of structuration into the domains of mentality, materiality and physicality.

The spectacular nature of such eclectic comparativism apart, it would be of much greater interest to see how within Western philosophy itself there have been repeated attempts to go beyond the epistemological dichotomy of thinking and feeling, and inject within the mind-matter dyad the third ontological category of the body. What would be thus more rewarding is to see when and how and under what circumstances the dominantly dichotomous Western thought shows signs of tripartition—either of an epistemic nature, by somehow bridging the gap between ideation and sensation into a third epistemology, or of an ontological nature by making body emerge as a positivity between mind and matter. Thus can one trace a genealogy of contemporary theory, whose difference with dominant constructions of erstwhile philosophy is marked majorly by its insistence on the category of the body and the resultant ontological tripartition.

Embarking on such a project, one's attention is drawn immediately to the interstices between the periods of dominant dichotomy in Western thought. One sees how the entire corpus of medieval scholastic logic comes between the Graeco-Roman age and the Renaissance; Romantic philosophy stands sandwiched between the post-Renaissance episteme and the nineteenth century, and of course, there is a huge body of thought from the end of the nineteenth century to the contemporary day. It would be worthwhile therefore to see if these three interstices show signs of a similar tripartition. Interestingly, one can show that both medieval scholastic logic and Romanticism inculcate embodied imagination as a third epistemological category beyond mental ideation and material sensation, resulting also in a
physicalist ontological tripartition, and by the end of the nineteenth century, the works of Darwin, Marx and Freud clearly show the appearance as ontological categories of the domains of physicality, mentality and materiality, respectively.

Medieval philosophy, generally thought to be operative in the period between St. Augustine (354-430) and William of Ockham (c.1300-1349), marks the development of a third epistemological category that Victor Cousin has called ‘conceptualism’, which stands equidistant from realism and nominalism, and leads to the possibility of the first tripartition in Western thought. Augustine fulfils both the epistemological and ontological needs of the tripartition to a certain extent, when he provides for an epistemic category between sensation and reason by stating that beyond the five external senses, there is also an ‘interior sense’, which is distinct from reason, because even animals, whose difference with humans lies in their not being rational, possess it, and when he asserts in his *Sermons* (CL, 3, 4) that the rationale of philosophy is to provide the means for a happy physical life. Similarly, William of Ockham classifies the terms of discourse into three categories: mental, spoken (i.e. physically articulated), and written (i.e. materially present), and goes on to show how universals are not realities that exist outside the mind either as objects or as absolute rational truths, but are exclusively mental ‘concepts’, residing within the embodied space of the mind or the brain. Having dealt with the two temporal extremes of medieval philosophy, I will now turn to Peter Abélard (1079-1142), who is surely the most important figure of the period from the current perspective.

On the one hand, Abélard refutes the ‘ultra-realism’ of Remigius of Ozerre (d. 905), John Scotus Eriugena (d. c.877-79) and St. Anselm (1033-1109), who, following Boethius (c.470-c.525) and his *Commentaries* on the *Isagoge* of Porphyry, claim that all substances have behind them an ‘extra-mental’ ideal unitary reality, by showing that the commonality in universals is simultaneously and entirely present in each of the singulaters and constitutes their very substance. On the other, Abélard also attacks the view of William of Champeaux (1070-1121) that there is one ‘material essence’ in all individuals of the same kind and also his ‘indifferentist’ doctrine, or that a universal is formed on the basis of the lack of difference between individuals of a certain kind. For Abélard, such a universal is not possible, because being a collection of individual parts, it cannot be prior to the individuals, and thus not universal. This makes Abélard conclude that there is no universality extra-
mentally, either in the world of *a priori* rational principles or in the world of things, because only the mind can form out of them universal concepts through abstraction. His stance is thus of ‘moderate realism’, as opposed to the ultra-realism mentioned earlier as also nominalism. This potential bridging of the realist-nominalist divide leads Abelard to three sets of tripartition. At an epistemological level, Abelard shows in his *Tractatus de intellectibus*, how there are three faculties of human cognition: *sensus*, or the empirical sense organs, *imaginatio*, or the conceptual apparatus that receives and orders sense impressions, and the *intellectus*, or the rational category that forms universals out of these ordered impressions. What is to be noted is that this *imaginatio* can easily be seen to operate in an embodied physical space, the embodied mind, as opposed to the essentially material sources of sensation, and the very ideational sources of intellection. It should also be noted that the way in which the *imaginatio* orders sensual information is considered by Abelard to be idiosyncratic, thereby hinting at its existential nature, something to be determined in accordance with the individual’s actual physical existence. At an ontological level, Abelard shows in his *Logica* how it is through words that the *imaginatio* sifts particulars as universals, and distinguishes in his *Dialectique* sounds which signify by nature, like the barking of dogs, and those which signify by convention, to lead to his tripartition of *res* (things), physically articulated *vox* (words as mere vocalized breath, *flatus vocis*), and the mental and significative *sermo* (words as ideas). At the cosmological level, as opposed to traditional monist Christian theology, which, in spite of recognizing the trinity, dissolves the tripartition in the unitary godhead, Abelard attributes distinct capacities to the three elements of the trinity. He equates the Father with power (*potentia*), the Son with wisdom (*sapientia*) and the Holy Spirit with goodness (*benignitas*), thereby coming very close to the power-knowledge-desire tripartition already talked about, without the desire or well-being pole being identical with the body in this case.

Just as medieval scholastic logic comes in an interstice between the dominant dichotomies of classical realism/nominalism and post-Renaissance rationalism/empiricism, Romanticism also occurs as a philosophy in the interstice between rationalism/empiricism and idealism/materialism. Accordingly, it can be expected that Romantic philosophy would also show both the features of scholastic logic: that of devising a third alternate epistemology which breaks through the dichotomy of sensation and ideation, and that of resorting to an
Beyond Binaries

ontological tripartition, introducing the body in the dual schema of mind and matter. This is precisely what one can notice in Romanticism. The epistemological shift in Romanticism from both Cartesian Rationalism and Lockeian Empiricism occurs in its construction of the third epistemological category of 'imagination'. On the one hand, this should make one recall the Abelardian category of *imaginatio*. On the other, what is even more interesting is that imagination is ideational and therefore non-empirical, and also imaginary and therefore non-rational, thereby breaking through both the stereotypical epistemic modes of Western thought. Furthermore, Romanticism is characterized by a reliance on the body, and therefore on tripartition, at the other two levels too: ontologically, it talks about physical beauty as the prime category of this world; ethically, it talks about a return to the primal and physical 'nature' on the one hand, and a cultivation of isolationism of the body on the other. This isolation of the body-beautiful can be seen in the Wordsworthian privileging of solitude or when Byron calls himself an 'aristocratic rebel', and idolizes in himself, and in Napoleon, it is the image of the Antichrist, while the passage from sensational 'beauty' to rational 'truth' through the three levels of the pleasure thermometer, comprising mental significational 'music', material 'nature' and physical 'love' can be noted especially in Keats.

Similarly, in the third 'interstice' of the late nineteenth century, one can notice how the new-found category of power and struggle as the base of structuration easily branches off into an ontological tripartition, with three of its most representative thinkers—Charles Darwin (1809-1882), Karl Marx (1818-1883), and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) talking about the 'struggle for existence' in the physical biological domain, 'class struggle' in the material economic domain, and the struggle between contesting drives in the mental psychological domain, respectively. Marx in fact goes on to provide the epistemological tripartition too when he stresses on 'Dialectical Materialism', or that it is only with a combination of dialectics and materialism—of the 'self' and matter—that one can understand the formation of knowledge and society. In fact, his insistence on the mode of economic production being the base of reality is because this is the mode *per excellence* through which the human subject and the material object can come in a relationship.

While divergence from dominant dichotomy, and hence a tripartition of modes of thought both epistemologically and ontologically, would be quite expected of the 'interstices' of Western
philosophy, it may be much more interesting to examine whether right from within the dominantly binary post-Renaissance rationalist/idealist-empiricist/materialist philosophy there rises the possibility of a tripartition of modes of thought, with a bridging of the gap between ideation and sensation and an inclusion of the body in the bipartite polemic. It is with this in mind that the current paper finds Schopenhauer and Berkeley, otherwise trusted custodians of the two antagonistic poles, advocating a bridging of the philosophic schism.

It can be seen how from within high rationalism-idealism, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) takes up the synthetic project of bridging perception and ideation by providing for the category of ‘Will’ in his *The World as Will and Representation* (1818) as the basis of knowledge. Knowledge, for Schopenhauer, is thus neither the product of an immanent rational subjectivity nor an *a priori* domain of inert materiality, but of the bridging of the two, of the ideal subject intending and acting on the material object. Similarly, from within high empiricism, one can find the most remarkable advance in the direction of bridging the gap between sensation and ideation in George Berkeley (1685-1763), who denies the very existence of matter, albeit from an empirical perspective, stating that material objects exist only through being perceived. In his *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), Berkeley shows that first, though all our knowledge is attained through perception, we do not perceive material things themselves, but only colours, sounds and like qualities, which are all ‘mental’ constructs, and secondly, that though first impressions are based on particular instances of matter, knowledge consists in arriving at generalizations from these sensory impressions, and so knowledge, in spite of being based on empirical encounters with matter, exists in the domain of ideas. Thus, from within the dichotomous poles of post-Renaissance Western philosophy, we find the epistemological ‘tripartition’ or the blending of the apparently incollapsible poles of mind and matter into a syncretic third epistemology.

However, what is even more interesting to note is that the tripartition happens even at the ontological level, with the body emerging as a category in the works of many philosophers within this dichotomous episteme, and I devote the rest of the paper to a study of some of these. In this genealogical search for the corporeal bases of ‘theory’ that makes this paper read Spinoza, Rousseau, Helvetius and Condorcet, Comte and Nietzsche as philosophers of the body, taking thought beyond the binary enlightenment, to the ontologically tripartite ‘end of philosophy’.
The first philosopher that I will mention in this context is Spinoza (1634-77), in whom one can locate, in a fashion similar to Bacon or Harvey, a composition of philosophy on the body. His chief works are the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670), *Tractatus Politicus* (1677) and *The Ethics* (1672-77). In the first text, where he discusses religious theory, instead of talking about the ideational category of God, he talks about interpreting the body of the text of *The Bible*. In the second text, dealing with political theory mostly derived from Hobbes, Spinoza talks about the benefits of monarchy, with the body of the monarch representing sovereign power. I would concentrate on the third text concerning the ethics of Spinoza to show how he privileges the body as a category of knowledge and society.

Spinoza’s ethics is quite different from any idealist moral code, because he shows that ‘good’ and ‘evil’ have a physiological basis, where the need for self-preservation determines what is profitable or ‘virtuous’ for the body and what is not. He says,

*Every man, by the laws of his nature, necessarily desires or shrinks from that which he deems to be good or bad*, and also

*The more every man endeavours, and is able to seek what is useful to him—in other words, to preserve his own being—the more is he endowed with virtue; on the contrary, in proportion as a man neglects to seek what is useful to him, that is, to preserve his own being, he is wanting in power.*

These observations make him come to the understanding that, ‘The effort for self-preservation is the first and only foundation of virtue. For prior to this principle nothing can be conceived, and without it no virtue can be conceived.’ Accordingly, Spinoza shows how ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are also essentially related to the body and its motions, and that ‘pleasure’ is a positive emotion while ‘pain’ is not:

*Whatsoever brings about the preservation of the proportion of motion and rest, which the parts of the human body mutually possess is good; contrariwise, whatsoever causes a change in such proportion is bad,... Pleasure in itself is not bad but good; contrariwise, pain in itself is bad.*

The insistence that pain is evil, because it is against the interests of the body, already puts Spinoza against a lot of ascetic Western morality, which would preach of self-castigation and suffering as values. He also shows how, following this logic, some of the standard virtues, like hope, fear, pity, humility and repentance are nothing but vices:
Emotions of hope and fear cannot be in themselves good.... Emotions of hope and fear cannot exist without pain. For fear is pain, and hope cannot exist without fear; therefore these emotions cannot be good of themselves. Pity is a pain, and therefore is in itself bad.... Humility is pain arising from a man's contemplation of his own infirmities.... Repentance is not a virtue, or does not arise from reason, but he who repents of an action is doubly wretched or infirm.... For the man allows himself to be overcome, first, by evil desires; secondly, by pain. 13

What Spinoza basically argues against is the ascetic tendency that would deny people physical enjoyment. Instead, he shows that as long as one does not overdo things, and as long as one does not hurt others, physical enjoyment is the virtue that every 'wise man' should pursue. For Spinoza,

Assuredly nothing forbids man to enjoy himself, save grim and gloomy superstition.... Therefore, to make use of what comes in our way, and to enjoy it as much as possible (not to the point of satiety, for that would not be enjoyment) is the part of a wise man. I say it is the part of a wise man to refresh and recreate himself with moderate and pleasant food and drink, and also with perfumes, with the soft beauty of growing plants, with dress, with music, with many sports, with theatres, and the like, such as every man may make use of without injury to his neighbour. 14

The introduction of the figure of the 'wise man' into the discourse already pre-empts a possible relation between physical enjoyment and knowledge, and Spinoza shows how knowledge, reason and virtues all rest in the self's knowing itself and its physical needs for self-preservation. He says, 'The first foundation of virtue is self-preservation under the guidance of reason. He, therefore, who is ignorant of himself is ignorant of the foundation of all virtues, and consequently of all virtues.' 15 Having provided knowledge with a physical basis, Spinoza next shows how social formations also operate on the basis of the urge for self-preservation. He shows how it is for the biological need for preserving the species that human beings go into all sorts of social bonds, be they that of matrimony, where the species is propagated straightforwardly, or more complicated structures like the state or the community, where the individual needs are looked after in a better way. He says, 'It is before all things useful to men to associate their ways of life, to bind themselves together with such bonds as they think most fitted to gather them all into unity.' 16, and thus shows morality, knowledge and socio-political structures to be ultimately based on the body.
The ‘physical’ ethics of Spinoza is carried further forward by Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78). That he follows Spinoza’s ethic of a morality based on enjoyment is made clear by Rousseau in his autobiography, *Confessions* (1782-89), where he shows gleefully how he was a great sinner, and for his benefit often committed acts that would normally be considered morally wrong. In one of his earliest works, ‘Discourse on Inequality’ (1754), Rousseau reverses the Christian notions of original sin and salvation by proposing an alternate ‘physicalist’ thesis whereby the human being is ‘naturally good’ and corrupted only by institutions and civilization. For Rousseau, under the ‘natural law’ the only inequalities between people are physiological, and it is ‘civil society’ and ‘private property’ that leads to others forms of inequalities. He thus talks of abandoning civilization and going back to the primal physical nature. In another work, *Emile* (1762), Rousseau talks of education according to natural principles and also of a natural religion. His most important book is *The Social Contract* (1762), which I now take up for discussion to see how Rousseau credits the formation of socio-political structures and their hierarchies to ‘physicality’.

Rousseau starts his discussion with a much-quoted statement whereby he shows that conventions that emerge in social life imprison the human being who was naturally free: ‘Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains’.

Having posed the distinction between what is natural, biological and corollarily free, and what is civilizational and constraining, Rousseau proceeds to show how the first social structure was that of the family, where the bonds of physicality between members, as well as its *raison d’être* in physical self-preservation, associate its naturality with a fundamental physicality:

The earliest of all societies, and the only natural one, is the family; yet children remain attached to their father only as long as they have need of him for their own preservation. As soon as this need ceases, the natural bond is dissolved... If they remain united, it is no longer naturally but voluntarily; and the family itself is kept together only by convention.

Rousseau further shows that the later formation of more complicated social structures was out of a physical motive, whereby the strongest enhanced the legitimacy of their power with structures of social obligation, which are therefore fundamentally ‘physical’ and not ‘moral’;
The strongest man is never strong enough to be always master, unless he transforms his power into right, and obedience into duty. Force is a physical power; I do not see what morality can result from its effects. [but] might does not make right, and that we are bound to obey have but lawful authority. 19

This is how the immediacy of a natural physical power gets replaced with a 'social contract', whereby individuals give up some of their power to form a community, which is however dedicated to an even better administration of its members' physical needs of preservation:

"To find a form of association which may defend and protect with the whole force of the community the person and property of every associate, and by means of which each, coalescing with all, may nevertheless obey only himself, and remain as free as before." Such is the fundamental problem of which the social contract furnished the solution. 20

Rousseau shows very clearly that this 'social contract' has a fundamentally physical function to perform, so that it substitutes physical inequalities with an equality in the domain of law:

...instead of destroying natural equality, the fundamental pact, on the contrary, substitutes a moral and lawful equality for the physical inequality which nature imposed upon men, so that although unequal in strength or intellect, they all become equal by convention or legal right. 21

The form that the social contract takes, that is the State, is thus a surrogate for the body itself, its purpose being to create, just like an individual body, a 'common self' and a 'general will' from out of its members. This is why for Rousseau, the State is like a body—a 'body politic':

Forthwith, instead of the individual personalities of all the contracting parties, this act of association produces a moral and collective body, which is composed of as many members as the assembly has voices, and which receives from this same act its unity, its common self (moi), its life, and its will. This public person, which is formed by the union of all the individual members, formerly took the name of city, and now takes that of republic or body politic, which is called by its members State when it is passive, sovereign when it is active, power when it is compared to similar bodies. 22

The State being a body politic, whose point of departure is the natural order of the body, whose purpose is to cover up the shortcomings of individual bodies, and whose end is in constituting a body for itself, its test also lies in the domain of physicality itself, so that for Rousseau
the successful State is that under which 'population' increases the most:

What is the object of political association? It is the preservation and prosperity of its members. And what is the surest sign that they are preserved and prosperous? It is their number and population. All other things being equal, the government under which, without external aids, without naturalization, and without colonies, the citizens increase and multiply most, is infallibly the best. That under which a people diminishes and decays is the worst.

Having outlined the physicalist basis for the social contract and the State that emerges out of it, Rousseau proceeds next to analyse the different wings of power of this body politic. Rousseau identifies two such agencies of government: the legislative, which deals with the 'force' of the power, and the executive, which deals with its 'will' or execution, but I can abandon Rousseau here and move on to other philosophers of the body.

As Rousseau exercised the greatest influence on the French Revolution, it is to be expected that the philosophers of the Revolution, such as Helvetius and Condorcet, carried the physicalist thesis further forward. Claude Adrien Helvetius (1715-71) believed that physical sensibility is the cause for all actions, thoughts, passions, and sociability, and connecting this essentially physical notion to the other two poles of materiality and mentality, he says that differences between individuals are due to differences in factors of upbringing like education, and not because of an ideal 'genius'. Because of his radical materialist-physicalist and anti-clerical views, his book *De l'Esprit* (1758) was condemned by the Sorbonne. Condorcet (1743-94) takes the notion of physicality in knowledge and social formation to theories of actual practice. On the one hand, though Bentham was to mention equal political rights for women, it is Condorcet who forcefully argues for the equality of women, that class of 'physical' others for patriarchy. On the other, Condorcet first talks about what would later be known as Malthus's theory of 'population', along with an emphasis on the absolute necessity for birth control. It is thus in these thinkers that the category of the body gains a positivity in actual socio-political practice, and now I can examine how this positivity gets crystallized in the philosophy of 'positivism'.

The philosophy of the physical and the concrete takes its disciplined form in Auguste Comte (1798-1857) and his doctrine of Positivism. In formulating the doctrine in his *The Positive Philosophy* (1850), Comte shows how knowledge passes through three successive...
phases: the 'Theological', the 'Metaphysical', and the 'Positive', with the 'fictitious' supernatural constructs of the first phase and the 'abstract' constructs of the second, finally giving way to 'Scientific' constructs based on physical actuality in the final 'positive' phase. He says,

From the study of the development of human intelligence, in all directions, and through all times, the discovery arises of a great fundamental law, to which it is necessarily subject... The law is this:—that each of our leading conceptions,—each branch of our knowledge,—passes successively through three different theoretical conditions: the Theological, or fictitious; the Metaphysical, or abstract; and the Scientific, or positive... Hence arise three philosophies, or general systems of conceptions on the aggregate of phenomena, each of which excludes the others. The first is the necessary point of departure of the human understanding; and the third is its fixed and definitive state. The second is merely a state of transition. For Comte, the movement of knowledge from the supernatural and the abstract to the concrete is historical, so that in the most primitive societies, one would notice all knowledge to be dedicated to the finding of the ultimate supernatural cause behind everything: theology and astrology, while in the most modern societies, one would see a profusion of studies dedicated to the concrete physical world: physics, chemistry, biology, with intermediate stages showing different degrees of 'metaphysical' knowledge: speculative and analytical philosophy. Comte explains this historical movement of knowledge in the following way:

Thus, between the necessity of observing facts in order to form a theory, and having a theory in order to observe facts, the human mind would have been entangled in a vicious circle, but for the natural opening afforded by Theological conceptions. This is the fundamental reason for the theological character of the primitive philosophy... The human understanding, slow in its advance, could not step at once from the theological into the positive philosophy. The two are so radically opposed, that an intermediate system of conceptions has been necessary to render the transition possible. It is only in doing this, that Metaphysical conceptions have any utility whatsoever. For Comte, the study of knowledge in the Positive Philosophy is based purely on the physiological. Accordingly, he refers to M. de Blainville's work on Comparative Anatomy, which classifies all human activity under two relations—the 'Statical' and the 'Dynamical', with the first concerning the state of the individual.
i.e., anatomy and physiology, and the second concerning the dynamics of intellectual activities that take place in the human mind, examined again from the perspective of physiological organicity. Comte shows how a psychology that does not take the physiological side of knowledge into consideration, is 'illusory', being merely 'theological' or 'metaphysical', and never 'positive' and scientific:

These being the only means of knowledge of intellectual phenomena, the illusory psychology, which is the last phase of theology, is excluded. It pretends to accomplish the discovery of the laws of the human mind by contemplating it in itself; that is, by separating it from causes and effects. Such an attempt, made in defiance of the physiological study of our intellectual organs, and of the observation of rational methods of procedure, cannot succeed at this time of day.26

This insistence on knowledge being positively physiological makes Comte explain other phenomena also from a physicalist basis. However, in spite of having identified all social phenomena as physiological, Comte stresses, and herein lies the political concern in Comte, that social phenomena have to be treated separately. He claims that only when socio-political phenomena enter the sphere of positive sciences that philosophy would become complete:

Though involved with the physiological, Social phenomena demand a distinct classification, both on account of their importance and of their difficulty. . . . This branch of science has not hitherto entered into the domain of Positive philosophy. Theological and metaphysical methods, exploded in other departments, are as yet exclusively applied, both in the way of inquiry and discussion, in all treatment of Social subjects, though the best minds are hardly weary about eternal disputes about divine right and the sovereignty of the people. This is the great, while it is evidently the only gap which has to be filled, to constitute, solid and entire, the Positive Philosophy.27

This insistence may indicate how besides a simple tripartition, hierarchies are also accounted for within the schema, as is evident in the contemporary dehierarchist 'theoretical' kinds of analyses that I began my paper with a reference to. But keeping that aside for another occasion, I can proceed now to Nietzsche, in whose Dionysian physicalism, one can very well plot the end of classical Western philosophy.

The first movement of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) towards a new mode of thought comes in a denial of both Idealism and
Materialism, and in the setting up of the third category of 'Physicalism', Nietzsche says in his autobiographical *Ecce Homo* (1890, pub. 1908) that he always kept himself away from German Idealism, which pursues problematic 'ideal goals' instead of reality:

"Only the utter worthlessness of our German culture—its "idealism"—can to some extent explain how it was that precisely in this matter I was so backward that my ignorance was almost saintly. For this "culture" from first to last teaches one to lose sight of realities and instead to hunt after thoroughly problematic, so-called ideal goals."  

In *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), Nietzsche moves beyond Germany to Platonism as well as Vedanta philosophy to show how all Idealism is dogmatic and a 'caricature' of reality:

"It seems that in order to inscribe themselves upon the heart of humanity with everlasting claims, all great things have first to wander about the earth as enormous and awe-inspiring caricatures: dogmatic philosophy has been a caricature of this kind—for instance, the Vedanta doctrine in Asia, and Platonism in Europe. Let us not be ungrateful to it, although it must certainly be confessed that the worst, most tiresome, and the most dangerous of errors hitherto has been a dogmatist error—namely Plato’s invention of the Pure Spirit and the Good in itself."

Similarly, Nietzsche rejects 'atomistic' Materialism too in the same text, saying,

"As regards materialistic atomism, it is one of the best refuted theories that have been advanced, and in Europe now there is perhaps no one in the learned world so unscholarly as to attach serious signification to it, except for convenient everyday use ... thanks chiefly to the Pole Boscovich: he and the Pole Copernicus have hitherto been the greatest and most successful opponents of ocular evidence ... one must also above all give the finishing stroke to that other and most portentous atomism which Christianity has taught best and longest, the soul-atomism."

Having rejected both Idealism and Materialism, Nietzsche provides in *The Will to Power* (1901) the 'Dionysian' alternative philosophy based on iconoclastic sensuality:

"We shall not allow ourselves to be deceived either in Kant’s or Hegel’s way:—We no longer believe, as they did, in morality, and therefore have no philosophies to found with the view of justifying morality. Criticism and history have no charm for us in this respect: what is their charm, then?...My first solution to the problem: Dionysian wisdom. The joy in the destruction of the most noble thing."
To prove how this alternate philosophy is based on the body, Nietzsche shows in *Ecce Homo* how food, nutrition and health are constitutive of human knowledge. He takes the argument further in his *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883-85), showing how the belief in 'soul' is childish, and it is the 'body' that is the only human reality:

“Body am I, and soul”—so saith the child. And why should one speak like children?

But the awakened one, the knowing one saith: “Body am I entirely, and nothing more; and soul is only the name of something in the body.”

An instrument of thy body is also thy little sagacity, my brothers, which thou callest “spirit”—a little instrument and plaything of thy big sagacity.

“Ego”, sayest thou, and art proud of that word. But the greater thing—in which thou art unwilling to believe is thy body with its big sagacity; it saith not “ego”, but doeth it.

Accordingly, one of the ‘remedies of modernity’ that Nietzsche offers in *The Will to Power* is ‘The predominance of physiology over theology, morality, economics, and politics.’ Nietzsche sums up his physicalist thesis with the following statement in the text: ‘The belief in the body is more fundamental than the belief in the soul: the latter arose from the unscientific observation of the agonies of the body.’ What really constitutes this change brought about by Nietzsche is his insistence on ‘Will to Power’ as the fundamental category of this world. He says,

A solution to all your riddles? Do ye want a light, ye most concealed, strongest, and most unwanted men of the blackest midnight?—This world is the will to Power—and nothing else! And even ye yourselves are this will to power—and nothing besides!

Connecting this power to the economy of desire, Nietzsche says, ‘Man has one terrible and fundamental wish: he desires power.’ Connecting this desire to pleasure, he says, ‘Pleasure appears with the feeling of power. Happiness means that power and triumph has entered into our consciousness.’ This connects knowledge to happiness, founding what Nietzsche would call the ‘Gay Science’, or what the translators call ‘joyful wisdom’, and as Nietzsche shows in *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887), this gaiety is the price the human subject is willing to exact to let itself and its knowledge be taken seriously:
...I think that there are no subjects which pay better for being taken seriously; part of this payment is, that perhaps eventually they admit being taken gaily. This gaiety, indeed, or, to use my own language, this joyful wisdom, is a payment: a payment for a protracted, brave, laborious and burrowing seriousness...

Nietzsche writes a separate volume, *The Joyful Wisdom* (1882) on the subject, in which he shows that this association of knowledge with pleasure does not mean, however, like the Utilitarians would have it, that the purpose of 'science' is to maximize pleasure and minimize pains for the human race. He says instead that the 'pleasure' of knowledge is connected to a possibly simultaneous enunciation of pain and sorrow:

*The Goal of Science.*—What? The ultimate goal of science is to create the most pleasure possible to man, and the least possible pain? But what if pleasure and pain should be so closely connected that he who wants the greatest possible amount of the one must also have the greatest possible amount of the other,—that he who wants to experience the "heavenly high jubilation", must also be ready to be "sorrowful unto death"?

In fact, Nietzsche explains the very progress and generation of knowledge from the perspective of this 'joy'. For him, the unfamiliar always poses a threat to the human being, a 'fear', and knowledge is nothing but an attempt to know the unknown, and get the joyful satisfaction of having quietened the anxiety raised by the unfamiliar. He says,

*The Origin of our Conception of "Knowledge"*. What do the people really understand by knowledge? what do they want when they seek "knowledge"? Nothing more than that what is strange is to be traced back to something known. And we philosophers—have we really understood anything more by knowledge?... is our need of knowing not just this need of the known? The will to discover in everything strange, unusual, or questionable, something which no longer disquiets us? Is it not possible that it should be the instinct of fear which enjoins upon us to know?

This brings me to an end of the exposition of how modes of tripartition, epistemologically in the form of bridging the gap between modes of sensation and ideation, and ontologically by foregrounding the body as a positivity between the dichotomous poles of matter and mind, emerge not only in epistemes which are either unrelated or merely 'interstices' in Western philosophy, but from within dominant post-Renaissance thought itself.
At the end of this somewhat sketchy paper, which tried to bring in a little too much within too limited a space, which embarked on too ambitious a project to trace the genealogy of 'theory' and trace the anti-canonical embedded in the whole of dominant Western philosophy within the span of just a few pages, one cannot overlook one glaring aporia. One cannot ignore that this paper, which started from a query concerning contemporary literary theory, took up only the epistemological and ontological implications of the same, trying to locate in both a kind of tripartition through varied bodies of thought. It did not, however, take up the ethics of contemporary theory, that which concerns the unmasking of how power structures determine and are themselves determined by knowledge, and how knowledge structures assume constructed centrality of presences to cover up their sheer provisionality in the game of truth generation. This can also be subjected to a similar typological probe, but as I have already stated in highlighting a certain point in Comte, that requires another paper, another discursive situation. In short, it is only in discussing the political implications of the epistemological and ontological tripartitions that this paper takes up, and the political appropriation of the same in contemporary theory and practice, that an exploration of the genealogy of 'theory' can be possible. And, this task I do not disown, but reserve for a subsequent occasion, a future but imminent presentation.

NOTES AND REFERENCES


Beyond Binaries

13. Spinoza, Prop. XLVII; Proof of Prop. XLVI; Proof of Prop. L; Proof of Prop. LIII; Prop. LIV; and Proof of Prop. LIV, respectively, in The Ethics, pp. 220, 221, 223.
19. Ibid., p. 103.
21. Ibid., p. 117.
22. Ibid., pp. 110-11.
23. Ibid., pp. 175-76.
25. Ibid., pp. 222-23.
30. Ibid., p. 393.
35. Nietzsche, Discipline and Breeding, Fourth Book of The Will to Power, in Ibid., p. 432.


Re-charting Indianness – A Study of Four Short Stories

USHÂ BANDE

"We cannot write like the English. We should not."

— Raja Rao

The two short sentences above from the ‘Foreword’ to Kanthapura show the undercurrent of pride that Raja Rao displayed in writing as an Indian, like an Indian. Although here he was talking of the use of English for creative writing, the words could well be applied to thematic and other concerns of Indian English writing.

"Indianness," of course, is an all-inclusive term and engulfs our entire culture, our traditional conception of human life, social structure, spiritual conditions, value system and the ideas and the ideals that have moved us since time immemorial, forming our character and sensibility. To this, we add the present day influences of the processes of modernity, industrialization, consumerism, feminism and globalization. The literature produced in modern India, be it in English or in other regional languages, cannot but be influenced by these discourses. To deny the existence of the current forces would be unrealistic.

Writing about the “Indianness” of Indian literature written in English, K.R. Srinivas Iyengar wrote as far back as the 1960s that what makes Indo-Anglian literature an Indian literature is the quality of its Indianness — in choice of subject, in the texture of thought and play of sentiment, in the organization of material and in the creative use of language. He further asserted: “To be an Indian in thought and feeling and emotion and experience, yet to court the graces and submit to the discipline of English for expression, is a novel experiment in creative mutation.”

Several other critics and scholars like V.K.Gokak and M.K.Naik voiced almost similar sentiments when they observed that the Indianness of Indian writing consists in the writers’ intense awareness of his entire culture. Another stalwart in the field C.D. Narasimhaiah
feels that as long as the “operative sensibility” is Indian, it is Indian literature. “Indian writing in English is to me primarily part of the literatures of India, in the same way as the literatures written in various regional languages are or ought to be... so long as the operative sensibility of the writer is essentially Indian it will be Indian literature.” By ‘operative sensibility’ he means the writer’s awareness that the Indian versus Western issue needs to be examined in relation to the sense of cultural orientation. In fact, the “Indianness” of Indian literature can be mapped on three levels: the creative use of the English language; the technique of story-telling adopted by the author; and the cultural milieu within which the author sets his story and builds his characters. These aspects have unlimited possibilities and can be debated for hours no end. I am, therefore, limiting my paper to the textual analysis of four short stories, namely, Dina Mehta’s ‘Absolution,’ Jhumpa Lahiri’s ‘The Treatment of Bibi Halder,’ Bhabani Bhattacharya’s ‘The Faltering Pendulum,’ and Khushwant Singh’s ‘Karma.’

I am aware that these stories are not “recent” in the strict sense of the word, but it may be granted that they are fairly recent in that all are written in the 20th century India. Further, the choice of the stories has not been made at random, but with a specific design in mind: I am interested in exploring how the cultural consciousness of the authors works to build up their themes and sketch out their characters, the actions and reactions of their characters, and the response they generate to a given situation. Moreover, the range covered, though not all-inclusive, is broad enough to give us a glimpse into some major social fields—the changes wrought by modern forces and modern Indian woman’s resistance; the social set up which disregards a woman’s needs and violates her individuality; the loneliness and suffering brought about by social taboos; and the fate of a marginalized man. I shall also refer to stories from Hindi and other Indian languages where necessary to establish a point or two.

Critics have often referred to Dina Mehta’s ‘Absolution’ as the modern “Sitayana” as against the traditional Ramayana. It is the story of a young, docile and submissive wife who, after suffering long from her husband’s infidelity, pays him back in his own coin. The author has chosen the mythological names—Ram and Sita—for her characters, probably with an express desire to show that if the modern Ram is not the prototype of his mythological namesake, there is no need for his Sita to be a model of purity. Thus, by subverting the Sita-myth, Dina Mehta recounts the story sometimes
Re-charting Indianness

with tongue-in-cheek style and sometimes matter-of-factly, until the reader smiles with the protagonist at the husband's discomfiture.

Ram, an executive in an office, is an incorrigible womanizer and is proud of his unconventional outlook. Interestingly, after every act of infidelity Ram comes with flowers in the morning, places them in a vase on the dining table as if to say, "these are for you" to condone his infidelity. Significantly and symbolically, he brings carnations. The story opens with a party where Ram openly flaunts Evelyn, his chic secretary, a new addition to his list of women. He looks at his wife "with cold, amused eyes" as if to declare, "I am free of all clichè, conventions, formalized gestures." But little does Ram realize that the "permissive order" gives as much freedom to the female as to the male, and that even his "slow, obedient and old-fashioned" wife could partake of the liberty. Dilip, her husband's bachelor colleague, awakens Sita to her miserable lot. Once when Ram leaves for a couple of days on the pretext of going on a tour, Dilip visits Sita, recounts the truth about Ram's whereabouts and makes meaningful suggestions. After initial (but weak) resistance, Sita decides to suffer humiliation no more and surrenders to Dilip. Next morning she wards off all assaults of guilt, anger and remorse on her conscience by consciously enjoying her bold step. The act has not only liberated her but has also transformed her. The story ends on a triumphant note. Ram on his return notices fresh carnations in the vase at its usual place on the dining table. To his query, "who sent you those?" her retort is, "They are not for me. I ordered them for you." Then she adds cheerfully, "Aren't they lovely?" and seals his fate.

It would be preposterous to believe that Dina Mehta, in letting Sita fall from the ideal, has sanctioned adultery. The narrator-protagonist does not jump into the extra-marital experience frivolously. Sita has ages of conditioning behind her. As Dilip says, she is the "docile, chaste and devoted Hindu wife ..." with that age-long tradition of "womanly faithfulness and days of long-suffering patience, all that disarming passivity," forcing her to conform to the stereotype. She finds herself attracted to Dilip, but she scrupulously keeps him at a distance. Only when Ram gives the final humiliating blow to her womanhood by his deceitfulness, does she react sharply, and takes her revenge.

Though marriage enjoins fidelity on both the partners, socially it is incumbent upon the woman to be a model of faithfulness, purity and submissiveness. The first person narration reveals Sita's side of
the story. In order to mitigate her hurt Sita endeavors to believe that her husband sends her flowers after every act of infidelity because he feels guilty. The flowers, she says, are an offering "at my shrine in expiation of his guilty deeds." It signifies "asking for absolution." This is Sita's version, but considering Ram's self-centeredness, it is doubtful whether he could ever have been burdened with guilt. Rather, he enjoys Sita's distress, Sita too offers him flowers but she makes no plea for "absolution," nor does she appear conscience-stricken. In fact, she does not want to lose the "splendour" of her decision by distorting it as "something graceless." Hers is a conscious step meant to teach her husband a lesson. She acquires a "radiance, a singular warmth" after the night. Sita retaliates with remarkable strength: it is almost like Shakespeare's Caliban saying to his master: "you taught me language, and my profit on't! Is, I know how to curse." Woman, like Caliban, is trained for docility, dependence, and when rejected she reacts and uses the master's language to curse him.

Ironically, in Sita's rebellion, there is less feminist rage than what Elaine Showalter terms, the urge for imitation. She does what Ram is guilty of — adultery. She succumbs to the charms of Dilip. Like Nayantrara Sahgal's Sim in The Day in Shadow, Sita allows a strong male (rather a male chauvinist) to dominate her. Both Sita and Sim are mute before the tirades of their male friends. Dilip shakes Sita into awareness and Raj is always up against the "self-effacing" Hindu character. Rebellion against the husband's extra-marital forays is not new to literature. Savitri in R.K. Narayan's The Dark Room shows her resentment by walking out of her home. But there is a marked difference between Sita ("Absolution") and Savitri (The Dark Room). Savitri does not (and she cannot) think of retaliating in the manner Sita does. Interestingly both the names —Savitri and Sita—symbolize the Indian ideal womanhood but Narayan, a male writer, writing in the 1960s shows the female anger without letting her fall from grace; Dina Mehta subverts the Sita-myth in the post-modern stance, and by giving her heroine more freedom, tries to show the attitudinal changes in the social psyche. However, before reaching at any conclusive understanding of the two situations, we must remember the basic positing of the two protagonist —Savitri is from a small town and is tradition-oriented; Sita is from the modern elite environment of a big town.

Moreover, Dina Mehta's Sita need not slam the door on her husband and walk out, nor does she need to be apologetic, ashamed or guilty. She is very much like modern Nora painted by Clare Booth
Luce in her play *A Doll's House*, (1970), wherein her modern American Nora says, “I’m not bursting with self-confidence, Thaw. I do love you. And I also need ... a man. So I’m not slamming the door. I am closing it....Very... gently.” Sita makes an explicit assertion of her individuality. Whether right or wrong, her step has made it clear to her man that even passivity has numerous possibilities, and that a woman, though docile, cannot be a doormat.

Jhumpa Lahiri who took the literary world by a storm by winning the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction 2000 for her *Interpreter of Maladies* has given a realistic portrayal of the female urge for sexual fulfillment in ‘The Treatment of Bibi Haldar.’ It is a saddening story of an epileptic young woman who suffers when her craving for marriage is thwarted because of her ailment. Bibi Haldar has everything negative to be a desirable commodity in the marriage-market; no looks so to speak of; no education, no parents, and above all she is epileptic and a simpleton at that. The story opens graphically, “For a greater number of her twenty-nine years, Bibi Haldar suffered from an ailment that baffled family, friends, priests, palmists, spinsters, gem therapists, prophets and fools” (p. 158). Further, the newspaper matrimonial advertisement is of no help in getting her a husband as her crafty cousin worded it rather unsympathetically: ‘Girl, unstable, height 152 centimeters, seeks husband.’ The slyness of her cousin and his wife juxtaposed with the naivety of the unfortunate Bibi Haldar helps in creating the required ambience of the social set up. Bibi Haldar’s cousin and his wife ill-treat her, extract a lot of work from her and finally considering her a burden, they forsake her. Bibi Halder manages to stay alive with her own resources and the kindness of the neighbours. Somehow, she fulfills her desire, begets a son (from whom, nobody knows) and is miraculously cured of her epileptic fits. The story, Jhumpa Lahiri says in an interview, is based on a woman she knew living in her neighborhood in Calcutta (now Kolkatta).

The depiction of the cultural, social and familial milieu is realistic, with helpful and sympathetic neighbours showing enough fellow feeling and pity towards the unfortunate being, juxtaposed with and the selfish kin devoid of feelings so as to evoke the readers’ amiable response. The first paragraph graphically portrays a synthesis of superstitious beliefs and a modern scientific approach. It also speaks of human desperation as an incurable disease which forces people to try a variety of faith healing – Hindu, Muslim, Christian — irrespective of religious faith. At the subtler level, one can spot violence towards woman in the treatment meted out to Bibi Haldar. Helpless women like Bibi
Haldar are victimized not only by their families but also by the society. The word ‘Treatment’ contained in the title is significant.

Of the nine stories in the Interpreter of Maladies, four have an Indian setting. Out of these, two, ‘The Treatment of Bibi Halder’ and ‘A Real Darwan’ show a situational clash and give voice to the subaltern putting forward important points to be considered. Textual evidence bears out that Interpreter of Maladies is replete with Indianness and makes for convincing reading. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s account of the attraction that multicultural themes hold for her readers, can well be mentioned here namely that most women: Indian, American, and even immigrant women are interested in fiction written by Indian women because they are curious to know of the life patterns of Indian/Asian women. “Many of us articulate in our books the deepest fear and trauma faced by women in India and show them emerge, at least in many cases, as stronger and self-reliant women. Some of our characters are good role models for women readers and women activists.”

The story under consideration, located in Calcutta, depicts the crisis in human values as also the human bonding that helps Bibi Haldar to survive even after her cousin’s desertion. There still exist those values that keep us human the author seems to suggest. Lahiri’s vision of India is limited to her visits to Calcutta, which she terms “tunnel vision” of India. “My own experience of India was largely that of a tunnel imposed by the single city we ever visited, by the handful of homes we stayed in, by the fact that I was not allowed to explore this city on my own. Still within these narrow confines, I felt that I had seen enough of life, enough details and drama, to set stories on Indian soil.”

The old, desolate and unhappy rag-woman develops close ties, almost a mother-son relationship, with the tiny goat to which she
unburdens her heart. She talks to him and he listens attentively, responding occasionally with a bleat or two. That animals serve as therapists for human beings is a well-established fact. In literature we come across many incidents of men or women sharing their grief or intimate feelings with birds or animals. Iona, the cab driver in Anton Chekov’s story ‘Grief’, for example, empties his sorrowful heart to his horse. Nearer home, in K.A. Abbas’s ‘Sparrows,’ the birds help Rahim regain his lost humanity after his contact with a sparrow family in his loft. The rag-woman, too, achieves her lost balance after finding a mute but understanding companion.

There is a superstitious belief prevalent in India, particularly among the rural folk that a barren woman’s accursed touch can dry up fruits, be they of a tree or plant or a human being. Childless women are shunned like the scourge. No wonder then that the rag-woman is a discarded being. Loneliness and the curse of barrenness make her hard. She is keen to wipe away the stigma vicariously; if her pumpkin vines bear fruit, she would feel reassured that she may be unfortunate but she is not vile; that the vines she planted and tended could bear fruits. Consequently, when the vines show no signs of fruit for long, she is given to doubt about herself. In her frustration she kills the goatling in a fit of temper because the animal had nibbled away some leaves of the vines despite her warning, and should he continue with his wantonness all her hopes to see the vines bear fruit would be crushed breaking her from inside. However, the animal seems to have done her a service. Through the nibbled part, a girl child spots two tiny pumpkins. Symbolically, it is the child who in her innocence and daring helps the rag woman wash off her curse. The vines, springing to fruitful life, “after their long barren dead-aliveness,” have a symbolic significance. The story ends on a note of optimism: “A balance was achieved. The faltering pendulum had regained its swing.”

That barrenness is a stigma and is considered a curse in the Indian social set up is depicted in some of the powerful regional language stories. Mallika Amarsheikh’s Marathi short story ‘Khel’ (Game) for example, depicts the psyche of a barren woman who kills a little girl she loves from the core of her heart, not for any superstitious reasons but because the woman would not be able to face the girl’s parents having detained the girl for a long just for a fun. In desperation, the woman beats her head to a pulp and after gaining consciousness of her inhuman act she commits suicide. There are dozens of such strong narratives that not only portray the barren woman’s psychological anguish but also indict society for holding erroneous views and beliefs.
Bhattacharya takes pains to reveal the wounded psyche of the rag woman. She is not unaware of the core of temper inside her, which she calls “the hard nut”. She makes efforts to control it but when the children hurt her, she flays at them like an insane person. Later, she feels ashamed of herself and confides in her goat “you saw? ... That angry thing rolled again in my belly.” She claps the animal to her heart as if to make amends for having cursed the children. The rag woman is neither mad nor wicked; only a victim of a situation that makes life hard. She finds a release in nature – the animal with its understanding and the vines with their rhythm of growth and life help her.

In the post-colonial era, many Indian writers have tended to re-write the empire, in what is termed as “writing back the empire,” to show the corroding effect of the colonial situation on the psyche of the colonized. As Franz Fanon maintains, “Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s head of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it. This work of devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today.” Khushwant Singh, in his story 'Karma' directs his gaze at a marginalized man who remains the proverbial "Trishanku", neither 'here,' nor 'there.' The case of Sir Mohan Lal, the 'Brown Sahib' is closely linked with the superiority-inferiority syndrome of the colonial situation. Sir Mohan hates all that is Indian, including his uncouth wife and her kith and kin. He, a barrister and Oxford educated at that, considers himself a Sahib. In the Railway waiting room, he acts like a real Sahib shouting koi hai in a typical English manner and orders a chhota peg. His wife, on the other hand, is content to sit on her tin trunk on the platform in typical native style, eat out of her tiffin, belch, chew pan, engage in light conversation with the coolie and board the Zenana compartment on the arrival of the train.

Sir Mohan shows no hurry—hurrying and rushing is for the uncultured natives. For a Sahib like him, there is always a room in the first class compartment. So, happily imagining a fruitful journey with some British co-traveller of class in his first class compartment, and impressing him with his reading culture (for, Sir Mohan reads nothing less than The Times), his Balliol tie, Oxford reminiscences and gold cigarette case, he boards a first class compartment only to be thrown out by two British soldiers. Far from being impressed by his British garb, they recognize the colour of his skin even in their
inebriated state, call him "bloody nigger" and shunt him out unceremoniously. The climax occurs when his wife spits a gob of red pan-juice from the running train and in all likelihood the "drizzle" falls on her pseudo-English husband, standing aghast on the platform. Symbolically, this is the fate the marginalized people encounter; they reject their own people and are rejected in tum by the dominant class.

Khushwant Singh has subtly evoked the colonial situation with its division between the ruler and the ruled. Those who lose their cultural identity are the dangling men. The ruling class is the empowered class. Even an ordinary soldier acquires the subconscious power to subjugate the ruled, irrespective of the latter’s social status. In the colonial situation, people like Laxmi are no better either. They are the tolerant mortals who have learnt "to live with the idea of subjection." They live in their "lesser world" under the pretext that it was the whole world, forgetting that it was damaged by the colonial forces. V.S. Naipaul in India: A Wounded Civilization maintains that in general, the British were felt only through their institutions: the banks, the railways, mission schools. But in the ordinary world of the ordinary people its impact was not pronounced. Considering R.K Narayan’s works, Naipaul says, in Narayan’s early novels the lesser world of “small men, small scheme, high talk, limited means, appears whole and unviolated.” Though these people appear to have preserved their identity, they are unconcerned and their attitude is damaging because their "inward concentration is fierce, the self-absorption complete." The educated, half-colonized Indians like Sir Mohan are the privileged-unprivileged occupying an unenviable position in colonized India. Sir Mohan though privileged, is made acutely uncomfortable by his subject status.

The author observes his characters from a distance and without indicting them he lets them play their game and enjoys their foibles. He is not angry nor sympathetic, only ironic and comic. Khushwant Singh shows how the power of the master is felt in both cases -- Laxmi, the representative of mute native subjects allows herself to be carried away by the British institution -- the Railways here; the "alien insider", the pseudo-English Sir Mohan is already brain-washed by the same power -- its educational system. The former by being "inward" and unconcerned allows the master to play his game; the latter plays the game of the master and suffers. Tolerance of the helpless, the powerless and the unconcerned does not help solve the identity crisis; what the country requires is the total awareness and ambition of the pragmatic.
Indian writing in English successfully interacts with the culture, tradition and the prevalent situations, and distinguishes itself by portraying the Indian reality, giving the readers an insider’s view of the social and psychological reality. A creative writer is not a natural scientist, nor is he/she a social scientist in that a creative writer does not deal with lifeless forces or statistical data; he/she has to deal with human life and human characters with motivations, emotions and responses. The author has to look at them from his vantage point in time and social positioning and in re-creating them he cannot reject or forget his own roots. The creative writer in English cannot obliterate his/her identity as the thematic pattern and the narrative strategy of the stories discussed here reveal. Indian writing in English has established its strength as Indian literature; it is neither derivative nor imitative; it is indigenous in themes and concerns and it has been able to capture the psychosocial matrix of the society. The efforts of the writers have been to find an authentic self-image, an indigenous identity that defies domination and helps the writer repossess the past.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Raja Rao, Kanthapura, New Delhi, Orient Paperbacks, 1938, p.5.
6. Internet interview with Jhumpa Lahiri quoted in Suman Bala.
The Con(Textual) Contours of *Lajja*: 
A (Re)Visioning of the Social Praxis in the Indian Subcontinent

NISHAMANI KAR

"We are not merely more weary because of yesterday, we are other, no longer what we were before the calamity of yesterday".
Samuel Beckett, *Proust*

In the Indian subcontinent today we witness the prevalence of at least three major societal systems: a different ordering of the social values leading to different priorities in personal and community life. Such social systems are: (a) the modern Western (the current face of humanism), (b) the absorptionist or mystic society, (c) the community society. Ironically enough, each of them embodies values fundamentally opposed to each other and it so happens that the said conflict of values is traceable through all fields of human endeavour. However, the present day social praxis in the Indian subcontinent belongs to the last category—the macro social system which engenders strong feelings of solidarity and fraternity amongst the believers with the society developing a quasi-ontological reality of its own, and in the least analysis taking precedence over the individual. This type of society has a tendency towards exclusionism in that those outside the circle of believers are not taken lightly. Eventually after all, the covert or overt aspiration of those subscribing to such a value system is to occupy the entire space and therefore anyone outside the frame is either converted through persuasion or tactical pressure, or he can be thrown out penalized, or, if so, killed without any mercy. This absolute assertion of the faith is also contingent upon insecurity, the lack of proper confidence in the faith itself, because of a threatening presence of 'the other' in the same field. History, in this perspective, reveals itself not so much as an evolutionary progression, but a see-saw of alternate victories
and defeats for competing value systems. Taslima Nasrin in her major work, *Lajja* uses the aforesaid model to analyse the macro-conflicts she observes in the subcontinent, through the exploration of the micro-dimension of such a conflict in the fragmented, homogenized and functionally differentiated Bangla society, which promotes, as it appears, the cause of a self-reflexive distopia. She makes an attempt to construct the fictive world, in which the events unfold thus, paving the way for a socio-historical enactment of what constitutes ‘reality’ for the contending communities. In this paper our objective is to re-read *Lajja* with a view to bring out its contemporary social and historical significance. The basic idea, for that matter, is to work from an analysis of the emergent socio-cultural patterns, which are but a sort of aggravation of and ultimate exasperation with the problem of ‘representation.’

I

It is a sociological truth that when identities develop larger territorial dimensions or intensity, or when individuals experience restlessness; group associations develop distorted features and tend to flare up in uncontrollable forms. Among the worst affected by this process was the Hindu-Muslim relationship in which the old balances and patterns were disrupted, leading to mistrust and suspicion on a larger scale. Nevertheless, the Hindu-Muslim conflict can be perceived embryonically as an unforeseen off-shoot of the British civilizational interference in the Indian subcontinent, creating the scope for some deliberately political exploitation later. The partition moreover bequeathed a confused legacy to both successor states, as the two nation theory failed to manifest in a clear-cut division along the communal lines. The inter-personal moral order that Gandhi had envisioned as the basis of national life receded under the impact of communal frenzy. Society, thus inevitably, sacrificed what the Mahatma would assert, ‘the common moral space’ in which all religious and non-religious systems must participate.

II

However, soon after the cataclysm of the partition and the communal frenzy thereof, Indian society adopted multi-religious secularism and endeavoured to integrate the communities - Christians, Jews and Muslims - within the logic of its group structure. It was possible for
them to adopt this society, because their distinctive community structure was not threatened— they were/are however respected as distinct groups amongst other groups. The penchant for cooperation and the adaptability of the host society thus occasioned the gradual evolution of a shared life. But in recent years, the cutting edge of monotheistic dualism or absorptive Hinduism remains susceptible to activation (may be, in the service of political, economic and other ends) leading to a catastrophic disintegration of the established social modes of intercourse.

III

The history of Bangladesh, however, proves to be a continuous series of victories and defeats, punctuated by stages of impasse or mutual frustration, after which the value systems have revived in new forms. The retreat of British imperialism has spelt the defeat of individualism, the forced ouster of the Pakistan army in 1971 and the independence gained thereof also rung the death-knell of Jinnah’s dream of a separate Muslim nation. The steps taken by the rulers (both civil and military), thereafter, have crystallized ideological camps asserting distinct opposite values. The initial attempt by Mujibur Rehman to transform Bangladesh into a non-communal and secular society (‘Sonar Bangla’) through appropriate educational and legislative measures has failed to woo the majority. Inevitably, the decision-makers have found themselves faced with unforeseen difficulties. The democratic, electoral political system, functioning within a multi-religious society has become vulnerable to irrepressible populism with potentially explosive consequences. The strong anti-religious orientation of the educational programme and the deculturing modes of mass entertainment have driven the Bangla society over the years, as it appears, towards at least a negative secularism (of course, in contravention of the earlier vouchsafed ideals), that is towards non-belief or hedonism, instead of towards a positive interpretation of humanism. Such a rot in the common psyche has remained instrumental for the emergence of a new era of conflict perpetrated and fanned by Islamic fundamentalism.

Conflict and religious rancour, thus occasioned, has led to crisis and the minorities (especially the Hindus) have failed to negotiate with such intractable complex emergencies. They remain marginalized. The human costs in terms of lives lost and innocent suffering continues to be extremely high. Democracy proves to
be a mockery. An inept administration and self-seeking leaders contribute to the canker, but it is for the non-partisan and forward-looking sections within the macro society to redress and restore normalcy in the situation. But the modernizers redefine tradition to suit modern conditions, and it is the more radical, aggressive and defensive responses to enforced modernization that helps to provoke the communal conundrum. Further, the reaction of the conservatives appears unethical, irrational and at times reactionary. Professional politicians with narrow short-term interests go slow on tight-rope walking. Inevitably, there is scope for an imbalanced and unstable triangle of forces emerging from a disturbed and conflict-ridden society.

Ironically enough the leaders in both communities (Hindu and Muslim), who have scripted their careers around the schism, play their respective roles on either side of the divide. Cocooned as they are in the narrow by-lane of their myopic interests, they would not like to venture out of their limited principality, lest they should lose their hegemony over a few. As for the Jamat-i-Islami (the leading community-friendly group), they are so bent upon on being politically correct all the time that whenever such outrages take place they think that blaming the party in power alone is enough. The administration may have goofed on several fronts, but why cannot those who claim to be committed to upholding the cause of peace try and evolve at least an informal mechanism to resolve the issue?

It so appears, and Taslima has rightly articulated it, that no one is really serious about solving the crisis. A demonstration or even a casual protest won’t do, it merely reflects an apathetic concern. The victims are always there to accept their lot. It is widely seen and often experienced that the managers of communal frenzy and rancour go scot-free and the common populace, represented here by the Duttas, are already at the receiving end. Taslima’s heart probably bleeds with the agony she perceives, and the inner strife, she suffers from, demands expression. In the Preface, she admits thus:

I detest fundamentalism and communalism. This was the reason I wrote *Lajja...* (which) deals with the persecution of Hindus, a religious minority in Bangladesh by the Muslims who are in the majority ... *Lajja* is a document of our collective defeat (p. ix).

IV

The Duttas in the fictive world of *Lajja* are an isolated lot, removed from the prevalent reality, the general ethos. They belong to no where,
not to the Hindu world outside, nor to the predominantly Muslim world of Bangladesh either. They have no roots that they can claim. Their loyalties always remain questionable; not necessarily because of what they do, but because of what they are expected to do — they represent an alien race whose interests lie outside of Bangladesh. Their fate is tied up with the fate of Bangla society, which never accepts them as its natural integral ingredient. They were, as it were, the victims of cumulative historical deprivation.

Taslima’s tongue-in-cheek rancour gravitates against such a deprivation. She appears to uphold the cause of a just political order championing the commitments of a constitutional system with a strong emphasis on the pursuit of formal equality of all and an even-handed application of the law. She admits her “determination to continue the battle against religious persecution, genocide and communalism” (p. ix). She reminds us of the games politicians have played among both the communities on either side of the fence from time to time and the communal passions thus whipped up by them to suit their politics of self-interest based on hatred. But these games would not have succeeded to the extent they did, if the Hindus and the Muslims had known each other better, if they had grown together from the childhood as one community rather than two separate worlds within one nation, within the subcontinent. Taslima declares unequivocally: ‘I for one will not be silenced’ (p. x). She refers to the ‘demolition of the sixteenth century edifice, which had struck a savage blow to the sentiments of Muslims in India and elsewhere’ (p. 3). In order to corroborate her point-of-view she quotes the newspaper report stating thus:

...a malignant situation has taken form in India, the pain caused by it will be felt all over the world and most certainly by her immediate neighbours (p. 3).

Further, as per her estimation, what was going on in India was a small change compared to what happened in Dhaka. There is a lot of violence - killing and looting, the Hindu shrines are set on fire, the Hindu households are torched giving way to a pervading sense of macabre - anything and everything only has its way. When a mob is out for blood and vengeance, who else is there to settle scores with them - the Hindu minority are mere spectators, the victims of genocide.

Dhaka is already a kind of microcosm of Bangladesh as a whole: a new centre-less city, in which the contending communities and the various classes have lost touch with each other, because each is
isolated in his own geographical, and even psychic, compartment. What then has become of the social dynamics, the historical and the dialectic in such a schema? The group dynamics has been obiterated, history faces a premature collapse and the dialectic simply been displaced - and it is this very displacement that informs what is paradoxical about our times. No longer attached to temporality, no longer clinging to historicity or the temporal mechanics of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, the dialectic is to be resumed and recognized in the real, effective contradictions of space.³

V

The Duttas no matter how solitary, are still somehow engaged in the social substance, their very solitude is social. In search of their self identity, they face a Sisyphean situation, every attempt in the appropriate direction meets absurdity. They face a series of unreconciled cross-purposes, which get heightened as they confront the dominant social ethos. They, inevitably, remain 'the other' in their own homeland, and, therefore, the cry for a relationship of reciprocal co-equality is denied to them.

There is often a sustained plea for conversion. Love fails to entice. Marriages remain conditional. Suranjan's love for Parveen is questioned. He is asked to convert before marriage. When Maya escapes into Parul's house on the eve of the communal rancour and at the thick of frenzy, she does not have a good time there, the haunting eyes of the visitors often taunt her. Belal comes all the way to console Suranjan and the Duttas, but in course of conversation he also gives vent to his pent-up emotion. He says:

I really don't know what is happening all around us. ... mean while in India, they are continuously killing us.
What do you mean by 'us'? Birupaksha asked.
Muslims.
Oh, I see.
When they get such news from India, these people naturally lose their heads. Whom can you blame? We are dying there, and you here...⁴

The point here is Belal's apparent sympathy, but on an implicit plane he also discovers a reason behind such a nefarious act. His rational self identifies with Suranjan, but at the back of his mind, the communal self derives vicarious pleasure out of his friend's suffering. It is a typical situation; as if the stimulation of ceaseless differentiation promotes the accelerating commodification of social relations and
The Con(Textual) Contours of Lajja

The oblitration of moral relationship with 'the other'. It speaks of a new realm of barbarity which receives their (Belal’s, Haider’s, Kamal’s - all friends to Surajan) tacit consent, without provoking any resistance. Even the elders who were swearing earlier, in the name of secularism, keep silent. Taslima raises the basic question:

Secularism was supposed to be one of the strong beliefs of Bengali Muslims, especially during the war for independence, when everyone had to co-operate with one another to win victory. What had happened to all these people after independence was won? Did they not notice the seeds of communalism being sown in the national frame work? Were they not agitated? ... But why were all these warm blooded people as cold as reptiles today? Why did they not sense how urgent it was to uproot the sapling of communalism immediately? How could they nurse the impossible notion that democracy could come to stay in a country in the absence of secularism? ... (p. 55)

The query remains unanswered, which suggests not only the plight of Hindu minority, but also the insensitive and callous ways of the Bangladeshi Muslims; none of them was shown as liberal, progressive and non-communal.5

In contrast, the Duttas were a peculiar lot. During the partition, when there was a large scale exodus, Sukumar Datta stood determined not to betray the values he had always upheld, his version was more pragmatic than patriotic: “If there is no security in your own country, where in this world can we go looking for it?” (p. 6) For all of them (Sukumar, Sudhamoy and even Suranjan) Bangladesh is their homeland. All through the same question is raised. Sudhamoy is often found reminiscing the days of 1952 - Language Movement, 1962 - Education Movement, 1966-Six Clause Movement, 1969 - National Movement, 1970 - General Election and finally, the Freedom Movement of 1971, and how all through he stood committed to the cause. It is more of a national identity he was concerned about. Here Taslima’s comments are worth remembering:

An independence that was carried out at the cost of three million Bengali lives proved that religion could not be the basis of a national identity (p.8). Sudhamoy time and again evades the idea of escaping into India. Kironmoyee’s appeal, the persuasion of close relatives like Nemigopal, Haripada and Nemai go unattended. Even at the thick of suffering in the hands of fellow countrymen, he does not harbour such an idea. He stands perplexed, as in his action and articulation he is never a Hindu either. He does not observe any ritual, Kironmoyee never pours vermilion on the partings of her hair, nor
does she wear the conch shells and bangles. In their action and vision, the Duttas prove to be atheists, they remain humanistic. Yet they are situated in a space (only because they were born in a Hindu household), wherefrom they are forced to negotiate with the adversities. During the Freedom movement of 1971 they had to willfully accept Muslim names (for instance Sudhamoy was Shirajuddin Hussain, Kironmoyee was Fatema Akhtar) to escape the passionate torments perpetrated by Pakistani army. But now, the devil is in the heads of their own countrymen, from whom there is no respite.

Sudhamoy’s family suffered at Mymensingh (their original home setting). Maya was kidnapped, when she was a six year old school-going child, the local hoodlums torture them in many ways, either by forcing their entry into the Dutta’s orchard or by writing anonymous letters hinting at a ransom. After being forced to sell the homestead of the fore-fathers with a paltry sum to one, Shaukat Ali, Sudhamoy moves to Dhaka to spend ‘a peaceful life’ of a medicine practitioner; the idea being, in a city, more so in the capital, people have less time for such nasty deals. But it is all the same; the majority dictating terms to the minority and snapping away whatever little the latter acquire through their long striving. It is, as if, there is no way in which the Duttas can break through ‘the one insurmountable barrier that stands between them and a peaceful life’ (p.16). The geographical shift from Mymensingh to Dhaka brings with it a lot of problems. The tall old building, the terrace with a long stretch of land, in and around it, is now replaced by a dingy, sticky, tiny rented house. The living space is gradually squeezed, so is their life. They in course of time and events accept and accommodate the new life style.

VI

In the new setting Suranjan develops friendship with Haider, Kamal and Rabiul; he is also involved with Parveen. He questions communal barriers and states that Bengalis as a race must live together in perfect harmony. For him, ‘the term Bengali should always be considered indivisible in character’. Therefore, the idea of labeling a particular group as outcasts in their own country is not acceptable to him. He proves thoroughly idealistic, rightly moulded in his father’s ways. As a result, his fancy for Parveen or even Maya’s involvement with Jehangir do never occasion the blowing storm. Rather the question is raised from the other side of the fence. Parveen’s relations want
Suranjan to get converted before the marriage and when such a proposal does not stick, she is married elsewhere. Suranjan’s innocent heart gets a shock and he starts realizing that his idealistic views may not find many takers in Bangladesh.

For Suranjan it is an instance of the demystification of the preceding ideal (illusion?). A glimpse into his psyche gives us the impression that he stands a divided self. He is shaped in the idealism of his father Sudhamoy, but the world he encounters is one bereft of any pattern whatsoever. The lip sympathy of friends, the stoicity of Kironmoyee (his mother) and also the obstinacy of Sudhamoy not to leave for India amidst all odds are gnawing him. The lover in him has acted as a safety valve and his earlier association with Parveen and the recent longing for Ratna conveniently deflects the tone of anger and disgust. But in both the cases he stands to lose and therefore his disenchantment deepens. More so, he finds his home in shambles, Maya being forcefully kidnapped (may be raped) and the ‘not-me’ turning against him in a seeming act of vengeance. Eventually, he is driven into a fury of mind-annihilating hatred and rushes headlong to destroy it. In order to propitiate his deep-seated anguish while earlier he escapes from the Dutta household, he now drinks with his friends without any hesitation (much against the norms of his grooming. He brings to his room Pinky alias Shamima, rapes her and opens rivulets of blood in her body. He rebels against the sordidness of a stunningly unequal system and whines for a meaningful change in the politico-religious social system. Taslima more often than not comments on the macro-dimensions of Suranjan’s personalized war against the hypocrisy of the system he is in. His fight (most of the time intended, not, of course, materialized) for personal justice is rather an implicit crusade against social injustice. He functions in a socio-political void. The tender, gentle and loving Suranjan stands shocked behind his own rugged and sullen exterior, who swears by honour, duty and other positive values. He feels guilty after the rape and the remorse eats into his entrails. Seen in this context Suranjan’s dilemma is a precondition, rather than a fall out. His insecurity is pitted against the security of Kamal. Claiming himself to be the ‘son of the soil’, he sets the question: “Why did he have to seek refuge in Kamal’s home? Why did he have to run away from his home?” (p.1) But he fails to understand a fundamental equation: it is not any individual’s ire against another, it is a typical case of genocide, a frenetic mob reacting against ‘the other’, that is not in any way concerned. In fact, our world has become too small a place and what happens anywhere has its fall...
out everywhere. It is essentially an attempt created to play on the reader's innermost fears and insecurities.

VII

In fine, the pervading tone of resignation with occasional flashes of revolt captures our attention. The personal and political histories are artistically blended to explore the tenets of the socio-political cataclysm of our time. The canvass is too large, the stage crowded; the attempt to comprehend too much has led to a cramming of incidental details. The multiplicity blurs the main outlines; the historical record is scored at the expense of human story through Taslima's sweeping comprehension, architectonic power and sheer creative energy. She, frequently resorts to a lengthy description of incidents (at times the same incident is narrated often) to lend a tangy tenor to her treatise. But whenever she loosens the stranglehold of extraneous comment on her narrative, what emerges is some bright and insightful comments on the eccentric traditions that constitute fundamental components of the social structure in the subcontinent. Now the question is: should a writer enable his readers to escape from social and ethical responsibilities through 'catharsis' always? The arousal of concern is perhaps the prime objective (we should remember that the work is dedicated 'to the people of the Indian subcontinent). Here the work does not provide the readers with the escape route of catharsis, but forces them to a regime of reason. Taslima, however, finishes her mediation by asking rhetorically what indeed has been the point of crumbling social order, that we all live in. She also submits: 'Let Another Name for Religion be Humanism'.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

4. T. Nasrin, _Lajja_ (Shame) tr. by Tutul Gupta, New Delhi, Penguin, 1994, p. 171 (All quotes in the essay are from this work).
Congress in Bihar Politics: From Dominance to Marginality

ANIL K. OJHA

Political parties are about power, they represent the principal instrument through which segments of the population compete to secure control of elective institutions and, through them to exercise a predominant influence over public policies. Parties are central to election and policy makings. They make and break governments, administer patronage, and take decisions that deeply affect people’s welfare. Under their aegis, the masses are mobilized. Political parties remain prominent among political institutions that shape the configuration and plot the direction of social institutions, as well as the destinies of humankind. Thus parties richly deserved to be studied.¹

Further, the study of elections and voting behaviour is one of the important sub-fields of Political Science. It is via elections that citizens participate directly in the political process and are able to hold governments accountable. So, the study of parties through elections, particularly in terms of their support bases, constitutes a viable mode of political enquiry in democracies. After more than five decades of periodic elections in which all political offices are contested and all adults are qualified to vote, there is little doubt that democracy in India has taken root.²

In this paper, an attempt has been made to trace the causes and consequences of the decline in social bases of Congress support in Bihar. The Indian National Congress (hereafter, Congress), founded in 1885, was ruling party for decades at the national level as well as in most of the states, including Bihar, following independence, leading the experts to characterize the Indian Party system as the Predominant Party system. Even in the pre-independence period it was the principal contender for power as evidenced through elections held under Government of India Acts, 1919 and the 1935 for the Bihar Provincial Council and Assembly.³
And after independence notwithstanding reverses, the party re-emerged both in the post-1967 and post-1977 scenarios. But from 1989 onwards to date, the process of a systematic decline has engulfed it in Bihar and U.P. It has shown tendencies to re-emerge in other states, but in Bihar its base has become stagnant. How did the Congress lose this preeminent position in Bihar? What are the reasons for a decline in the Congress’s support base? How far have changes in the nature of linkages between the voter and this party; in the patterns of inter-party competition, in its goals and ideologies, and in the structures affecting the processes within the organization responsible for this decline?

Bihar, the second most populous Indian state with 54 Lok Sabha seats has been a politically active state and has proved to be an important factor in national power dynamics particularly since 1989. With its bifurcation and the creation of a new state—Jharkhand, the state now has only 41 Lok Sabha seats. Among the crucial Hindi-speaking states, it is only in Bihar that the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) has never come to power. Barring two interruptions of 1967-71 and 1977-79, the Congress dominated the state’s politics till the 1980s. The Janata Dal (JD) replaced the Congress as the dominant party during 1989 Lok Sabha elections, getting 31 seats with 36.4 percent votes as compared to the four seats and 28.1 percent votes of the Congress.

Since March 1990, the JD and its new incarnation—the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) continues to be in power, though at times with the outside support of other parties or in a coalition. The present RJD government has the Congress as a junior coalition partner upon which its dependence has decreased with the creation of Jharkhand.

A clear understanding of politics in India is not possible without looking at some of the enduring forms of social organization. Two of these durable modes of identity are religion and caste. However, it is caste that has formed the very basis of election strategy and politics in Bihar since long. Caste, in politics, is so tacitly and so completely accepted by all, including those who pose most in condemning it, that it is everywhere the unit of social action. In Bihar, politics is organized on the basis of caste; it is a means of securing or retaining power. Hugh Tinker was right in speculating that state politics would be caste politics throughout most of India for many years to come. The changing relationship between social cleavages and politics of electoral mobilization and the emergence
of upper caste or upper/lower, Other Backward Caste (OBC) or Dalit as more or less a homogeneous category in states like Bihar has been underlined by commentators.8 Historically, a system of widespread inequality and the existence of a dominant strata of upper castes characterizes society in Bihar. In so far as the Congress strategy of social support is concerned, support for it came from the traditional social groups often as a function of deliberate strategy and at times, as a consequence of deep social cleavage and polarization.9 When India attained independence, the upper castes—Kayastha (1.36 percent), Bhumihar (2.89 percent), Rajput (5.87 percent) and somewhat later Brahman (5.97)—besides the Muslim community (13.28 percent) dominated the Congress party and state government in Bihar. Though the OBCs, about 49 percent, were represented in the Congress, the leadership remained in the hands of the upper castes. For example, in the Congress ministry in Bihar in 1962, 58 percent cabinet ministers were from the upper castes and eight percent from OBCs.10 In most of the Bihar Congress ministries the upper castes were overrepresented.11 That kind of situation persisted upto 1967. During those days one of the notable feature of Congress politics in Bihar was caste-based factionalism often drawing strength from the central leadership. In 1967 all the four stalwarts of Bihar Congress saw to it that potential supporters of their factional rivals did not win. The party could win only 128 out of 318 seats in the house. Other factors, to be delineated below, also contributed to it. With the Congress split in 1969 three party bosses, representing Kayastha, Bhumihar and Rajput castes, parted company with Indira Gandhi. And, a new Brahman-Harijan alliance emerged under the leadership of Jagjivan Ram and Lalit Narayan Mishra, which restored the fortunes of the Congress in 1971 and 1972 with the continuous support of the Muslims.

There was a clear lack of OBC support for the party. In 1971, out of 31 Lok Sabha members from general seats in Bihar 10 were from the OBCs, while in 1980 out of 22 only two were from that category. The OBCs especially Yadavs, politicized and mobilized at the behest of Lohia Socialists, later landed up in the Congress. But, after the 1972 elections the attempt at adjustment with the middle castes received a setback. Earlier, after the split of 1969, Daroga Prasad Rai, a Yadav, was made the first Congress (R) chief minister of Bihar. After the weakening of Congress (O), Bhumihar and Rajput leaders began to rejoin the Congress and upper caste representation
once again increased. Between 1972-77 out of three Congress chief ministers, two—Kedar Pandey and Jagannath Mishra, were Brahmans. During this period the country faced a lot of political upheavals some aspects of which were the Navnirman Andolan starting in Gujarat and Jaya Prakash Narain led famous Bihar agitation against internal emergency.

In the 1977 elections, the Congress lost badly in Bihar; it could not win a single seat. Its vote share dropped sharply from 40.1 percent to 22.9 percent, while its national average had come down from 43.6 percent to 34.5 percent. In 1977 the Muslims were also, more or less, alienated from the Congress. Later on, with the end of the Janata Party rule, the landed upper castes, disenchanted with the opposition’s reservation politics, re-entered the Congress. These castes—Bhuumihars and Rajputs still enjoyed sufficient coercive power in rural areas. Thus, the Congress dominance was mainly based on the core support of the upper castes, the Scheduled Castes (SCs, 14 percent) and Muslims.

The Congress power in villages had in the past arisen from its successful mobilization of two separate categories of castes. These were the landless Harijans at the bottom and the upper castes at the top. The Congress by taking socially and economically entrenched groups into its organization relied on the accommodation along the already existing lines of identity. This led to a great dependence of the Congress on men whose main reason for remaining within it was the benefit they derived from its control of government and continued confirmation of the traditional status, which they enjoyed in view of such an association at a time when they were otherwise threatened by the modernist egalitarian compacts of democratic politics.

The OBCs deeply resented the upper caste hegemony in state politics. With the rise of middle peasantry and their political mobilization initiated by Lohiaites, the situation changed. Many of the OBCs—particularly the Yadav (14 percent), Kurmi (5.27 percent) and Koeri (4.93 percent) castes—becoming conscious of their numerical strength and its potentiality in democratic politics, started asserting a new political role. The cleavage between the upper castes and the OBCs soon turned into a conflict under the leadership of Karpoori Thakur leading towards a greater consolidation of the OBCs. So, the gradual politicization of the dormant strata widened the anti-Congress political space in Bihar.

Though the process of polarization was not complete in the mid-
1970s, it had been clear since the late 1960s that the weaker sections had become increasingly aware of their rights under the law and, as such, more and more assertive. This put a strain on the Congress machine just when, in fact, it had begun to ossify and decay.\(^{14}\) Caste conflicts took a virulent form in Bihar as was evident during caste riots in 1978 and 1990 over job reservations. The Mandal agitations particularly, led to the consolidation of castes along two axes—the forward and backward.\(^{15}\)

In the 1980 elections, the Congress won less votes in Bihar than its all-India average. The combined votes of the Lok Dal and the Janata Party had exceeded by 7 percent. The middle peasantry largely voted for the Lok Dal.\(^{16}\) The decay in the Bihar Congress during 1980s had several causes. Apart from the caste-based factionalism that existed earlier, growing complacency fostered by the 1984 Lok Sabha outcome—which itself was a by-product of the sympathy wave generated out of Indira Gandhi’s assassination. Rigidity and privateering also cast the old machine into oblivion. The old key operatives had come to accept refraining from much personal profiteering, while the new role incumbents often lacked both the self-restraint and skill at forging new coalition. Things were made worse by Indira Gandhi’s attempt to centralize power.

During the 1980s the apparent population in Congress politics concealed undercurrents of clientelism.\(^{17}\) In Bihar, dissident activity became a permanent feature of Congress politics. During the period six chief ministerial changes had taken place. Nominated by the Prime Minister, their survival hinged more on central party backing than on a majority in the state legislature. In certain cases the party leadership decision fully disregarded the factional balance of forces in the state, causing tension. Jagannatha Mishra’s Janjagaran campaign in the late 1980s had considerably weakened the party in Bihar.

Further, during the 1980s the Congress leadership’s playing of the Hindu card created scepticism in the minorities. It was said that Indira Gandhi started thinking in terms of the Hindu backlash because the government was perceived by Hindus as favouring the Muslims.\(^{18}\) The growth of Hindu revivalism was explained by her as being the reaction to a real or imagined threat from the Muslim communal organizations.\(^{19}\) Rajiv Gandhi also adopted the same policy. He vacillated and the value of pragmatism was compromised with the fundamentalist forces. The constitution was amended to placate extremist Muslim sentiments in the wake of the Shah Bano case and
to meet the Hindu reaction the lock of disputed Babri structure was opened in 1986 and Shilanyas was allowed to be performed in Ayodhya in 1989. In Bihar, Muslims gravitated towards the JD in the aftermath of Bhagalpur riots of October 1989. This process crystallized further in the post-Ayodhya demolition phase, where a political demarcation between the Secularists and anti-Secularists emerged. Laloo Prasad emerged as one of the most successful and effective champions of secularism and reservation for OBCs. So, this consolidation of Muslims with the OBCs and the SCs strengthened the JD in Bihar, thus weakening the Congress.20

In fact, the historical shift in political power during 1990s saw the RJD becoming the mainstream voice of the backward caste politics, particularly for the MY (Muslim-Yadav) combination. The RJD though mobilized around secular issues, ably created electoral divisions based on religious lines and got Muslim votes in bulk, playing on their fear psychosis of the BJP.21 Politics of caste was initiated by the Congress but, in the post-Mandal phase the JD used the caste weapon first against the Congress and later on, the RJD used it against the BJP combine. The emerging political change in Bihar is the result of the cultural and social interaction of previous decades and political generations.22 The recognition of caste and jati as active and dynamic elements in Bihar's cultural and political lives thus becomes imperative. M.N. Srinivas observes that under the impact of modernizing forces, caste was becoming a stronger player in the political arena. The djinn of caste was being let loose from the bottle of the local community to become an active force in state and national politics.23

Earlier, with regard to social tensions arising out of class militancy prevalent in Bihar during the 1980s, the role of the Congress was one of ambivalence. It was accused of being aligned with the oppressors. In central Bihar there was a serious agrarian unrest as the landless workers and landowning peasants were locked in a violent Naxalite-led encounter. Various landed castes, both from the upper castes and OBCs, formed senas to protect their caste and economic interests. In such a polarized scenario the Congress government showed little interest in actualizing either a policy or a legislation. Also, on the face of the opposition's political mobilization through demonstrations, dharnas, gheraos, road blocks, rallies, etc., its leadership tried to meet the challenges through centralism, plebiscitary politics and managerial style. Despite Rajiv Gandhi's famous presidential speech at the Mumbai Congress Centenary
convention denouncing "the Congress power brokers, who dispense patronage to convert a mass movement into a feudal oligarchy", nothing tangible was done at the organizational level to alter the situation. The party's mass membership drive and organizational election remained a formality providing opportunities to well entrenched loyalists and sycophants to thrive on. Having failed in many of the party functions such as mobilization, recruitment, articulation, aggregation and integration in Bihar society, it arrived at a situation of policy drift. It could not present a specific political identity and thus failed in resurrecting its vote bank. It could not mould and reinforce citizens' political identity.

The decline in the Congress may be attributed to its failure in adapting to the changing socio-political conditions. As an opposition party it could not make election issues of, either the corruption in administration or politicization of bureaucracy or even the lack of proper understanding of development priority on the part of the ruling establishment of the state. Further, the incidence of political crime and violence has been a disquieting feature of Bihar politics. But the 1980s saw an alarming increase in the criminalisation of politics for which the Congress was not the least responsible. This continued unabated during the 1990s and presently the Congressmen are at the receiving end.

During the 1998 and 1999 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress had seat adjustments with the RJD in Bihar. Its decision to vote against the ratification motion in the Rajya Sabha had compelled the NDA government at the centre to withdraw the President's rule from Bihar in February 1999. The RJD reciprocatingly supported the Congress President, Sonia Gandhi in her abortive government formation exercise after the fall of the NDA government in April 1999. Its seat sharing arrangement with the RJD was not foolproof. In 1998 it contested 21 seats as against the 8 allotted by the RJD; in 1999 it contested 16 seats as allotted by the RJD.

So, it can be concluded that as a result of sharply divided caste loyalties, political parties in Bihar are constantly haunted by the need to reconcile two divergent objectives—group solidarity and broad social representation. And a reconciliation between the two objectives plays an important role in transforming cleavages into political support bases and alternative policy frameworks. The Congress failed to respond to this challenge. In Bihar, the electoral mobilization and voter alignments revolve around caste and the social coalition of the predominant party era has disappeared. The questions of identity
and empowerment have left the Congress bewildered. Instead of the strategies of persistence and innovation it has chosen the path of accommodation and surrender.\(^{25}\) So, chances of its re-emergence as a major player in state politics appears dim.

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of votes polled and seats obtained by the Congress in Bihar during five Lok Sabha elections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seats</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES AND REFERENCE

4. After the Assembly elections 2000, NDA government under Samata Party leader Nitish Kumar was formed, with the BIP as a major partner. But, for want of majority support, it resigned within ten days without facing the vote of confidence in the Assembly.
Electoral politics in the modern and truly democratic sense is a new experience for the people of Arunachal Pradesh. “Arunachal Pradesh (formerly NEFA) is the youngest sub-polity of India to be introduced to the process of modern participatory politics.” Although the first General Election in India was held in 1952, the franchise right remained unextended to the people of Arunachal for long. The voting right was withheld till 1977 by a special provision of the Representation of People Act, 1951. This was probably due to the fact that the “Administrative policies of Arunachal Pradesh had long been determined by the anthropological view that elections are alien to tribal culture.” The Bordoloi sub-committee also did not favour extending franchise to the people of NEFA as it found that the level of consciousness among the tribals was very low.

Notwithstanding the late entry of electoral politics into Arunachal Pradesh, the democratic culture was in practice here since time immemorial in the workings of the traditional village councils in different forms among different tribal groups. Traditional political institutions such as Kameng of the Adis were essentially democratic in function and structure. Elements of the electoral system too were not entirely unknown to the tribals here. It is on record that the Monpa tribe of Tawang and Kameng Districts traditionally employed modern methods of election in their process of selection of tsorgens, the village head.

Verrier Elwin describes the system as:

...“the election of tsorgens is traditionally initiated at the Kharchung level, on the initiative of the various tsoblas. The panel of names of person suitable for election as tsorgens is drawn up by the tsoba concerned after consultation with the entire village population. In practice there is nearly an occasion when a panel has to be prepared and the deliberation normally results in the choice of one person as the most suitable candidate. All the tsoblas
concerned, then approach the person selected and after obtaining his agreement to the nomination, put it up to the tsotsang zem or the General Assembly. Three days are normally given for the distribution of the ballot papers and for their collection from the voters. In rare cases where there is a tie, the tsorgens is chosen by drawing lots from among the candidates. Participation in the voting is compulsory and the household whose head does not attend the General Assembly when it meets, or fails to take part in the voting, is fined."

In our view, however, the electoral system as described by Elwin above does not reflect the traditional system. A survey of Monpa dominated areas has revealed that such practices including the distribution and collection of ballot papers in a three day time period did not exist in the traditional Monpa society. In the traditional way, an assembly represented by a member from each family, selected the tsorgens, after the potential of the candidates was debated at the tsobla (village) level. On the appointed day and place the villagers assembled together to select their leaders from among those persons of ability. The selection of a candidate is generally made by a unanimous decision. Thus, the Monpa type of democracy can be termed as ‘Direct but limited Democracy’.

The Panchayat Raj Institution introduced in 1969 initiated the modern participatory political process in the state. And the North East Frontier Agency Administration (supplementary) Regulation, 1971 introduced an electoral system in the Village Panchayats. The 1971 amendment has changed the provisions of 1967 Regulation relating to the Gram Panchayats to create a new body, to be elected according to customary tribal methods, by the residents of a village or villages that fall within the Gram Panchayat. The Arunachal Pradesh Gram Panchayat (Constitution) Rules (1972), spelt out certain details regarding the election of the members of Gram Panchayat, but, it is silent about the actual process of election. This rule says that the Deputy Commissioner should prepare a list of all adults in the Gram Panchayat area for the purpose of the Panchayat elections and that the election should be conducted by a Presiding Officer to be appointed by him. The successful candidates are required to be formally declared elected by the Presiding Officer.

The North-East Areas (Re-organization) Act, 1971 provides the Union Territory with one seat in the Rajya Sabha and another in the Lok Sabha to be filled by the nomination of the President. The candidates, however, were not exactly nominated by the President, for the candidates to be nominated by the President were indirectly
elected by the people. With regards to the Rajya Sabha seat, the candidate was selected by the Pradesh Council through an election process. So, in effect, an electoral college consisting of all the Zila Parishads elect a candidate to be nominated for the Lok Sabha seat. Each Zila Parishad consists of all the Vice-Presidents of all Anchal Samitis within its jurisdiction, with one representative from each Anchal Samiti in the District, and not more than six persons to be nominated by the Administrator to secure representation in the Zila Parishad. The seats to be filled were hotly contested. There were five contestants in the fray for the first Lok Sabha seat—three from Siang District and two from Lohit District. The first Member of Parliament was Chowkhamon Gohain to be followed by Dying Ering. In 1972, Todak Basar became the first member of the Rajya Sabha.

Even with the introduction of the Panchayati Raj, the formal pattern of political behaviour could not be conspicuous as elections to the Panchayats were patterned on the existing tribal customs. An election on the basis of the Universal Adult Franchise took place in the state only in 1977. Even in this first parliamentary election in Arunachal only half the population exercised their franchise as there was no election in Arunachal West Parliamentary Constituency, the lone candidate being elected uncontested. But the first Assembly Election in 1978 ensured a popular participation of the people of Arunachal in electoral politics.

Party politics made its first entry in the State in October 1972 with the foundation of a unit of the Indian National Congress. The two nominated members of parliament joined the Congress party. Party politics were activated by the first General Election in 1977 in which an electorate of 2,15,657 were called upon to elect their members of parliament in place of the previous practice of their nomination by the President of India. The Indian National Congress was the only political party to participate in the first ever General Election in Arunachal Pradesh.

The Sample

This study plans to understand and analyse the voting behavior of the electorate in five purposefully selected Assembly Constituencies. The selected constituencies possess a varied social structure and political traditions therefore can be said to be possibly representative of the tribal society in Arunachal Pradesh. The Assembly Constituencies selected are: 7-Bomdila (ST), 13-Itanagar (ST), 55-Khonsa East (ST), 17-Ziro-Hapoli (ST), and 38-Pasighat East (ST).
The Khonsa Assembly Constituency is inhabited by the Wanchoos and Noctes with a political tradition of tribal chieftaincy. The Adis of Pasighat are one of the first tribal groups who reaped the benefits of early education and development in the State. This group is famous for its political institution called Kebang, a highly democratic traditional village council. The political institution of the Monpas in Bomdila is theocratic in nature. The Itanagar constituency represents a society of mixed political cultures and cultural ethos. The Apatanis of Ziro-Hapoli Constituency are counted as one of the most advanced tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. Their society still maintains rigid social structure uninfluenced by the forces of modernization.

A partially structured questionnaire was designed for this study and supplied to the sample electorate in order to elicit the necessary information. Since it was not possible to cover the entire Assembly segment of all the constituencies, it was considered prudent to select at least four polling booths (two rural and two urban) from each constituency at random. The survey covered twenty polling stations and reached an electorate of 570 (371 males and 199 females) in total, employing the random sampling technique.

Voting Behaviour

Voting preferences have been found to be an outcome of various pressures working on an individual in a social milieu. Therefore, an understanding of voting behaviour is a study into socio-cultural processes, which influence the psychology of voters.14

David J. Elkins has identified two strategies — “Individualistic” and “Holistic” — for explaining the national and regional differences in political participation. The individualistic approach is distinguished by two important features: (i) it aims to answer questions about an individual such as “how does an individual make up his mind regarding whether or who to vote for”? (ii) it depends primarily on individual attributes (such as, age and attitudes towards politics) to answer such questions. The central question in the holistic approach does not refer directly to the individual’s voting decisions or their decisions about running for office; rather this focuses on the social, economic and political aspects of the regional electorate. The holistic approach however, does not rule out the importance of individual differences, but it considers them only within the context of the broader social structures, which condition the levels of participation in a broad spectra of citizens.15

As Arunachal’s society is made up of diverse social and political
cultures, an attempt has been made here to analyse the voting behaviour of individuals representing various cultures with regional differences. Hence, the study shall keep into considerations “holistic” approach placing individuals as the basic units of analysis.

Different studies have delineated different sets of variables as determinants of voting behaviour. The studies undertaken by scholars of Columbia University entitled, The People’s Choice and Voting, place an emphasis on the impact of social and environmental factors in the individuals’ voting choice. The studies conducted by Michigan Survey Research Centre like the Voter Decides and the American Voter, on the other hand, link voting behaviour and party preference to psychological variables or to the subjective world of the individual voter and his interpretation of the candidates and the issues associated with a particular event.16

According to Norman Palmer there are three broad classes of factors or variables which influence individual’s voting behaviour: the ecological, the political and the socio-economic or SES factors. “Not so much attention,” he writes, “is given to the ecological or environmental factors. Yet these are of decisive importance, for they concern the broad cultural, social, political and economic setting of the total social system in which the act of voting takes place.”17 Norman Palmer has also emphasized certain political factors that influence individuals voting behaviour i.e., the candidate orientation, the party orientation and the issue orientation of the voter. According to Imtiaz Ahmed, “the local political framework is significant for the understanding of the political behaviour of social or communal groups in an area.”18

The social determinants of voting behaviour in India include certain primordial factors such as family and kinship, caste, factions and communalism. In a parliamentary democracy, the main assumption is that the party is more important than the candidate in voting. “In India,” Norman Palmer writes, “the party rather than the candidate has been the major determinant in most constituencies and in most elections.”19 This proposition does not hold true for the voters in this study. A majority of the voters (52.80%) voted in consideration of the candidate as a person rather than for his party affiliation and only 30.35 per cent of the total voters cast their vote in consideration of the party. Only 16.84 per cent voters considered issues as the basis of their voting.
Table 1

Q. Do you vote in consideration of individual candidate/party/issues?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bomdila</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(56.66%)</td>
<td>(30%)</td>
<td>(13.33%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itanagar</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(43.24%)</td>
<td>(34.45%)</td>
<td>(22.29%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ziro-Hapoli</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(36%)</td>
<td>(28%)</td>
<td>(16%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasighat East</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(50.65%)</td>
<td>(31.57%)</td>
<td>(17.76%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khonsa East</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(67.14%)</td>
<td>(21.42%)</td>
<td>(11.42%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(52.80%)</td>
<td>(30.35%)</td>
<td>(16.84%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Candidate Orientation and Voting Preference

The political behaviour of voters who are oriented towards the candidate rather than a party or other considerations is largely un-ideological. Their voting preference is likely to be shaped by factors such as caste, class, religions, etc. These voters do not attach much significance to the policies and programmes of the political parties. The percentage of voters who vote in consideration of a candidate rather than a party or an issue is the highest i.e., 52.80 per cent.

Party Orientation and Voting Preference

Most of the sample voters were not members of the political party they voted for. Table 1 shows that 30.35 the voters voted in consideration of a party as against 52.80 per cent of those who voted in favour of a candidate.

A unique feature in the electoral politics of Arunachal Pradesh is that the voters tend to favour candidates who are official nominees of the ruling party. Their orientation towards party has nothing to do with the policies and programmes of the concerned party. In fact, a majority of the party-oriented voters were ignorant of the ideological basis of the parties they voted for. Party ticket, therefore, rather than party itself is the prime consideration of the voters. Some of the candidates are believed to have spent a considerable amount of money in their effort to secure party (party in power) nomination.
**Issue Orientation and Voting Preference**

The general observation is that "issue orientation is much less significant as a voting determinant than candidate orientation and party identification." This is true even in the case of the sample voters in this study. Only 16.84 per cent of the voters consider issues as the determinant of voting behaviour.

The issues to which voters pay attention are basically localized in nature with a parochial appeal. The voters indicated their inclination to vote for such parties with whose programmes they could identify themselves. In Arunachal Pradesh, every candidate issues a local manifesto detailing the problems confronted by the voters of that constituency. The local manifesto also contains promises to be fulfilled in next five years. It is evident from Table 2 that 73.33 per cent voters voted in consideration of local issues. The voters who voted in consideration of national and state issues constitute just 26.66 per cent of the total respondents.

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Local issues</th>
<th>State issues</th>
<th>National issues</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bomdila</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(77.33%)</td>
<td>(14%)</td>
<td>(8.66%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itanagar</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(67.56%)</td>
<td>(20.27%)</td>
<td>(12.86%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ziro-Hapoli</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(74%)</td>
<td>(16%)</td>
<td>(10%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasighat East</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(72.36%)</td>
<td>(17.76%)</td>
<td>(9.86%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khonsa East</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(78.57%)</td>
<td>(12.85%)</td>
<td>(8.57%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(73.33%)</td>
<td>(16.66%)</td>
<td>(10%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Kinship and Voting Preference**

In a tribal society "in group" solidarity is religiously maintained. A tribal voter in Arunachal Pradesh behaves politically in response to the group pressures or community welfare. The voters are bound by a network of social relationships, which often get transformed to political relationships at the time of election. It is obvious from the Table 3 that 64.56 per cent of the voters consider kinship as a primary determinant of their voting behaviour.
Q. Which factor do you consider in favouring a particular candidate?

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Kinship</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bomdila</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(65.33%)</td>
<td>(26.66%)</td>
<td>(8%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itanagar</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(51.35%)</td>
<td>(11.48%)</td>
<td>(3.37%)</td>
<td>(33.78%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ziro-Hapoli</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(68%)</td>
<td>(6%)</td>
<td>(4%)</td>
<td>(22%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasighat East</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(70.39%)</td>
<td>(11.84%)</td>
<td>(17.76%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khonsa East</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(75.71%)</td>
<td>(17.14%)</td>
<td>(7.14%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(64.56%)</td>
<td>(15.78%)</td>
<td>(1.22%)</td>
<td>(18.42%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Religion and Voting Preference

Till recently religion did not find any place in the electoral politics of Arunachal Pradesh. S.K. Chaube notes that voters in Arunachal Pradesh voted without religious consideration, though the election result reflects a regionalist thinking which is very similar to that found in the neighboring hill states. The entry of two Rimpoches (religious head in Buddhism) from Lumla and Tawang Constituencies in 1995 general election has however, created a break in the political tradition of the state. Again in 1999 elections, an instance of intra-religious rivalry was reported from Bordurai-Bogapani Assembly Constituency in which a Catholic candidate was pitted against the candidate belonging to Baptist denomination.

As seen from Table 3, voters who voted with religious consideration form merely 15.78 per cent.

Caste and Voting Preference

The role of caste in Indian politics is perhaps one aspect which has received the greatest attention. It is considered to be a key variable in India’s political behaviour in general and electoral behaviour in particular. Scholars dealing with Indian elections have pointed out that Indian voters tend to vote on caste lines. They have further generalized that caste associations or assemblies or federations were mobilized to support their respective caste candidates.

It is evident from Table 3 that caste has no role to play in the electoral politics of Arunachal Pradesh. A mere 1.22 per cent voters...
voted on caste lines. Even among the Apatanis where society is divided into two social groups, clan or village solidarity dominates caste or other considerations.

**Village Council and Voting Preference**

The behaviour of an individual in the tribal society of Arunachal Pradesh is largely regulated by traditional village councils. The analysis Table 4 gives us a true picture of the importance of the village council and its role in the electoral politics of the state. About 31 per cent voters still maintain that traditional leaders do influence their voting choice. Of the respondents, 51.92 per cent however, feel that the council or its leaders remain neutral during elections. The percentage of voters who replied that the candidate to be favoured is decided upon in the meeting of the council is 10.87 per cent. Of the voters 6.84 per cent said that the village council directs the voters.

**Table 4**

Q. What is the role of traditional village council leader in elections?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Constituency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bomdila</td>
<td>Itanagar</td>
<td>Ziro-Hapoli</td>
<td>Pasighat East</td>
<td>Khonsa East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(11.33%)</td>
<td>(8.10%)</td>
<td>(10%)</td>
<td>(10.52%)</td>
<td>(17.14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6.66%)</td>
<td>(4.72%)</td>
<td>(6%)</td>
<td>(6.57%)</td>
<td>(12.85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(30%)</td>
<td>(27.02%)</td>
<td>(24%)</td>
<td>(30.26%)</td>
<td>(42.85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(52%)</td>
<td>(60.13%)</td>
<td>(60%)</td>
<td>(52.63%)</td>
<td>(27.14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Candidate to be favoured is decided at the meeting of the council.*

**Locality of the Candidate and Voting Preference**

Election politics in Arunachal Pradesh is tribe-oriented and the election issues are largely parochial in appeal. A tribal voter finds it hard to accept a candidate from outside his tribe/community. Gegong
Apang, a former Chief Minister was defeated in Liromoba Constituency in the 1999 election primarily because he did not belong to that area.

Table 5 shows that a large majority of the voters (89.93 % in Bomdila, 64.86 per cent in Itanagar, 84 per cent in Ziro-Hapoli, 79.60 per cent in Pasighat East and 87.14 per cent in Khonsa East) feel that their MLA should be a local person. It is to be mentioned here that a local person basically means a person from the voter's own tribe. A significant percentage (32.48%) among the voters of Itanagar constituency, however, was ready to accept a good leader from any outer place as their representative.

Table 5

Q. Do you think your MLA should be a local person or a good leader from any other place?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Local Person</th>
<th>Leader from any</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bomdila</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(89.93%)</td>
<td>(8.66%)</td>
<td>(2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itanagar</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(64.86%)</td>
<td>(32.48%)</td>
<td>(2.70%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ziro-Hapoli</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(84%)</td>
<td>(14%)</td>
<td>(2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasighat East</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(79.60%)</td>
<td>(16.44%)</td>
<td>(3.94%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khonsa East</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(87.14%)</td>
<td>(10%)</td>
<td>(2.85%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(81.75%)</td>
<td>(15.26%)</td>
<td>(2.98%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Money and voting preference

Money is an elusive factor in any election. Its role as a determinant of voting behaviour is not easy to understand. An accepted fact is that one cannot think of entering into an electoral fray in Arunachal Pradesh without a sound financial background. In some of the constituencies, the financial involvement of each candidate is reported to be very close to a crore. But not even a single voter is ready to admit receiving this payment for votes.

At the same time, it must also be noted that money alone does not determine the winning chance of a candidate. There are cases where money was received from both parties, yet the vote was not given to
It was found that "money by itself did not produce the desired result; it succeeded only when used as a timely instrument of election strategy."

NOTES AND REFERENCES

2. The Constitutional (Removal of Difficulties) Orders VII and VIII withheld from NEFA the right of representation to Assam and Central legislatures.
4. Bordoloi sub-committee was appointed to recommend an appropriate and special administrative framework for the tribals of Assam and other un-represented people.
6. Mr. A.B.Sharma, Lecturer, Govt. College, Bomdila has drawn the similar conclusion.
7. NEFA Administration (Supplementary) Regulation, 1971, Section 21(1).
10. Ibid., Rule 8.
12. V.V. Rao, A Century of Tribal politics in North-East India (1874-1974), New Delhi, 1976, pp.327-330.
15. David J. Elkins, Electoral Participation in a South India Contex, Delhi, 1975, p.3.
Food in a Globalised World
A Cultural Perspective

V.P. RAGHAVAN

The twentieth century world economy has been witnessing an incessant movement of people, commodities and information propelled at first by technological progress and later by the globalisation of trade, commerce and labour. The last few decades have seen a vivid expansion of diverse pathways of global exchanges and an intensification of interconnectivity among people all over the world. Today, global connectivity exerts its impact on the everyday life of the people in various domains all over the world.

The expansion of western capitalism has had a critical impact on recent developments in the globalised world. The political, economic and cultural inter-relations of western imperialism have been well documented and its consequences are clearly revealed by the changes in lifestyles in many societies of the modern world. This is hardly a one-way process. Assimilation of influences from the periphery to the centre is an outcome of globalisation, and assimilation is regarded as an important source of innovation in the contemporary world. Hence, the twentieth century may be generally characterized as a period of intensified flows of inputs of culture, largely asymmetrical, between the dominant West and the rest of the world, leading to an increasing interconnectedness and food has come to be used as a significant index of such a connectivity.

Food is a primary element of our social relations. The physiological immediacy of food serves as a foundation for incredibly diverse and complex cultural relations. Eating habits have been a social pursuit for centuries as food was considered to be a symbol of social status. Its ostentatious display articulates social conflicts, conspicuous consumption being a typical example. Consumption patterns of the people express even their national identities. Food also mirrors the self as our eating habits reveal our attitudes. The variety of social functions and cultural formulations that food brings
as it is produced, distributed and consumed, makes it one of the necessary means to observe local lifestyles.

Despite a gradual diffusion of foods and food producing methods, the variety of foodstuffs worldwide and the large-scale movement of people across continents in the course of many millennia, most human beings until recently subsisted on food produced or acquired within a day's travel from home. \(^9\) Thanks to the intensified expansion of the relationships between places and localities all the world over, the movement of foods and culinary cultures has got accelerated leading to what may be described as culinary globalisation. This expansion is a key to the development of world cuisine \(^9\) in terms of a study of the globalised system of the food and food habits of people in a changing world economy. It also seems necessary to unravel the areas of cultural connectivity between the global economy and the localities in each of their social domains of complexity and diversity.

So, this paper mainly focuses on the dietary globalisation in a cultural perspective of the world economy. It explores the multifaceted impact of globalisation of food on the everyday life of people, in the developing countries of the world. In the study, we address issues of food from different angles such as, the historical process of globalisation of food, food as the epitome of culture, food as an economic achievement and food as business in the hands of the agri-business communities. The present scenario of the food system in the developing countries will also be reviewed and the observations drawn will be presented in concluding remarks.

\textit{Globalisation of Food: A Historical Process} \(^9\)

Globalisation is a process of reducing barriers between countries and encouraging closer economic, political and social interaction. \(^11\) It necessarily implies diminishing the importance of national borders and strengthening identities that stretch beyond those rooted in a particular region or country. \(^12\) Globalisation is a process of intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and \textit{vice-versa}. \(^13\) Modern communicative devices worldwide have facilitated it further. Giddens holds that the space increasingly dislocated from place is getting networked to other social contexts across the globe as the old modes of time (say, seasons or sun up or sun down in agrarian societies)
become separated from space and open up various possibilities of recombination.\textsuperscript{14}

The cross country flows of food or what we call culinary globalization, form the core of refined cookery. It also evolves a mindset and a trend of change in dietary appreciation which impact a large number of people all over the world. Unlike in the past, many people now share the same kind of food everywhere and always in the world.

This form of global integration of foodstuffs, culinary techniques and eating habits is by no means a new phenomenon. In fact, history reveals that the major components of many traditional diets originated at places other than where they were eventually adopted and put into use.\textsuperscript{15} The Greeks refined their cooking by learning from Persians and provided food for the ancient Romans.\textsuperscript{16} Likewise, cooking in the European Middle Ages was greatly influenced by the Arabian cuisine.\textsuperscript{17} Apart from that, the worldwide expansion of food plants like tomato, chili, peppers, maize, etc. has had an impact on the dietary behaviour of almost the entire human population.\textsuperscript{18}

Cultural relationships that flourished among nations in the past were invariably related to food. The cultural interdependence between England and France from the later seventeenth century was especially marked in the field of food.\textsuperscript{19} The food products of the Mediterranean such as grape, the olive and wheat for making bread, and wine for sacred and profane pursuits were enjoyed by major civilizations in the past. The Germanic people of the North cultivated other cereals less intensively than they produced large quantities of beer and meat.\textsuperscript{20}

The French diet was profoundly influenced by the advent of Romans from the Mediterranean, first as traders, then as conquerors, bringing about substantial changes in consumption patterns. Wine was first introduced by the Greeks to Marseilles from where it was traded, together with drinking vessels, to the tribal areas, mainly for consumption on auspicious occasions. The political economy of that penetration was, in Dietlar's words, 'driven by drink'.\textsuperscript{21} Wines came from Italy and Spain. Romans also introduced shellfish, oysters, anchovies, prunes, sauces, spices and aromatic plants along with the plants such as those bearing cherry and peach. In return, the South-east, for example, exported cheeses, salaisons and other agricultural products to Rome.

Foreign food goods have been easily available in all regions through time and the regional societies used to adopt and domesticate
foreign consumption practices, all over the world. During the twentieth century, the speed, intensity and the variety of worldwide culinary systems have increased successively. In fact, before the development of modern modes of transport, people separated from each other by geography could hardly get in touch with the foodstuffs produced in distant lands. Only the richest people were able to procure such expensive foods that were scarce and not made available locally. Even if climatic situations allowed the production of an exotic food in large quantities outside its place of origin, as in the case of potato and capsicum native to the Americans, it usually took two to three generations for it to become a part of the domestic diet.\(^2\)

With the exception of certain foodstuffs such as potatoes and maize and certain condiments such as black and red pepper, which also reached the lower segments of the population worldwide, a growing interest in foreign food could be observed among the ordinary people only since the dawn of the last century.\(^3\) These interests were evident among the urban rich in Europe and the U.S. The mass media used to feature the eating habits of foreign nations and many cookbooks on western cuisine were produced forthwith. The middle class in non-western societies also evinced interest in western cuisines. But such interests did not change their consumption pattern. In fact, many dishes that appeared in restaurants and in cookbooks were not actually foreign. They surfaced from the imagination of their producers. However, this trend favoured culinary globalization by the end of the twentieth century. The growing importance of cross-cultural dimension in food during the last decades were invariably related to the global flow of goods, information and the people.

*Food as an Epitome of Culture*

Globalisation influences the production and processing of food as well as its sales, preparations and consumption. As local cultures are invariably integrated with their practices, they are well knit to shape social landscapes along with cultural and national identities of the citizenry. Consumers around the world now find in their supermarkets the same foods produced by the same corporates. This globalised phenomenon, facilitates the proliferation of western food industries in different parts of the world. As the dietary patterns and attitudes toward food form an integral part of the local cultures, the foreign goods, catering technologies and consumption practices tend to become indigenised as they arrive. Global practices are
increasingly attaining global dimensions in the process. In the present circumstances of transnational connectedness, the locals cannot escape the global implications even as the transnationals find it difficult to manage its local articulations. As global brands become increasingly available in the world the importance of local cuisines is slowly getting diminished. It also entails the arrival of new hybrid varieties of cuisines and new identities are growing as a result of the acceptance of new cuisines and the avoidance of the older ones.

In the past, people solely depended on local producers for meeting their food requirements. Later on, as society developed, they were able to acquire access to new varieties of foods, as well as modern technologies for producing and processing them. Seasonal variations were always reflected in the food structure of the earlier societies. But today all varieties of foods are available in all the seasons in the world.

Though regional ecology has its role in evolving culinary traditions and food preference in all the societies, socio-cultural and economic factors are also important in maintaining dietary differences among communities. Food is now considered to be an expression of social manifestation. Douglas thus laments: ‘If food is treated as a code, the message it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed. The message is about different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across the boundaries.’

The inter-relationship of the culinary cultures was not a case of one-way movement from West to the non-West. Many of the Asian habits were positively emulated by the Westerners as well. From 1950 onwards, Asian food items like rice, sago and spices have been familiar to the people in Europe and the U.S. The popularisation of Asian food in the West has in fact a colonial memory. Indonesian food in the Netherlands and Indian food in the U.K., for example, is a reflection of their age old colonial relationship.

The increasing interests in foreign food in the West and in many of the Asian countries have been promptly stimulated by the expansion of tourism. As western lifestyles are promoted through process of globalisation, the cross cultural spread of western food industry products such as breakfast cereals, condensed milk, fizzy drinks and ketchup became the order of the prevailing food options. The contemporary culinary globalisation is also influenced by a cultural phenomenon called ‘social imaginations’. Appadurai has asserted that imagination per se has become an organized field of
social practice, a form of work (both in the sense of labour and of organized cultural practice) and a form of negotiation between sites of agency ('individuals') and globally defined fields of possibility. So, food has now become a meaningful investment, creating the world of new imagination a desirable entity. It has been aptly said that 'now a days foods do not simply come from places organically grown out of them'; it even makes places into "symbolic constructs" and deploys them in the "discursive construction of various imaginative geographies."

Food as Economic Achievement

Food is a daily matter of man. It is also a manifestation of love, health and happiness and, having the "right" food is often the great achievement. Though prestige plays a key role in formulating a food choice, it may be possible only when economic conditions find favour with such a choice. As has been pointed out: 'a comprehensive desire for social prestige is to be found as the primitive motive of actions only among members of classes whose income under normal circumstances is substantial and perhaps even growing, and at any rate, is appreciably over the hunger threshold. In such cases, the impulse to engage in economic activity is no longer a simple necessity of satisfying hunger but a desire to preserve a certain socially expected high standard of living and prestige.'

The social prestige of any class is determined by the available and accessible economic resources at their disposal. Economic growth, infact, leads to an improvement in nourishment and advancement of culinary systems whereas economic deterioration affects them adversely. The removal of hunger and an improvement in the living standards of the people in industrialized societies resulted substantially from the economic growth following the Industrial Revolution. The advancement of science and technology have created greater efficiency in agricultural farming and animal husbandry which in turn have increased production and improved dietary qualities. New cooking apparatus brought diverse varieties and helped in reducing the workload for cooking. The advanced food processing technologies have made the preservation of food easier and brought new varieties of food to newer areas in abundance. Food processing technology has also helped in providing cheap substitutes for luxury food items such as margarine as a substitute for butter and condensed milk as a substitute for fresh milk.
advancement of transport facilities together with the food processing technologies which reduced the cost of supplying distantly available food in the local market eventually encouraged the diffusion of innovations. The cross cultural flow of foods, cookery techniques, and consumption patterns, which accelerated in the second half of the twentieth century brought variety to daily nourishment and broadened the culinary horizons of ordinary people in the industrialized societies.  

Although economic progress and technological innovations generally took the freedom of choice of the people in food to new heights it has also posed many nutritional problems for them. For instance, the chemical additives and other harmful substances used in the production and processing of food are considered to be the cause of diseases of various forms. Excessive consumption of sugar and saturated fat have also led to eating disorders and obesity, which forms one of the most pressing health issues of the days.  

Food as Business

Food is an indispensible component of our daily life. It is an essential means of life; it keeps us alive. But food also becomes business - the business of industrial enterprises as it is intricately linked to profit. The very meanings and understanding of food as biological necessity and its everlasting presence in human life makes its domain fit for exploring its globalisation. As globalisations spreads its tentacles, commercial interests become the major driving force in the process. The universal need of food necessarily induces the producers of food to market their product all over the world. Kikkoman attempts to sell soy sauce in the Netherlands, the Dutch confectioner Verkode motivates Japanese to buy their cookie and McDonald’s and KFC set up their outlets in India. Food is, thus, targeted for commercial ventures wherever one goes, not only because it is a daily necessity, but also because of the common human desire for variation and the general proclivity to shape one’s own life through the medium of food.  

A careful reading of food as an elemental part of modern living is now receiving attention and its impact is seen in common acceptance of the largess economy currently generated by the manufacture, processing and distributions of food stuffs. This is seen in mass produced -, pre-cooked -, pre-packaged -, processed - and fast-food, and the gimmicks in advertising them. All these have significant
influence upon their popularity leading to a rapid growth of corporate
capitalism and agri-business and their increasing domination of the
world marketplace. The widening popularity of fast foods clearly
reveals that the food systems are intricately intertwined with the
macro social framework of the political economies of all the modern
societies. A pattern of homogeneity now pervades over the food
and food preferences across the world.

As the tastes transcend the national boundaries, the profit seeking,
corporate agri-business capitalists of the West mastermind food
industries worldwide and reap the gains. But the increasing expansion
of transnational corporate ventures in food has had a disfavouring
effects on the local systems of 'third world' countries. As
transnational corporates tend to expand their businesses in food in
developing countries the livelihood of the local populace persistently
gets affected.

The agri-business corporates have been penetrating into all
segments of the food system in developing world. The agri-business
corporates are the vector linking regional economies and crop sector
in developing countries of the world to the global system of
production and consumption. New products and modes of
integration have emerged which complement and often eclipse
traditional agricultural exports. The virtual presence of agri-business
corporates is also significant in agri-crops, commodity marketing
and catering.

The Present Scenario

Culinary globalisation has today grown into a new phenomenon of
internationalization of the agri-food system. This phenomenon made
an extremely corrosive impact on food security in many developing
countries, including India. Staple food sectors have been undermined
simultaneously on several fronts, including shifts in domestic
consumption induced by a cheap-food policy and discriminatory
modernization programmes that promote import substitution, notably
of food grains and export crops. These bear little relation to local
needs. For instance, Mexico was once epitomized as an exemplary
model of third world agricultural development. But it turned into a
food deficient nation as the fulcrum of its agri-food system shifted
decisively towards the livestock complex and export crops. The
output of basic food grains (wheat, corn, rice) and beans declined in
per capita terms as the acreage, previously devoted to those crops in
rain-fed regions was switched to oilseeds, principally soyabeans, and forage crops (sorghum, barley, alfalfa). Corn, the staple food, suffered particularly from crop displacement in the rain-fed regions.36 In India, the fertile rice lands along the east coast have been bought or leased by transnational corporates for farming shrimps, which may be exported to Europe, Japan and the U.S. In fact, export-ied agriculture affects food security as it encourages a shift from sustainable small-scale farming to non-sustainable large-scale industrial production. Peasants are getting displaced from farming as commercial interests takeover land for industrial-scale production of export commodities such as shrimp, flowers, vegetables and meat.37 Internationalisation of the food system, thus, pauperizes the local fishing and farming community who have lived on rice paddies and fishing for ages.38 Another illustrative example is from Bikaner, Rajasthan. The Bikaneri bhujia is a traditional snack produced in cottage industries in Bikaner. The U.S. based transitional corporations, Pepsi, is now mass producing its new version using the same traditional name in its advertisements, underbidding local producers and destroying their markets. This is an example of sheer appropriation of common knowledge and the traditional method of food preparations of millions of local people and thereby destroying their livelihood.39 Likewise, in other parts of India farm land used in farming to feed the local population is now being used for export oriented food products, such as tomatoes for ketchup in place of rice in Punjab; sunflower instead of rice and millet in Karnataka; strawberries and fruits for exports instead of basic food stuffs in Maharashtra.40

Concluding Remarks

Globalisations of food is invariably a part of globalisation of cultures—the culture of a globalised village. Nevertheless, there are two aspects of this culinary globalisation. One is homogenization, where by, bread, for example, comes to play a dominant role in cultures worldwide or coca-cola comes to dominate the world markets of soft-drinks. The other aspect refers to global-differentiation in which adoption of local food systems assumes a pattern of multiculturalism.41 The process of globalisation has gradually taken a route to western domination, eroding cultural diversity in food stuff including goods, ideas and identities. The food cultures are now becoming more and more homogeneous as western food
conquers the world. Although cultural assimilation with a wider ramification has become a truism in the modernizing world, the traditional food and food systems in the developing world are getting destroyed at the instance of the transnational corporates under the guise of ‘development’. Food is a means of life but it has become a meaningful investment for the business. Business is always for seeking profit, and profit seekers now aspire to appropriate the lives and the livelihoods of the ‘other’ world. Food has now become a tool for appropriation rather than the means to feed the teeming millions. What is the way out? It is a question imperative to be addressed not by governance but by the people.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Food in a Globalised World

32. Sidney Mintz, who first examined the relationships between eating habits and economic development, narrated the history of sugar consumption in
Western Europe and he found that the popularization of sugar has been caused by the rising supply of sugar provided by sugarcane plantations in New World. Cf. Sidney Mintz. *Sweetness and Poor: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*, New York, Viking, 1986.


35. Ibid., p. 162.


40. Maria Mises and Veronica Bennholdt – Thausen, op. cit., p. 43


42. S. Sargent, op. cit., 1985, p. 143.
CONTRIBUTORS

**DR. F.G. ASENJO**  
Professor Emeritus  
University of Pittsburgh, P.O. Box 10244  
Pittsburgh PA 15232 (USA)

**DR. USHA BANDE**  
Fellow, IIAS, Shimla (H. P.)

**DR. SUGATA BHADURI**  
Associate Professor  
Centre for Linguistics & English  
Jawaharlal Nehru University  
New Delhi – 110 067  
email: bhaduris@hotmail.com

**DR. SIBESH BHATTACHARYYA**  
Fellow, IIAS, Shimla (H. P.)

**DR. S.N. DUBE**  
Fellow, IIAS, Shimla (H. P.)

**DR. NISHAMANI KAR**  
Senior Lecturer in English, Prananath College  
Kharada - 752 057 (Orissa)

**DR. NANI BATH**  
Lecturer, Department of Political Science  
Arunachal University  
Doimukh – 791 112 (A.P.)

**DR. ANIL KUMAR OJHA**  
Lecturer, Department of Political Science  
B.R.A. Bihar University, Sikandarpur  
Muzaffarpur – 842 001 (Bihar)

**DR. V.P. RAGHavan**  
Principal, S.E.S. College  
Sreekantapuram  
Kannur – 670 631 (Kerala)

**DR. T.S. RUKMANI**  
Fellow, IIAS, Shimla (H. P.)