Institute of Indian Culture

News and Views

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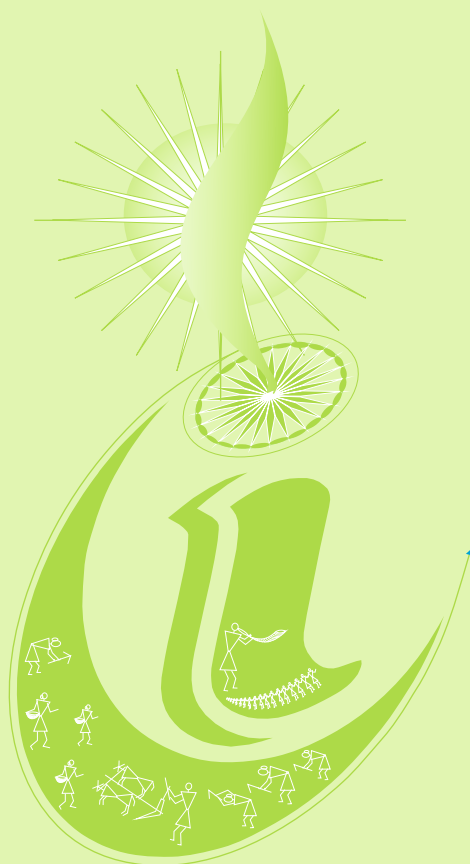
INSTITUTE OF INDIAN CULTURE

INSTITUTE OF INDIAN CULTURE (IIC)

A Post-graduate Research Centre
for degrees of M.A. (by research) & Ph.D.
in Anthropology and Sociology
Recognized by the University of Mumbai

Vision of the Institute

IIC Works with a Vision of
providing reliable and
researched data on
Indian Culture, Religion and Society,
towards the goal of building a just and humane society

EDITORIAL

A NATION IN CONFLICT WITH ITSELF CANNOT PROGRESS

"WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA"

Uphold the Constitution by Dialogue, Not Division

Seventy Years ago, on January 26, 1950, the **Constitution of India** came into effect with a democratic government system, completing the country's transition towards becoming an Independent Republic.

This happened after much debates, discussions and historical struggle on the **"Idea of India".** The culmination of this prolonged deliberations, sustained efforts and non-violent movements led the **Founding Fathers of the New India** to adopt the governing principles of People of India through its Constitution. The Vision of this New India is articulated in its Preamble which states:

We, The People of India, solemnly resolved to constitute India into

a **SOVEREIGN, SOCIALIST, SECULAR, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC** and to secure to all its citizens

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this 26th day of

November 1949, do HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.

During this year of the celebration of our 71st Republic Day, we can ask ourselves, how far this dream and vision of India is lived and practiced in its letter and spirit. Indications are there that there are shadows and dark clouds to trample down the very idea and spirit of India. The way the implementation of Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), National Register of Citizens (NRC) and National Population Register (NPR) indicate this fear. According to the Bill, members of the Hindu, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist and Zoroastrian communities who have come from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh till December 31, 2014 and facing religious persecution there will not be treated as illegal immigrants but given Indian citizenship. The Bill excludes the Muslims. This goes against the spirit of the Constitution of India. According to the Indian Constitution religion should never be the criterion for citizenship of a country.

The youth and the civil society of India have come together to protect the Constitution and the Idea and Spirit of India. The on-going prolonged and sustained nationwide agitations, especially by the students of India against the implementation of CAA, NRC and NPR indicate their determination to protect the constitutional vision of India. According to many social thinkers, political and religious leaders, lawyers, journalists, academicians, students and general public, the efforts of the ruling BJP government at the Centre which implements the vision of the Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh (RSS) is slowly turning India into a Hindu Rashtra (Hindu Nation). It is feared that CAA, NRC and NPR are meant to move to this direction (Read editorial pages of Indian Express, The Hindu, Times of India, Hindustan Times and others from December 2019 & January 2020).

Moreover, the way the freedom of expression is shunted out by police brutality, and creating a fear complex through various unlawful punitive methods on the dissenting voice against the

ruling dispensation strengthen this apprehension that our Constitution is in danger. The recent violence at our universities and the violence of the police on students, especially in the BJP ruled states and in Delhi, where police is under the Central Government show that the upholding the freedom of expression and the spirit of India enshrined in the Constitution is under great threat. The face of India is changing through majoritarian intolerance. This trajectory is also accelerating India's economic decline and weakening India's international influence.

The onus is on the government to reach out to people of its clear stand. But what we see is the seeming contradictions between Prime Minister Narendra Modi's position and those taken earlier by Home Minister Amit Shah on the NRIC exercise. The media reports on detention centres and the real response to CAA in neighbouring and other countries also add to fuel to the fears of the citizens on the usefulness of the implementation of the CAA, NRC and NPR.

This perception is growing among the religious minorities of India that the majoritarian rule of the present government is not respecting the Constitution of India which guarantees equal citizenship to all. This fear is well articulated by Irena Akbar in her participating in the present CAA agitation. Writing to **Indian Express** (Jan.3,2020) she says: "It was a protest against six long years of the anti-Muslim agenda of the Narendra Modi government. It was a protest against the lynching of Mohammad Akhlaq, Pehlu Khan, Tabrez Ansari, Junaid Khan, and many others whose names have been forgotten. It was a protest against the passing of the Triple Talaq Bill. It was a protest against the Supreme court verdict in the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi title suit. It was a protest against the CAA and NRC. Finally, it was a protest against the trigger that pushed us out on the streets – the Delhi Police's crackdown on the students of Jamia Millia Islamia. It was a cumulative protest, a release of pent-up anguish over the relentless anti-Muslim agenda of the state and the media since 2014".

To alleviate this fear of the minorities and avoid majoritarian imposition of "Hindu Rashtra", and to uphold the Constitutional vision of India, 106 retired civil servants each with distinguished record of service formed a "Constitutional Conduct Group" which wrote a letter to the "fellow citizens" and it "wants the repeal of CAA and government to abandon its intentions on the NPR and NRIC inter alia for the apprehensions all three have generated in the country's Muslim community. In the context of the contradictory statements of government ministers on these issues, the Group notes that Indian citizens are `bewildered' and fearful `more so when government has not entered into any dialogue on this issue'" (see Vivek Katju, "Uphold Dialogue, Not Division", Times of India,15 January 2020, p.16).

To conclude, I may say that since we are interested in the welfare of all citizens and live justly and peacefully, it is very vital that we uphold the vision of the Constitution. It disturbs us to see that instead of building bridges and peace, what is happening today is division among us on the basis of religion and culture. This is not good for the nation. Since CAA and NRC raise issues which go to the core of the principles of India's polity and society, they require serious academic examination, analysis and debate among scholars with contending views on the issues

It is important to understand that a nation to prosper there should be peace, unity, justice, equity and fairness. A nation in conflict with itself cannot prosper. Hence, we need to resolve our differences with a fresh dialogue based on our Constitutional vision of India. This is the best gift one could give to our nation on the celebration of the 71st anniversary of our Independence. Let our Constitution show us the way.

S. M. Michael SVD

Reflections on Teaching: Explorations in Facilitation

Shazneen

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Introduction & Background

I'm a diehard teacher…I was born to teach…Only I find the idea of teaching as a one way flow of information, very boxed up. It refuses to acknowledge that we are all born with our own intelligence and possess wisdom that draws on our personal experiences, which necessarily vary widely according to context. Additionally, today's students have considerable exposure, experience and insights that endure from those experiences.

My story of Learning

I'll narrate my story of teaching and learning. I began teaching when in school. I always knew I wanted to teach. That's the response I'd give anyone who asked me the standard question, *'What do you want to do when you grow up?'*. I'd say, *'I want to teach'*. I'd teach the students who needed individualized attention. When I was 15, I conducted a series of lectures on *'Creating better relationships',* drawing on Psychological theory and elucidating it with my own examples. I thank my teacher, Jyoti Sisodia for giving me that opportunity and my students/ classmates for listening and sharing. That was over two decades ago. Since then, I've done a lot of learning, teaching, unlearning, researching, observing, listening, understanding. All of these are signposts to learning.

My education:

- Masters in Clinical and Abnormal Psychology;
- a four year intensive training in Psychodynamic psychotherapy,
- academic associate at IIM Ahmedabad;

- qualified the NET exam,
- Oxfam fellowship on violence against women.
- PhD, Institute for Health Research, (Now school of Health and medicine), at Lancaster University, UK. This involved year long fieldwork in the UK and India. This fieldwork was perhaps most enlightening, socially and psychologically, and involved most unlearning.

My journey of learning has been arduous; involved forays into various disciplines: Psychology, which I consider my 'parent' discipline; I've then branched out into Narratives, English, Psychotherapy, legal jurisprudence, culture studies, women's studies, management, peace and non-violence.

My Journey of Teaching

My journey of teaching has been equally diverse: I have taught Psychotherapy, women's studies, research methodology, Psychology. My students have been varied: international students at Lancaster University, MBA students at IIMA and Mumbai Business school, women's empowerment and social work students at Sophia college, working professionals at TISS (Tata Institute of Social Sciences), mental health practitioners and those belonging to the clergy at Atma Darshan, nurses at Ambani hospital, parents of children with special needs at Ahura centre.

Teaching: Modality

My modalities for teaching have been equally diverse, some of them created specially for the teaching at hand; others sharpened through my own learning. I teach orally, face to face in classes, using PowerPoint and a variety of other tools. I also engage in writing articles, cases and reflections and critiques. I facilitate intensive training workshops for mature students.

Teaching: Vision

Over the years, my vision of teaching has metamorphosed. Earlier, I was content to teach theory, kind of 'textbookish'. Explain the concepts or theories written about in books (often written by Western authors), and elucidate with examples. Now, I've raised the bar. I've taken teaching, learning out of the 'intellectual closet', and applied it to practical day to day life situations. This is not to draw an artificial boundary line between the two. Theory and practice complement each other. Rather, the weight age given to practice and drawing on it for understanding has been prioritized. I aspire to facilitate understanding of the participant (I prefer to use this word, s/he then assumes greater responsibility for learning. In the areas I teach in, that understanding is drawn forth from the participant's social, psychological, intellectual, emotional and clinical processes.

Teaching: Tools

Some of my tools for facilitation are:

- Questioning, which one of my mature students labelled as 'socratic'
- Listening attentively (often with eyes closed to target attention)
- Citing examples
- Enacting: role play
- Drama: theatre of the oppressed (Augusto Boal)
- Movement, gestures
- Case studies, vignettes of experiences
- Metaphors
- Reading of articles, asking for critiques
- Discussions based on film screening
- Questions related to students' personal, professional experiences and observation of social processes.

- Individualized feedback and questioning: I focus attention on each participant and give her/him specific assignments: a question, an example, a thought.

Teaching Session Case study

In this article, I wish to elucidate on a session I recently conducted on the Psychology of women's empowerment: the methodology I used for it, the nature of the students' engagement, their experience and their learning questions and insights. This way I wish to present transparently, the processes and experience of teaching and learning. So, you, the reader can think of creatively enliving your teaching-learning experience.

This session was conducted in a girls college in Mumbai. They have a centre that runs a women's empowerment course. The brief given: keep the class experiential and practical. This also happens to coincide with my personal conception of how I'd like the class to flow. Increasingly, I believe that theoretical information available in public fora like the internet and books. Theory which flows from knowledge based on practice is more thoroughly grasped than the other way round. My supervisor, Tim Atkin, at Lancaster University would share papers that I'd read and critique, and have a discussion, even argue with him about.

The session began with a concept note that I wrote for myself: actually giving a structure for the class. I emailed the participants: this set out the tone of the class, builds rapport, and by way of preparation, creates fertile ground for the learning experience.

Here's what the email read like:
- *We're all participants: co-painters of a self portrait*
- *I'll ask questions. So will you.*
- *The light will be directed as much inwards as outwards.*

Following this, I created a PPT: these had about 10 slides, the purpose being to work as a memory cue: and guide me regarding

the flow of the class. The class began with about 15 participants, and the number increased to about 25, as the rest of the girls trickled in. All the participants were enrolled full time in the degree college. They were aged approximately 20 years.

Teaching-Learning Process

I began the class with introductions: each girl shared her name, what she was studying and what she wished to learn from this class. We then had sharing around 'what is empowerment?'. Here's what some of the girls shared:

- *'becoming strong and confident to live life according to one's will'.*
- *'fight for our rights; raise our voice when someone harasses us'*
- *'gaining knowledge for self love and confidence. Investing that knowledge to gain equality in society.'*

I then probed gently as to what em-powers and dis-empowers them:

The responses to the first varied:

- *'the only person who can empower me is me. when I have the confidence and knowledge I can break through the barriers'.*
- *'moving from my native place to live in Mumbai all by myself'.*

Disempowering:

- *'when someone tries to make me do things against my will'.*
- *'my own feelings of inadequacy'.*

Following this, they were given a vignette, a brief slice of life story, detailing the experience of a woman, across 20 years of her life: her achievements, trials, life experiences, feelings. This was followed by questions based on the story that the students responded to:

What are your 'gut' reactions to this story?

- *'I identified with the woman at the beginning, when she was happy and satisfied. As the story progresses, the situation goes downhill. I kept hoping for something good to happen to her and her family, but actually, I was subconsciously aware of what might happen. I also felt like this is a life which I would not want for myself.'*

- *'I feel the story tells us about how a person's mental health is very important. There are a lot of problems in the woman's life which are a projection of her own insecurities (as far as I remember this was mentioned in the text itself). It shows us how emotional imbalance is a normal, inevitable aspect of life that we need to start accepting and also figure out the tools to deal with it.'*

What do you feel this person is experiencing?

- *'She's frustrated. After her mother's death, she's been in control of her life and was self dependent. But this is now being challenged by her husband who wants to control many aspects of her life. This maybe makes her feel as if she's not good enough. The loss of control must be terrifying for her.'*

What do you understand about her situation?

'her situation is very desperate, she needs appreciation, cooperation, validation, etc which she obviously isn't getting at all.''

I have included these excerpts from writings they shared with me over email. I also had questions about the class. These were:

What did this class feel like?

- *I felt really vulnerable in a classroom environment for the first time. Don't know why.*

What worked?

- *The fact that you are from a Psychology background. I felt I could tell you things and I won't be judged so that felt good.*

How would you do it differently?

- *I just wish it wasn't a classroom environment with everyone there.*

Any suggestions for the next class.

- *No, not really.*

Rationale: Understanding the 'why' behind the teaching:

Now, let me explain why I did what I did in this class.

I began with a friendly, yet academic tone, setting up the session as a space where they could learn about themselves, and their own experiences of empowerment or otherwise. It was revealing for them in a way that they were being posed these questions for the first time, and they were looking within their own life experience for answers.

The purpose behind enquiring about their conception of empowerment and what they found empowering and disempowering was to encourage them to think for themselves, and articulate their responses, in a group. The latter, it is hoped, will build their confidence.

The slice of life story was shared to allow a degree of identification and *projection*. Admittedly, the protagonist was at a different stage in life, than them; however, they still empathetically, slipped into the character, and revealed what it must be like for her. This was a relatively non-threatening way of entering another's life world and experiencing empathy.

Here, I'd like to articulate how I draw on my psychotherapy experience for teaching. The first is my belief that I am a

facilitator, not a teacher. That each experience can have multiple interpretations, and somewhere it's the multiplicity that contributes to the richness. This also draws on my training in qualitative research, where I was supervised by a journalist turned ethnographer, a narrative therapist cum supervisor and conducted fieldwork in variety of settings: police stations, NGOs, temple compounds, homes, railways, courts, amongst others.

My teaching spans different disciplines: also, the learners belong to different disciplines: different amongst themselves and from mine. Therefore, I need to be pliable to different ideas and ways of thinking. For example, recently at a story making workshop I conducted at TISS, the participants varied widely: NGO heads pursuing the government for funding, urban planners wishing to write convincing tales about water conservation; researchers trying to explain statistical data in an understandable manner. Similarly, in this class, my students came from small towns, big cities, the majority and minority communities, some with parents who had been educated abroad, and some who had experienced challenges to psychological wellness. I needed to take this entire cohort on board and hold them psychologically, enough, for them to be able to explore these spaces within themselves and their lives.

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IIC News

ONE-DAY NATIONAL SEMIINAR ON CHANGING CONTOURS OF INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

With a view to discuss the various aspects and changing contours of India's foreign policy, the Institute of Indian Culture, Mumbai organised a one-day national seminar in collaboration with the Political Science department of the SNDT Women's University of Mumbai on 18th September, 2019 at the Conference Hall of the IIC in Andheri East, Mumbai.

The seminar was inaugurated by Dr. V. N. Magare, Pro-Vice Chancellor, SNDT Women's University, Mumbai.

Foreign policy of a country is dictated by both its internal and external factors and is considered as a system of activities evolved by a country to influence the behaviour of other states and adjusting its own activities to suit international environment. Foreign Policy is the key element by which a state translates its broadly conceived goals and interests into concrete courses of action. Each nation has the right and power to secure the goals of its national interest in international relations. Each nation wants to be self-reliant in all areas of activity, though it may not be possible to achieve total self-reliance and self-sufficiency. But interdependency compels every nation to get involved in the process of establishing and conducting relations with other nations in the areas of diplomacy, economy and trade, educational, cultural and political relations. India's foreign policy has undergone changes since Jawaharlal Nehru, depending on the party in power and the ideology of the Prime Minister who takes decisions on international relations and the changing international relations itself. Drastic changes have occurred since Narendra Modi took over as the Prime Minster in 2014.

The following reputed academicians participated and presented papers at the Seminar:

1. Dr. Muralidhar Rao
2. Dr. Manisha Madhava
3. Dr. Vibhuti Patel
4. Dr. K. M. Parivelan
5. Shri Jatin Desai
6. Dr. Aruna Pendse
7. Dr. Vasundhara Mohan
8. Dr. Priya Singh
9. Dr. Sandhya Iyer

Collaboration with Other Academic Institutions

Collaboration with SNDT University for INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

As a sequel to the MOU between the IIC and the SNDT Women's university, Churchgate, Mumbai, seven post-graduate students of the Department of Economics participated in the in the internship programme organised by the IIC. The internship programme started in the first week of January 2020.

The internees are engaged in a study of the status of educational reforms in the government schools; specifically in the middle schools (class 7 to 10). The internees propose to undertake a survey relating to the status of education and infrastructural facilities available among government and MCGB-run schools in Malad. The internees were addressed at the IIC by Professor S.M. Michael and Dr. Vasundhara Mohan on topics related to the study being undertaken by the internees.

Dr. Vasundhara Mohan, Programme Director of the IIC acted as the Coordinator in the internship programme.

Collaboration with Vinayak Ganesh Vaze College

Sociology and Anthropology students from Vinayak Ganesh Vaze College, Mulund visited our IIC and interacted with our faculty. After a few lectures on "The Use of Anthropology in Day to Day lives", they visited our library and spend time in updating their knowledge on the original works of reputed anthropologists. Dr. Laxmi, lecturer of Sociology from the College, who has completed her Ph.D. under the guidance of Dr. S.M. Michael accompanied them.

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Academic Activities of IIC

S. M. Michael

- The Hon'ble Vice Chancellor of Savitribai Phule Pune University has nominated Dr. S.M. Michael as a "Subject Expert on the Research and Recognition Committee for the subject of **Anthropology** under the Faculty of **Humanities** of Savitribai Phule Pune University for a period of two years.

- As a Visiting Faculty at Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth (JDV), Pune; at St. Pius College, Mumbai; at National Vocational Service Centre (NVSC), Pune; at Ishvani Kendra, Pune; and at Pastoral Centre, Goa, Dr. S. M. Michael has been delivering regular lectures on various related topics in "Cultural Anthropology" and "Social Movements".

- Ms. Jennifer Coutinho, Asst. Professor in Sociology at N.E.S. Ratnam College, Bhandup (W), Mumbai, successfully completed her Ph.D. on the subject "***Displacement and Resistance in the Era of Globalization: A study of Dharavi Bet Anti-SEZ Struggle***" on 3 rd December 2019 under the guidance of Dr. S. M. Michael.

- Mrs. Karen Miranda, Asst. Professor in Sociology at Maharashtra College of Arts, Science & Commerce. Mumbai, successfully completed her Ph.D. on the subject "East Indian Community: A Sociological Study in Mumbai" on 27th December 2019 under the guidance of Dr. S.M. Michael.

- Mr. Gautam Sadashiv Nikam has submitted his Ph.D. thesis on January 2020 on the subject "Sociology of Conversion: A Comparative Study of Mahar Christians and Mahar Buddhists"under the guidance of Dr. S. M. Michael.

- As a Member of College Development Committee of the College of Social Work: Nirmala Niketan and of St. Andrew's

College, participated in several official academic meetings.

- *Publication:*"Inter-Relationship Between Ecology and Culture for a Sustainable Development", Perspectives in Social work. Vol. XXXIII, No. 3, December 2018, pp.39-67. College of Social work, Nirmala Niketan, Mumbai.

M. T. Joseph

Special Lectures and presentations:

Special lecture titled "Dalit Feminist Standpoint and Inter sectional Analysis in Teaching and Research" on 03 January 2020 on the occasion of the Death Anniversary of Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Tuljapur, Maharashtra.

14 August 2019. "Perspectives on Patriarchy and Gender". Session given for Inter-Disciplinary Refresher Course in Social Sciences at Human Resources Development Centre, Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad on 14th August 2019.

Paper presentations

"Prof. Sharit Bhowmik and the Study of Street Vendors". Special lecture at RC 16, at the 45th Annual Conference of the Indian Sociological Society at University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, on 28th December 2019.

Dr. (Mrs.) Vasundhara Mohan, Programme Director of IIC

Participated in the following events during 2019:

1. At the invitation of Pravin Gandhi College of Law, Ville Parle, Dr. Mohan presented a paper entitled Problems of Forced Migration and its effect on the Society, in August 2019.

2. Dr. (Mrs.) Mohan was the Chief Guest at the Valedictory function

of the Annual Model United Nations Conference organised by Sophia College for omen. Mumbai in December 2019.

3. She was also the Chief Guest at the function organised by Pravin Gandhi College of Law, Ville Parle, in January 2020 for awarding Degrees in Law to the students of the college.

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Research Article

Culture and Nationalism: Politics of Identity in India

S. M. Michael

I. Introduction

1. Culture and Identity in India

In recent years, the question of the identity of India has been at the top of the agenda at debates on culture, politics and Indian Nationalism. We are confronted on the one hand with a militant Hindu revivalism trying to define India in terms of an upper-caste Sanskritic Hindu identity, and on the other hand, with voices from below, from tribals, Dalits, religious, linguistic and ethnic groups which are demanding elbow room and acceptance of their specific cultural identity in the Indian National Commonwealth. This chapter sets out to explain the cultural situation in which this power game is being played out and the need for an inclusive nationalism, for the peace and prosperity of the Indian Nation.

The Indian Nation is, in essence, multicultural, a fact that the Constitution duly recognizes. The Indian Constitution grew out of the challenges and contending visions for the future of India's cultural, religious and ethnic plurality at the time of the freedom struggle. Hence, it is important to understand that patriotism is not the monopoly of any single ideological or religious group in India.

We shall shortly see how the secular Constitution of the Republic of India is the outcome of conflicting views on the secular form of the modern state and various religious claims on Indian identity; between contending visions of what India should be; between the enthusiastic support for the promotion of Hindi and the fear-backed reticence of the non-Hindi speaking **'majority'** or **'minority'**; and between the demands of a centralized government and policies defined by local needs and visions.

After over sixty years of loyalty to the Constitutional pledge to honour the principles of pluralism and secularism, India now faces a challenge and an unconstitutional attempt to redefine India solely in terms of a mono-cultural, Hindu *Rashtra* (Nation). The steady growing Hindu orientation of our political culture and national self-understanding with its consequent marginalization of other groups has caused much communal disharmony and discontent in India, in terms of violence against Christians, Muslims and others. This paper sets out to highlight the dialogue that took place at the time of the birth of the Indian nation. History may teach us a lesson that we need to learn in order to promote and enhance the dialogue here (at the beginning of the new millennium). It is my fond hope that knowledge of the past will help us in the present, to point out the road that must be travelled, to arrive at a concept of an Indian identity that is comprehensive enough to include the totality of her many sub-cultural groups. Such reflections are urgent and important in the context of globalization and the present upsurge of worldwide ethnic and religious unrest and also for us here in India who must find a way to respond to the challenges of the present times.

2.   Indian Civilization and Indian Nationalism

India is a sub-continent with a vast population of the most diverse kinds of culture. An anthropological knowledge concerning the people of India reveals that almost all known racial groups have migrated to India at different times in the past with their own

language, religion and culture. Given the availability of space, the migrating cultural and racial groups could pass on and penetrate further into the interior without much opposition or obstacles. Thus, the various cultural groups did not destroy each other but continued to live on and consolidate their presence in the main components of the present-day population. The caste system also helped to keep the diverse racial, social and cultural groups apart, effectively preventing them from mixing with one another. The population of India is thus very heterogeneous. Variety and diversity permeate every state and district, every town and village on the subcontinent.

Indian civilization is the outcome of a confluence of various cultural, religious, linguistic and ethnic traditions. Over the years of mutual fecundation, synthesis and challenge, Indian civilization has come to be characterized by a diversity of culture, religion, language, race and caste groups. According to Kothari, "In the absence of a centralized political authority, it was 'the Indian civilizational enterprise' that, over the centuries, achieved a remarkable degree of cohesion and held together different sub-systems in a continental-size society" (Kothari 1988:2223). Thus, the unifying force of Indian civilization was the acceptance of multi-culturality and linguistic diversity rather than a political ideology of regimentation.

The Age of Nationalism in the modern sense of the word is a recent phenomenon. It developed in the eighteenth century in the West and emerged at a later period as a universal political concept. According to Kohn, it was only between the years 1815-1920 that the political map of Europe was redrawn, while the political map of Asia and Africa changed between 1945 and 1965 (Kohn 1968:63). Before this period, nationalism with its present implications did not exist; there were city-states, tribal groups, dynastic states and empires (Gellner 1994:62).

The development of Nationalism is seen as an integral part of the

same historical process that saw the rise of industrialism and democracy. According to Gellner and Hobsbawm the emergence of modern nationalism is an inevitable consequence of capitalism and industrialization (Hastings 1997:10). Partha Chatterjee expresses similar views with regard to the emergence of Nationalism. In his opinion, Nationalism required the replacement of a traditional, group-based culture by the culture of an industrial society, i.e., a shared culture of a larger group, but where the individual and not the group was the primary unit (Chatterjee 1986:5). Nationalism thus presupposes the existence, in fact or as an ideal, of a centralized form of government over a large and distinct territory (Kohn 1956:4).

In India, Nationalism emerged in the context of colonialism (see Oommen 1997; Singh 1997:117-130). It can be traced to the political and administrative unification followed by the economic unification by the British. Politically speaking there was no India at the beginning of the nineteenth century and for at least a century before that; neither did India possess knowledge of its own past and its ancient history (Majumdar 1965:4). The introduction of English education, European science and philosophy, as well as the pride in India as a nation and her past culture, emerged at this historical juncture.

II. Contending Visions of Indian Nationalism

3. What is the Cultural Foundation of Modern India?

In its early manifestation, the struggle for Nationalism, anti-colonial consciousness and the need for independence were not in the realm of politics but in the realm of ideology and culture (Pannikar 1995:57). The first expression of this consciousness was in the form of social and religious reform movements. The important question then was – what is the cultural foundation of Indian society and how are we to reconstruct it as a modern nation on par with other modern nations?

Two strands of thought emerged from upper caste Hindus: one that led to an attempt at reconstructing Indian society on the basis of Western ideas originating in the Age of Enlightenment and Liberalism, and the other that wanted the reconstruction to take place on the basis of ancient Hindu traditions. These two visions of India developed their own ideology, leadership and organization, in the course of the country's freedom struggle. A third vision was voiced by the oppressed and marginalized people of India. These three visions of modern India shaped the course of dialogue in India at the time of the birth of the Indian nation and the framing of her Constitution. They are also influential in the current political debates today.

Let us concentrate on these strands of thought.

4. The Concept of an Indian Nation built on a Rational Approach to Culture

The Enlightenment philosophy of the West began to have its impact on the newly Western-educated Indians during the colonial period. It gave rise to the "Indian Renaissance." The spirit that was promoted by English education was usually that of British liberalism, rationalism and utilitarianism, a spirit that challenged many of the presuppositions on which the orthodox Brahmanic Hindu world outlook was based. With ruthless self-criticism the new Western-educated elite sought to lay the basis for a total social transformation, to wield science and rationality to recreate India.

The beginnings of this social revolt can be easily identified in the thoughts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833). With a view to cleansing Hindu culture and society of their weaknesses and incongruities, he founded the *Brahmo Samaj* in 1828 at Calcutta. Its main ideological thrust was to transform Hinduism in the mould of Christianity, the assumption being that Hindu society could only be healed of its social evils if it adopted the Christian rejection of polytheism, sati, and idolatry, to restructure Hindu culture in terms of modernity.

Roy campaigned for the prohibition of *sati* until Governor-General Lord William Bentinck enacted it in 1829. His revolt against the Hindu society of his time and his appeal to Indians to purify their religion and reform their social institutions echoed throughout the century after his death. The Brahmo ideologues imbibed quite a bit of Christianity along with some Deism of the European Enlightenment. The third-generation Samaj leader Keshub Chandra Sen (1838-1884) professed a Christian-like veneration of Jesus of Nazareth and interiorized the Christian concept of the basic sinfulness of the human person.

The massive all-India impact of such reform measures led to a widespread reaction, to restrain its further diffusion and subsequent erosion of traditional Hindu values.

5.   The Concept of an Indian Nation Built on Aryan Vedic Culture

While Ram Mohan Roy cherished a vision of an Indian society rejuvenated by centuries of exposure to Western science and Christian morality, Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883) urged a regeneration of Hinduism through adherence to a purified 'Vedic faith'; based on the concept of a primordial and elect people to whom the Vedas had been revealed by God and whose language (Sanskrit) is said to be the 'Mother of all languages' (Dayanand, 1981:249). These people had migrated in the distant past, at the beginning of history, from Tibet – the first land to emerge from the Ocean – towards the Aryavarta. Their territory, the original homeland of Vedic civilization, covered the Punjab, Doab and the Ganges basin. From there the Aryans were in a position to dominate the whole world till the war of the Mahabharata, a historic watershed that inaugurated a phase of decadence. A national renaissance for Dayanand implied a return to the Vedic Golden Age.

The chief object of the Arya Samaj that he founded in 1875 in Bombay was to bring about social and religious reform through a

renaissance of early Hindu doctrines. Popular slogans were: *Back to the Vedas* and *Aryavarta for the Aryans* (Smith 1938:57). This view simply equated Indian culture with Hinduism and Hindu culture and the Hindus as the incontestable descendants of the Aryans. All non-Hindu cultural traditions were regarded as contaminating influences. The Arya Samaj is probably the first movement in India to define nationalism in terms of ethnicity. The ideological impact of the Arya Samaj was one among several factors that influenced the subsequent ideology of Hindu nationalism that emerged in the 1920s (Jaffrelot 1996:17).

Dayanand's attack on other religions, such as Christianity and Islam, was vigorous. His book, the *Satyartha Prakash* (Light of Truth) contains a polemical chapter against Christianity, one against Islam, one against Buddhism and Jainism, and several against allegedly degenerative trends in Hinduism. The Arya Samaj had two items in its manifesto: *Shuddi*, the meaning of which is purification, a term for the ceremony by which non-Hindus were converted to Hinduism, and *Sangathan* which literally meant union; that is, the promotion of solidarity among Hindus. In short, the Arya Samaj wanted to establish a Hindu nation by propagating a common religion and culture in India and converting others to Hinduism through the ceremony of *Shuddhi* (see Jordens 1978).

The idea of world domination by the Hindus was voiced at that time by another Arya Samajist, Har Bilas Sarda (1867-1955) based in the Rajasthani British enclave of Ajmer. In the second chapter of *The Hindu Superiority* (1906), entitled "Hindu Colonization of the World", the author rejects the Central Asia theory of emigration of the Aryans to India, and asserts that Aryavarta was the birthplace of a race which subsequently spread and settled in Egypt, Ethiopia, Persia, Asia Minor, Greece, Rome, Turkistan, Germany, Scandinavia, the Hyperborean countries, Great Britain, Eastern Asia and America (Sarda, 1975:109-163). According to Sarda most civilizations of the world could be traced

back to the Hindu-Aryans, a race that had colonized the whole world before the *Mahabharat* war (Sarda 1975).

Vivekananda's (1863-1902) thought marked the culmination of the 19th century social revolt. He founded the Ramakrishna Math and Mission for the dissemination of Hinduism and for social service. He believed that India alone had a spiritual message whereas the West was steeped in sensuality: "Up, India, and conquer the world with your spirituality" (Vivekananda 1957:600).

There are thus two predominant versions of Nationalism in India: *Indian Nationalism* and *Hindu Nationalism*. The basic question raised by these nationalistic movements was "What should be the base of the cultural foundation of the Indian nation?" Indian Nationalism was mainly supported by the western-educated Indian elite, who were secular and utilitarian in their approach. In the words of Heimsath, this brand of nationalism had "at its base an anti-traditional, liberal democratic, secular and politically oriented concept of the nation," so at an early stage a nationalist ideology was developed which "could properly encompass all Indian cultures and religions" (1964:39). Hindu nationalism developed as a reaction against liberal and inclusive Indian nationalism.

6.   Cultural Controversies in the National Congress

A second stage in the development of modern Indian nationalism emerged in 1885 with the foundation of the National Congress by Allan Octavian Hume. The Indian National Congress tried to define a new India in terms of borrowed ideas from the European political experience and Western social ethics. Most of the leaders of the Congress understood the need for a truly all-India nationalism which would rise above regional and communal loyalties (see Smith 1963:88).

By the end of the nineteenth century there was a mighty struggle for the control of the Congress. Two factions, the moderates and

the extremists held radically different views as to the proper ends and means of the nationalist movement. While the moderates in the National Congress such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Madhava Govinda Ranade and Gopal Krishna Gokhale promoted reforms in Hindu culture, extremists glorified Hindu culture and opposed any kind of reform to it. While liberals envisioned a modernization of India through the adoption of the Western parameters of justice, order, rationality and the secular state, Tilak glorified Vedic civilization (Parvate 1959:463). According to him the Vedic religion was the religion of the Aryans from very early times and that during Vedic times, India was a self-contained country, a united and great nation (Varma 1967:197). He thus became the proponent of the Hindutva ideology of his time.

Tilak's overall consideration was the promotion of solidarity among the Hindus; so he emphasized the superiority of their religion, encouraged revivalism, politicized the Ganapati festival in 1893 and converted Shivaji into a cult figure in 1895, thus serving both religious and political objectives (Michael 1986: 185-197). Tilak effectively invoked the spirit of resurgent Hinduism to support the nationalist cause, but at the inevitable cost of alienating the Muslims.

Tilak at one time put the matter this way: "The common factor in Indian society is the feeling of *hindutva* (devotion to Hinduism)" (see Wolpert 1962:210). The style of the revivalists was more aggressive and tended to reflect a *kshatriya* (warrior) world-view. The partition of Bengal in 1905 which created a Muslim-majority area, widened the breach between the Hindu and Muslim communities, and gave further stimulus to extremist activities.

The land of Bengal, and by extension, all of India became identified with the female aspect of the Hindu godhead, and the result was the concept of a divine Motherland. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's (1838-1894) poem Vande Mataram (Hail to the Mother) soon became the Congress Nationalist song, and popular

throughout India. The country was the Mother, but not a defenceless female: "Thou art Durga (the Mother Goddess), Lady and Queen, with hands that strike and swords of sheen" (Smith 1963:90). According to Majumdar, Bankim's nationalism was Hindu rather than Indian. In his novel he converted "patriotism into a religion and religion into patriotism" (Majumdar 1965:479).

The cult of Durga or Kali, with its tantric ritual and animal sacrifices quickly became associated with revolutionary terrorism in Bengal. A pamphlet printed secretly called upon the sons of India to rise up, arm themselves with bombs, and invoke Mother Kali: "What does the Mother want? A coconut? No! A fowl or a sheep or a buffalo? No!.. because the Mother is thirsting after the blood of *firangis* (foreigners) who have bled her profusely" (Quoted in Griffiths 1952: 296; also in Smith 1963:91). The creed of Aurobindo Ghose in 1907 contains some of the most passionate statements of the extremist creed: "Liberty is the fruit we seek from the sacrifice, and the Motherland the goddess to whom we offer it." "Nationalism is not a mere political programme; nationalism is a religion that has come from God" he declared (Ghose 1965: 135).

In 1909 the famous Arya Samajist nationalist leader Lala Lajpat Rai declared, "Hindus are a 'nation' in themselves because they represent a type of civilization all their own" (Jaffrelot 1996:19). He was echoing the use of the German word 'nation', which connoted a people, implying a community possessing a certain civilization and culture. He published some articles by Lala Lalchand in the paper Punjabee on how to build a Hindu country: "This can only be achieved by asserting a purely Hindu interest, and not by any Indian propaganda. The consciousness must rise in the mind of each Hindu that he is a Hindu, and not merely an Indian, and when it does arise the newly awakened force is bound to bring its result." In another article Lala Lalchand wrote: "The point I wish to urge is that patriotism ought to be communal and not merely geographical."

In 1915, the marriage of politics and religion was ultimately consummated in the formation of the Hindu Mahasabha.

7.   Muslim Nationalism as a Response to Hindu Cultural Nationalism

The monopoly of the Nationalist movement by Hindus who had a culture different from that of the Muslims created unease among the Muslims as to the future of their own culture in the event of the Hindus attaining independence. Moreover, the large-scale participation of the Hindus in the nationalist movement inevitably put a stamp of its own on the movement. The various symbols used for promoting the nationalist movement like the anthem *Vande Mataram* were suggestive of the predominance of Hindu culture. A historical figure like Shivaji was a political hero to most Hindus but to many Muslims, he was the very antithesis of Muslim rule in India. All this drove a deep wedge between the Muslims and the Hindus, the gradual politicization of religion rendering the division more acute. It was during this time that a number of Hindu-Muslim riots occurred in various parts of India.

Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan, a prominent Muslim leader realized the position of the Muslims and in 1877 opened a college for Muslims in Aligarh which later developed into what has come to be known today as Aligarh Muslim University. Sir Sayed, at first an ardent nationalist affirmed that Hindus and Muslims in India formed one nation. At the same time, however, he opposed the Congress movement from its inception. He urged Muslims to stay away from it and set up organizations with a view to opposing it because he feared that the Hindus as the majority community would ride roughshod over the interests of Muslims.

Sir Syed Ahmed's advice to the Muslims not to join the Indian National Congress was based on the following considerations. He held that its aims and objectives reflected ignorance of history and the present reality, and that the Congress did not take into consideration the fact that India was inhabited by several

nationalities. As India lacked homogeneity, the result of differences in educational background and political consciousness, it would not be in the interest of Muslims to cast their lot with the Congress, which was largely dominated by Hindus. Thereafter, this fear continued to dominate the minds of Muslim leaders and, in subsequent years, shaping their political objectives and influencing their course of action. Like the parallel movements among the Hindus, the Muslims too formed their own organizations. These Islamic movements tried to assert the superiority of their religion, their culture and their past and succeeded in at least giving substance to the idea that their religion, culture and philosophy were in no way inferior to that of others (Haq 1992). Serving them as the political platform for the purpose of propagating their views in relation to their identity in India was the Muslim League founded in 1906.

8. Revivalist Response to Gandhi

Revivalism was a movement, the object of which was to promote a renewed interest in traditional religion. The followers of the Arya Samaj and the Congress faction led by Tilak wanted the revival of Hindu tradition in building modern India. After the death of Tilak in 1920, when Mohandas Gandhi publicly emerged on the Indian political scene as the 'Mahatma', he received widespread revivalist support. Indeed, many believed him to be one of them.

While Gandhi had much in common with the revivalists, many gradually came to oppose him as they became better acquainted with his ideas. Gandhi strove unceasingly for Hindu-Muslim unity, convinced that ultimately both religions were true and valid (see Gandhi 1949). His deepest conviction was that God, Truth and Ahimsa (non-violence) were all one and the same. Satyagraha (truth-force, non-violent resistance) was based on Gandhi's personal religious faith, which he successfully employed against the British who in their commitment to the maintenance of law and order appeared ruthless and brutal.

The revivalists were disturbed by Gandhi's ascetic non-kshatriya style of leadership, his definition of *dharma* (right conduct) as the nonviolent pursuit of 'truth', and his assimilationist conception of the Indian nation which he saw as a brotherhood or a confederation of communities.

Dr Kurtakoti, *Sankaracharya* (religious head) of the Karvir Peeth, expressed the views of many revivalists when in the 1920's he wrote that Gandhi's use of *ahimsa* (non-violence) in the non-cooperation movement would "uproot the very principle of Hinduism and Aryan philosophy" (*Mahratta,* Pune, 20 October 1922). He claimed that *ahimsa* as employed by Gandhi weakened the Hindus. Moreover, he maintained that "passive and non-resisting sufferance was a Christian and not an Aryan principle." He implored Hindus to return to the militancy advocated by Tilak, Vivekananda, and Ghose. Many other revivalists were in agreement, and when Gandhi took control of the Congress in the 1920's the stage was set for a revivalist search for new forms of protest (Anderson and Damle 1987:20).

As a result of the intensification of Hindu-Muslim tensions between 1921-1923, renewed importance was attached to the dormant Hindu Mahasabha (Great Assembly), formed in 1915 as a forum for a variety of Hindu interests (e.g., cow protection, Hindi in the Devanagri script, caste reforms, etc (Anderson and Damle 1987:28).

It was against this 'Hinduism-in-danger' stance that a new influential Hindu militant organization known as the Rashtriya Swayam sevak Sangh (RSS) (Association of National Volunteers) was established in 1925 by Dr Keshab Baliram Hedgewar who was deeply influenced by Tilak. The RSS purports to defend Hinduism against its so-called antagonists, its avowed objective being the unification of the Hindu community and the inculcation of a militant awareness of its common heritage and destiny.

One of the most influential works in the development of the Hindu Nationalist ideology was the treatise on *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?,* first published in Nagpur in 1923 by a Maharashtrian Brahmin and future president of the Hindu Mahasabha (1937-42) Veer D. Savarkar (1883-1966), a close associate of Tilak. Hindutva refers to a people united by common country, blood, history, religion, culture and language. The concept stems from the mythical reconstruction of the Vedic Golden Age of the 'Aryan' race (Klostermaier 1989:33). The idea of Hindutva became influential in all RSS organizational activities. While rejecting politics as the means to attain its particular objectives, the RSS has nevertheless in the past supported the political work of the Hindu Mahasabha, and has been closely linked with the Jana Sangh and Bharatiya Janata Party.

9.   The Hindutva Vision of Nationhood

According to Golwalkar, who succeeded Hedgewar, the Hindu nation has existed for 8,000 to 10,000 years, and Hindustan has been in the possession of Hindus for at least that length of time. In fact, the Hindus are not immigrants but indigenous sons of the soil, whatever scholars may say to the contrary. At the heart of the Hindu religion are the noble ideas of the Vedas. Golwalkar claimed Bharatvarsha had been a *rashtra* (country) since Vedic times. He states that every race develops a language of its own. The diverse languages of India are offshoots of Sanskrit, the dialect of the gods.

Race is a population with a common origin and with one culture. Therefore, the maintenance of racial unity in a nation necessitates the assimilation, or inextricable fusion, of foreign populations in it, into the mother race – in other words, they should merge fully into an original national race not only economically and politically but also religiously, culturally, and linguistically. Race is by far the most important of the five ingredients in a nation. Golwalkar suggests Hindustan can learn and profit from

Germany, where racial pride led to the attempt to eliminate the Jews because deep-rooted differences prevented their total assimilation into the German race.

Golwalkar makes it crystal clear that India is a Hindu nation. Muslims and Christians, though born in this country, can no more feel that they are children of the land after they have changed their faith. He goes on to suggest that such people should be placed behind bars during the time of a national crisis.

Golwalkar reiterates that secularism is not his choice of path to national integration which should, he insists, come through Hinduization. His idea of the best solution to the problems of minorities is contained in one word – assimilation. According to him they should be "wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment – not even citizen's rights" (Golwalkar 1947:55-56). Like Savarkar's Hindutva, Golwalkar's definition of Hindu is political rather than religious (Heehs 1998:117).

Linked to the RSS in India are several affiliated organizations (referred to in RSS literature as the 'family'), working in politics, in social welfare, in the media and among students, laborers and Hindu religious groups. The symbiotic links between the RSS and the 'family' are strengthened by the recruitment into the affiliates of *swayam sevaks* (members) those who have already demonstrated organizational skills in the RSS (see Lambert 1959; and Seunarine 1977; Koenraad, 2001).

So the river of Hindu revivalism flows on. The origin of Hindutva and its promotion by Hindu nationalistic groups such as the Hindu Mahasabha, the Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the Ram Rajya Parishad, the Jana Sangh, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Shiv Sena, Bajrangdal and Bharatiya Janata Party have their roots in the traditions of late nineteenth-century Hindu nationalism (see Anderson and Damle 1987; also Malik and Singh 1995).

A Hindu Mahasabha leader in an interesting speech attempted to list the cultural changes which Indian Muslims would have to undergo in order to become acceptable nationals of the Indian (Hindu) state of the future. First, they would have to accept the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* as their epics and reject the Arabic and Persian classics. They would have to regard Ramachandra, Shivaji, and Hindu gods Ram and Krishna as their heroes, and condemn various Muslim historical figures as foreign invaders or traitors (Deshpande 1949:10; Smith 1963:375).

The formation of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in 1964 marks a new phase in the history of Hindutva. Specifically set up to forge a corporate Hindu identity, to unite all Hindu sects in opposition to Islam and Christianity, the VHP uses the latest media technology to exalt Puranic heroes as the models of Hindu character. A bid is being made to set up a Hindu state ruled by an explicitly 'Hindu' political party.

Thus, Hindu Nationalism in India emerged at that phase of the Nationalist Movement when religion was sought to be made the basis for the emerging identity of India. As Juergensmeyer explains, when a religious perspective is fused with the political and social destiny of a nation, it is referred to as religious nationalism. He maintains that religious nationalists were not just religious fanatics; they were for the most part political activists who were seriously attempting to create a 'modern' language of politics and provide a new basis for the nation-state (1994:406).

10.   An Alternative Cultural Vision of Indian Nationhood – The Voice of the Oppressed

Upper caste Hindus identified 'nation' and 'national culture' as basically Hindu; as deriving from Vedic times, and as fundamentally a creation of the Aryan people. With this they tended to accept some form of the *varnashrama-dharma* as an inherent part of their culture and to relegate other Indian cultural traditions to a secondary and inferior position. As we have seen,

they not only used high-caste religious symbols in their mass organizing but also made use of the "Aryan theory of race" in interpreting cultural traditions. It is in this context of what constitutes Indian national culture that we should examine the alternative vision of prominent non-Aryan or non-brahmanic leaders within India.

The main figures of this larger non-Aryan and anti-Brahmin vision of Indian nationalism are Jyotiba Phule, E.V. Ramaswami 'Periyar' and Babasaheb Ambedkar with many others throughout India (Narayanswami Guru in Kerala, Acchutanand in Uttar Pradesh, Mangoo Ram in the Punjab). They attacked the exploitation by the upper castes at all levels; culturally, economically and politically.

a)   The Vision of Jyotirao Phule (1827-1890)

Jyotirao Phule was the first Indian in modern India to proclaim the dawn of a new age for the common man, the downtrodden, the underdog and the Indian woman. It was his aim to reconstruct the social order on the basis of social equality, justice and reason.

  In Phule's time, Indian civilization was seen as primarily derivative from Aryan civilization, and the caste system was lauded as a means by which people of diverse racial and cultural backgrounds were brought together and subjected to the civilizing influence of the Aryans (Omvedt 1976:103).

Phule basically reversed the perception arguing that the low castes whom he sometimes called "Shudras and Ati-Shudras" and sometimes listed as "Kumbis, Malis, Dhangars … Bhils, Kolis, Mahars, and Mangs" were the original inhabitants of the country, enslaved and exploited by conquering Aryans who formulated a caste-based Hinduism as a means of deceiving the masses and legitimizing their power. Hence, Phule consciously sought to bring together the major peasant castes (these were, besides the Kumbis or cultivators, the Malis or 'garden' cultivators and

Dhangars or shepherds) along with the large untouchable castes of Mahars and Mangs in a common `front' against Brahmin domination

.Jotirao's attack on Brahmanism was unmistakable. He realized that the seeds of Brahmin power, supremacy and privileges lay in their scriptures and Puranas; and that these works and the caste system were created to exploit the lower classes. Phule also reinterpreted sacred religious literature, for example, by treating the nine avatars of Vishnu as stages of the Aryan conquest. He used King Bali (a non-Aryan King) as a counter-symbol to the brahmanical scriptures and Puranas. He revolted against priest craft and the caste system and established a social movement for the liberation of the Shudras, Ati-Shudras (untouchables) and women.

To achieve his life's ambition for a casteless society, Phule founded *the Satya Shodhak Samaj* on 24 September 1873. The Samaj opened the first school for girls and untouchables and organized widow remarriages, marriages without Brahmin priests, etc. Phule's view of exploitation was thus focused on cultural and ethnic factors rather than economic or political ones.

b)   *Periyar's (1879-1973) Self-Respect Movement*

E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker, known as Periyar (Great Sage), was born in 1879 in Erode, in a respectable middle class family of artisans. He married at the age of 13, but after six years he became a sannyasi, travelling as a religious mendicant over the whole of India. In his visits to pilgrim centres, he gained an intimate knowledge of the evils of popular Hinduism and also the exploitation of the masses by Brahmin priests.

Periyar was convinced that casteism and Hinduism were one and the same. His movement took a turn towards racial consciousness and became a 'Dravidian' movement, seeking to defend the rights of the Dravidians against Aryan domination. The Aryans were

blamed for introducing an unjust and oppressive social system in the country (see Hardgrave 1965:17).

Periyar immediately realized what the new ideology of the Indian elite, the 'Aryan view of race', would imply. That is, Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas were held almost as a matter of definition to be the descendants of the invading Aryans; Shudras and untouchables, of the native conquered inhabitants. In the light of the new ideology, to claim 'Aryan' descent was equivalent to claiming "twice born" status and "Dravidian" or "non-Aryan" almost equivalent to saying 'Shudra'. The high caste elite of India began to define Aryan and Sanskritic culture as the basis of 'Indian nationality', but by so doing they were in fact highlighting the culture of the north Indian upper castes and mistaking this fraction of Indian culture for the whole.

Periyar sought to defend the rights of the Dravidians against Aryan domination. He saw in the Brahmins the representatives of Hindu arrogance and a stronghold of social injustice. He left the Congress attacking it as a tool of Brahmin domination. In 1925, he organized the 'Self-Respect Movement', designed as Dravidian Uplift, seeking to expose Brahmin tyranny and the deceptive methods by which they controlled all spheres of Hindu life. Periyar publicly ridiculed the Puranas as fairy tales, not only imaginary and irrational but grossly immoral as well.

The Hindu religion was denounced as an opiate by which the Brahmins had subdued the masses, dulling their senses. "A Hindu according to the present concept may be a Dravidian, but a Dravidian in the real sense of the term cannot and shall not be a Hindu" (A. S. Venu cited in Harrison 1960:127). Measures were taken to destroy the images of Hindu deities such as Rama and Ganesha. According to Periyar, "Rama and Sita are despicable characters, not worthy of imitation or admiration even by the lowest of fourth-rate humans'. Ravana (a Dravidian hero) on the one hand, is represented as a demon in the north, and on the other

hand, as a Dravidian of 'excellent character'. In his preface to *The Ramayana: A True Reading*, he states that "the veneration of the story any longer in Tamilnad, is injurious and ignominious to the self-respect of the community and of the country" (Naicker 1959:iii-iv).

Today, several Dravidian political parties in Tamil Nadu trace their inspiration to Periyar in their efforts to build a Dravidian civilization in the Indian subcontinent.

c)   *Ambedkar (1891-1956), a Revolutionary*

Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was greatly inspired and guided by the noble example set by Mahatma Jyotiba Phule. His example made an indelible impression on the mind of Ambedkar, who was determined to complete the work begun by him, This became his life's ambition (Rajashekhriah 1971:18-19; also see Keer1974:vii).

Ambedkar was a revolutionary. He led the fight against untouchability, Hinduism, and the Brahmin caste. He vehemently criticized the caste system and taught that caste was not only unjust but also immoral.

For him the fight against casteism and untouchability was central to his agenda. If caste was to be destroyed he said, then its religious foundation, the Vedas and Shastras, must also be destroyed. Faith in these scriptures was nothing more than a legalized class ethic favouring the Brahmins. If you wish to bring about a breach in the system, then you have got to apply the dynamite to the Vedas and Shastras which deny any part to reason; to the Vedas and Shastras which deny any part to morality. You must destroy the Religion of the Smritis (Ambedkar 1945:70). He established a new dispensation, a new religion (Neo-Buddhism), whose foundation is its unequivocal rejection of Hinduism.

Gandhi felt that the ancient Hindus had already achieved an ideal social system with the *varnavyavastha*. So according to Gandhi,

"The law of *varna* means that everyone will follow as a matter of dharma-duty the hereditary calling of his forefathers… he will earn his livelihood by following that calling." He thus indirectly supported casteism. By contrast, for Ambedkar the priority was not making 'Hinduism' or Hindu society 'shine forth' but building a new, equal, free, open, non-hierarchical, modern India. Hence, he was very critical of the two prevalent approaches of his time to reform the caste system; namely, that of Dayanand Saraswati and of Gandhi.

According to Ambedkar, "it is wrong to say that the problem of the untouchables is a social problem. That Society should be based on the three fundamental principles of liberty, equality and fraternity was his ideal. The problem of the untouchables is fundamentally a political problem (of minority versus majority groups)" (Ambedkar 1945a:190). Hence, Ambedkar launched his revolutionary movement for the liberation and advancement of the Dalits.

On 20 July 1942 he declared at Nagpur: "With justice on our side, I do not see how we can loose our battle. For our struggle is for our freedom. It is a battle for the reclamation of human responsibility which has been suppressed and mutilated by the Hindu social system and will continue to be suppressed and mutilated if in the political struggle the Hindus win and we lose. My final word of advice to you is, "educate, organize and agitate"; have faith in yourselves and never lose hope (see Das and Massey, 1995:viii). Thus Ambedkar was able to put the untouchability issue at the centre stage of Indian politics.

Ambedkar painfully realized that individual respect and group mobility was difficult for untouchables within the Hindu social system. In this context, he saw two possibilities of social emancipation: the political unity of untouchables and mass conversion. Hence, in 1936 he talked of conversion to another religion: "Though I have been born a Hindu, I shall not die as a

Hindu" (31 May 1936, Bombay). He had already made a first mention of conversion during the Yeola Conference of 1935.

Hearing the conversion call of Ambedkar, the Hindu leadership was very disturbed. Several leaders began to persuade him not to go ahead. Ambedkar expressed surprise that the caste Hindus who had never shown fellow-feeling for the untouchables were suddenly beseeching them to stay within the fold of Hinduism. Since untouchables have been for centuries ill-treated and humiliated by caste Hindus, why did they now suddenly take such an interest in keeping them within the Hindu fold?

After long deliberation and a conscious choice in favour of Buddhism, on 14 October 1956, Ambedkar took his *diksha* (initiation) at Nagpur at 9:30 am. Assembled were about five lakh Mahars, who were all converted to Buddhism on that day. His act of embracing Buddhism was a strong protest aimed at all that the Hindus had failed to do. For him *swaraj* (freedom) did not mean anything if it did not also put an end to the slavery of the untouchables (Gore 1993:14).

 The above tradition of the trio of Phule / Periyar / Ambedkar represents the effort to define an alternative identity for the people, based on non-Aryan and low caste perspectives that was critical not only of the oppressiveness of the dominant Hindu castes, but also of the claim to antiquity and to being the major Indian tradition (see Michael 1999; Oommen 2001). The issue, however, was not basically racial but cultural, a matter of group identity.

III. Dialogue and Convergence of Contending Views

11.   The Constitution and the Contending Visions of Indian Identity

The above survey on identity in India shows that there have been several contending visions of Indian identity. All these visions

were active and influential during the freedom struggle in the run-up to the formation of the modern Indian State. A continuous dialogue took place with regard to identity in free India. The failure to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion on the question of Indian identity resulted in the bifurcation of Pakistan from India, Mahatma Gandhi eventually falling victim to excessive and narrow nationalism.

In spite of these setbacks, on 26 November 1949 the Constituent Assembly of India, after almost three years of protracted discussions, adopted a constitution for the world's largest liberal democracy. The debate in the Assembly reflected the paradoxes of the Indian situation which we highlighted above as the contending visions for India. The founding Fathers of the Indian Constitution defended the notion of a pluralistic society and a neutral state based on equal rights and citizenship, upholding ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious pluralism in India and promising recognition and protection for all and non-discriminatory state policies. Differences are recognized and so are the values of equal citizenship and equal rights.

The Indian Constitution may justifiably be described as secular and multicultural; articulating a secular and inclusive nationalism of equal opportunities and equal liberty for all, regardless of their religious affiliations or social status. Recognition and protection was offered to religious, cultural and linguistic minorities. Equal respect, fairness and non-discrimination were to be the guiding principles of state policies towards minorities. The equidistance to all religions became the quintessence of secularism and this is ensured in the Constitution.

IV. Established Constitutional Rights under Attack

12. Dialogue on True Patriotism and Nationalism

Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr Rajendra Prasad, the

President of the Constituent Assembly, K. M. Munshi and Dr B. R. Ambedkar played an important role in formulating the Indian Constitution. They well understood the different aspirations of contending groups and the importance of recognition in Indian nationhood. The idea that all Indian citizens should inherit as their birthright such basic civil rights as were recognized by all modern nations in the world, was enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

However, the Nehruvian and Ambedkarian vision began to break down by the late 1960s and today several Constitutional rights are being questioned; there is an imminent danger that anti-liberal forces may set the agenda for Government policies. Over the past two decades the rise of Hindu nationalism and the growing political strength of regional, low caste and tribal parties have helped expose the tears in the fabric once again. As a result of the differing ideologies of Hindutva and of the oppressed and marginalized forces, we today observe the emergence of two opposite socio-political and cultural movements. On the one hand, backward castes and classes are in search of a culture based on egalitarian social and economic principles with greater political participation; on the other hand, upper caste Hindus are equally strong in trying to retain control of their present position of privilege and dominance by consolidating ancient hierarchical Brahmanical Hindu values. Thus, culture in India has become polarized by the contrasting interests of the upper and the lower groups, the former vigorously clinging to their traditional status and the latter fighting for justice, equality and human dignity.

The most vociferous and militant Hindu nationalists are now training their guns on the very basic constitutional concept of pluralism. Public opinion is being shaped to the effect that some people i.e. the upper and middle classes/castes are patriotic whereas others are not. Tribal people are looked at with suspicion and their national loyalty is being questioned. Similarly, the aspirations of the whole Dalit community and their movements for equality have been brushed aside as suspect. In the minds of

religious nationalists, there is one supreme value – the Hindu nation – on whose altar everything including claims for equality must be sacrificed. Their policy of cultural regimentation has one aim – the consolidation of a Hindu national identity.

History is now being re-written to suit Hindu nationalism. The educational system is being redefined in order to influence young minds to believe in Hindutva ideology. Hate literature is being distributed to create an aversion towards Christians and other religious groups. Propaganda is being designed to turn Christians and Muslims into enemies of true patriotism and supporters of anti-national activity. Such a policy is highly dangerous for Indian society which is basically multicultural and multi-religious. Today the terms nationalism and patriotism need clarification.

The concept of patriotism is much-debated. Sometimes the word is given such an ethnocentric and narrow meaning that it is bound to wreak havoc among us if applied in practice. It is a general observation that where the spirit of extreme nationalism prevails, from childhood people are being taught to hate the 'enemy'. That is why Rabindranath Tagore, long before the country won independence, long before it witnessed partition wrote, "Nationalism is a great menace, it is the particular thing which for years has been at the bottom of India's troubles" (Tagore 1992:83 original 1917).

Writing in a similar vein, Earl Stanley Jones, a visionary and close associate of Mahatma Gandhi wrote: "One of the greatest dangers to world peace is the rise of modern nationalism. It has taken that lovely sentiment called patriotism and has turned it into the deadliest enemy known to the modern world. It causes men to sin where they otherwise would not."

In the present circumstances fresh dialogue is needed animated by the experience of our past history in order to

bring to light the true nature of patriotism and nationalism in India. It is also very important to call attention to all the efforts that were made to define the concept of a comprehensive Indian identity during the birth pangs of the Indian nation.

V. Dialogue in Action

13. Humanistic Nationalism

Dialogue in words should end in action. What does nationalism mean for the poor, for the oppressed and marginalized? Is it possible for them to experience a sense of common and shared humanity in Indian nationhood? Or is nationalism the luxury of the rich and the powerful? In the face of Hindutva and an exclusive and narrow Hindu nationalism, we need to redefine nationalism in such a way that the poor and the downtrodden receive due attention and care. As civic-conscious citizens concerned about the welfare of others we need to ask what nationalism means for the poor - for the Dalits, for tribals and other weaker groups. Behind the dreams and aspirations of these marginalized groups lingers the hope that a nation of fairness and justice will be realized, a nation, humane and inclusive.

Such a humanistic nationalism ought to be pursued by all right thinking people not by themselves but in collaboration with emerging humanistic peoples' movements. Widespread support for the cause of suppressed groups and identities will take us in the direction of a more complete and integral understanding of anation. Ordinary citizens should be motivated to get involved in issues of justice, equality, fraternity and ecology. People must be active in civil society. Scholars should collaborate with secular humanist intellectuals in bringing to light the history and cultural traditions of the tribals, the Dalits and other marginalized people. This would be a constructive move in promoting holistic and integral nationalism in India.

VI. Conclusion

India is a multi-cultural and multi-religious country. Its unity is derived from the fact that it welcomes and embraces diversity. When the issue of the nature of Indian nationhood was being discussed during the freedom struggle there were contending visions of India. A continuous dialogue was alive and the outcome was an inclusive secular Constitution. Today though, there is an active and powerful move to unify India in terms of a Hindu *Rashtra* (Nation). The impression created is that upper and middle caste Hindus are the true patriots and the real custodians of Hinduism, whereas others are not. Steps have been taken to rewrite history to suit the above agenda. The educational system has been revamped to influence young minds to accept Hindutva ideology as something indispensable. Devices have been envisaged to carry out the Hindutva agenda, viz to change the Constitution. In this paperwe have attempted to highlight the informal dialogue which took place during the freedom struggle for the purpose of defining Indian nationhood. This dialogue of the past could guide us in our present situation. Indian nationalism should accord dignity to all Indians and make them feel respected as citizens and thus wanted. What we see today instead is that while Dalits, tribals, backward castes and other marginalized and suppressed communities are intensely working for and exploring a nation inspired by egalitarian values, social justice, economic opportunities and participation in political decision making; the Hindutva ideologues are equally strong in trying to retain control of their present privileges and dominance by insisting on ancient hierarchical Brahmanic Hindu cultural values. Thus, culture and nationalism in India have become polarized by the contrasting interests of the upper and lower class groups.

The future lies in strengthening inclusive nationalism as visualized by the Founding Fathers of this great nation. The question the intellectuals in India need to address is: how can the citizens strengthen the pluralistic characteristics of Indian

society? We have suggested that first of we all need to be aware of the historical processes that took place at the birth of the Indian nation. We should understand the hows and whys of the pulls and pushes taking place in the socio-political arena in the country. This paper sets out to highlight precisely this. Secondly, inspired by the continuous dialogue that took place during the freedom struggle in the making of the Indian nation, we need to engage in a dialogue on socio-political questions of the present times and participate in the promotion of an integral, humanistic nationalism. We need to mobilize the public to join people's movements to build a just and a humane society in India.

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